EUREKA STREET

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Paul Chadwick in Jakarta
to meet the Indonesian press

Beleaguered

Jon Greenaway on the state
of the national football codes

Geraldine Doogue interviews Cardinal Martini

Will immigration policy hurt
our relations with Asia in the
long run, asks J.S. Gregory

Brett Wright investigates
xenotransplantation

It's after the second siren at the MCG, Essendon v Hawthorn, but it could be anywhere—Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane. In an earlier age it would have been a scene to catch the eye of Pieter Bruegel. But what's happening to these games we play?
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PO Box 553
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Tel (03) 9427 7311
Fax (03) 9428 4450

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A magazine of public affairs, the arts and theology

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COMMENT

JOHN QUIGGIN

The reluctant Budget

THE 1996-97 BUDGET—IMMINENT as *Eureka Street* goes to press, will be brought down in an atmosphere of crisis, at least crisis according to the Howard government. It is claimed that the $8 billion 'Black Hole' necessitates drastic spending cuts. Does the Black Hole exist, and if so, does it justify the crisis measures?

On the first question, it seems likely that the Budget outcome for 1995-96 will be around $4 billion worse than was predicted when the Labor government brought down its last Budget in April 1995. Yet the projections for economic growth, unemployment and other economic parameters contained in the 1995 Budget were almost exactly correct. There were no policy decisions between the Budget and the election with any significant effect on revenue or outlays. In these circumstances, an error of $4 billion is a startlingly bad forecasting performance by Treasury.

It appears that almost all of the shortfall will arise because tax revenue will not meet the Budget forecasts. A re-examination of the Budget forecasts for 1995-96 reveals a highly optimistic projection for an increase in individual income tax revenues of 13.6 per cent, despite the absence of any significant increase in tax rates or other measures to enhance income tax revenue (the Medicare levy was increased by 0.1 per cent, but the effect of this measure was negligible). It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Keating government's desire to announce a return to surplus led to pressure on Treasury to come up with optimistic forecasts.

Exactly the reverse point applies to the projections supplied by the incoming Treasurer when the alleged discovery of the 'Black Hole' was announced. The new projections for 1996-97 imply that there will be almost no improvement in the Budget balance, despite the effects of an increase in company tax and the absence of any planned expansion. This seems totally implausible. It seems much more likely that the coincidence between Treasury's constant desire for spending cuts and the government's post-election need for an excuse to dump the promises on which it was elected have resulted in a swing from extreme optimism to extreme pessimism in revenue projections.

So far the information revealed by the Treasury, with its misleading references to 'parameter revisions' is insufficient to tell for sure whether the massive changes in forecasts are the result of incompetence or dishonesty. But there can be no doubt about the dishonesty with which successive Australian governments have approached the electorate in recent years.

Both the 1993 and 1996 elections were won on the basis of commitments that could not possibly be delivered. In both cases the party leaders compounded their dishonesty. Keating enacted the One Nation tax cuts into L-A-W, only to repeal them after the election. Howard campaigned specifically on the basis of his personal reputation for honesty. When asked what would happen if, as was expected, the Budget deficit was worse than had been announced, he stated that he would let the deficit blow out rather than renege on his promises.

... an open debate about whether the public interest would be better served by higher taxes and better community services or by lower taxes and cuts in services is pointless. The answer is already known in advance since the ideology of the free market means that smaller government is always better.

Underlying this pattern of deceit is a belief, shared by leading figures in both parties, and that is even more prevalent in departments like Treasury and Finance, that the Australian people cannot be trusted, but can be fooled. In this view, an open debate about whether the public interest would be better served by higher taxes and better community services or by lower taxes and cuts in services is pointless. The answer is already known in advance since the ideology of the free market means that smaller government is always better. But the electorate will always be fooled by offers of improved services, and its influence on policy must therefore be kept to a minimum.

In this view, the only way of getting sensible policy into place is to say whatever is necessary to get elected, then cut as hard and as quickly as possible. When the next election comes around, the benefits of the cuts will, it is hoped, be showing up in terms of increased productivity. Even if, as usually happens, the benefits of free market orthodoxy are not apparent, the electorate will have had three years to forget the cuts, and some last-minute bribes in the form of pre-election tax cuts will maximise the government's chances of re-election.

As a political theory, this represents an underestimation of the electorate, and particularly of the public capacity to remember and punish those who betray its trust. The recipe described above is exactly that followed by Nick Greiner in NSW, with a notable lack of electoral success.

The drastic cuts desired by Treasury and Finance can be implemented successfully only in an atmosphere of crisis, like that surrounding the election of the Kennett government in Victoria. More importantly, the policy prescription is wrong. Although a surplus is usually preferable to a deficit, there is no need for panic measures. Australia could maintain a deficit of 1.5 per cent of GDP (around $7 billion) indefinitely, simply by allowing public debt to grow in line with national income. The real need is for an end to cuts in services such as health, education, environmental protection and social welfare, which represent a more significant investment in the future than an improvement in the government's net financial worth.

To the extent that there is any truth in the Black Hole, it reflects inadequate revenue. To meet the goal of maintaining and improving services, as well as the subsidiary goal of improving the budget balance, long-term increases in revenue are needed. A good start in this direction would be the abandonment of short-term expedients like privatisation and private infrastructure bonds. The apparent improvement in the bottom line generated by these expedients is more than offset by the long-term loss of income they generate. Other 'tax expenditures' such as the concession on superannuation investments for the well-off could also be pruned back.

The ultimate question, however, is a simple one. Do ordinary Australians want to have more cash in their pockets, or do they want to have community services that meet the needs of all? If the choice is for community services, ordinary people must be prepared to pay higher income taxes. Despite the horror with which such a suggestion is met by politicians of both major parties, there is plenty of evidence from opinion surveys to show that a majority of Australians would be quite willing to pay this price if an end to the remorseless cutbacks of the past decade could be assured. ■

John Quiggin is Professor of Economics at James Cook University.

CHRIS MCGILLION

Cut of the cloth

THE APPOINTMENT OF AN ARCHBISHOP is always a thing of interest beyond the city that is his see. One reason why this is particularly true of Melbourne, where, in July, Bishop George Pell was appointed to succeed Sir Frank Little, should be obvious to anyone with even a passing knowledge of Australian Catholic culture.

Although it galls a Sydneysider to admit it, Melbourne is the intellectual heart of Australian Catholicism. Since at least the establishment of Newman College at the University of Melbourne in 1918, the opening of the city's Central Catholic Library in 1924, and the first flowering of its Campion Society in the 1930s, Melbourne has been in the forefront of the most stimulating and innovative Catholic debate. Sydney retained its seniority in the ecclesiastical pecking order but Melbourne became home to a tradition of intellectual vitality. By this Melbourne was able to rise above the rut of Catholic tribalism at those times when Sydney dug in deeper. And Melbourne went on producing the more creative and enduring goods, like answers to the questions of who and why Australian Catholics are.

The notion that there was such a thing as a national Church, like the opportunity after Vatican II to explore collegiality as a way of expressing it, had never been taken anywhere near as seriously in Australia as it was in the Americas or Western Europe.

In Archbishop Pell Melbourne may yet have another champion of this role. But his form suggests another inclination. Dr Pell is a member of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Rome's chief instrument in its drive for orthodoxy. He has been associated with *AD2000*—the censorious journal of a disgruntled Catholic rump.

And he is the leading episcopal advocate of Pope John Paul II's 1993 encyclical *Veritatis Splendor (The Splendour of Truth)*. This was a treatise on moral teaching that contained an instruction to the bishops on how to get the Church's message across: 'have recourse', the Pope told them, 'to appropriate measures to ensure that the faithful are guarded from every doctrine and theology contrary to it'. Liberal theologians, and some outspoken priests, were soon to learn that 'appropriate measures' usually come in the form of discipline and ostracism.

When the news of his appointment broke, Archbishop Pell gave a number of interviews in which he said that he sees his task as one of unifying the Church behind the teachings of John Paul II because this is the best way to restore the confidence of 'rattled' Catholics. It is still too early to tell what he meant by this but it has an ominous ring to it.

Archbishop Pell may believe that his success will be measured in terms of the volume of dissent within Melbourne: the less noise there is, the more united (and less 'rattled') Catholics must be. If so, he will be confusing any silence he imposes on Melbourne with the suffocation of what has been the most lively and exciting pocket of the local Catholic scene.

But there is another reason why Catholics generally should be interested in Pell's appointment. At their April conference, the Catholic bishops issued a *formal apology* to the victims of sexually abusive priests and religious workers. This went much further than their 1993 *acknowledgement* that sexual abuse by some priests and religious had occurred in the past, and it committed all the bishops to follow-up measures including codes of conduct for priests and a study into the factors peculiar to the Catholic Church that might lead them to abuse. In other words, the bishops adopted a distinctly national approach to the issue. They finally accepted that the conference, as the peak leadership body of the local Church, had to take the initiative for the sake of all Catholics—and of the victims. This marks a profound progression in the bishops' collective self-identification.

Until April, the bi-annual national Catholic Bishops Conference had been viewed as part talk-fest/part administrative formality. The notion that there was such a thing as a national Church, like the opportunity after Vatican II to explore collegiality as a way of expressing it, had never been taken anywhere near as seriously in Australia as it was in the Americas or Western Europe. Consequently, the Church in Australia has been slow to develop a distinctive culture, it has been particularly vulnerable to the dictates of Rome, and it has failed to capitalise on its strengths and resources to take its full part in the political, social and moral life of the country.

The April development was a tentative step forward. A more cautious line may have prevailed at the conference had not the NSW Royal Commission into Police Corruption been publicising the clerical abuse scandal in the weeks before the bishops met; a retreat remains possible while the most senior clerics remain committed to a different model of Church.

And therein lies the rub. All the senior clerics are close to retirement except, that is, Archbishop Pell who, at 55 years of age, can contemplate two decades as the second-most senior churchman in the country.

Archbishop Pell is quintessentially Roman. By training he is a product of Rome's Propaganda Fide College; by outlook he believes that all roads lead straight to Rome and all the answers flow straight back again. This view allows no deviations, no concessions to local differences. Rather than taking the Australian Church into the 21st century, it is the kind of view that would haul it back into a kind of pre-1960s ghetto.

The result, most likely, would be a paralysing, and ultimately debilitating, tug of war between the old and the new. That is why Archbishop Pell deserves our prayers—that he might receive wise counsel and exercise sound judgment. It is why the rest of the Australian Church needs prayers as well—that it might prevail even should its heart start missing beats. ■

Chris McGillion is the opinion page editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

What's right about the right

SIX MONTHS INTO OFFICE, and the Howard government has seriously punished a number of old Labor constituencies—some with good cause and some for the simple pleasure of getting its own back.

But the Howard strategy is not focused on cuts and it does not depend on his being able to get spending cuts through a hostile and contrary Senate, or upon a double dissolution strategy. He actually believes in prim government housekeeping, and so does the international marketplace; not least when it has been promised it. But he is far too cynical to expect that merely cutting the size of the government deficit will by itself spark economic activity and growth, or that an automatic trickle-down process will overcome the macro-economic effects of government job losses, or that $5 billion one way or another (about one per cent of gross national product) actually makes much difference to national savings or investment, or the structure of the economy.

He is much more focused on uncertain national and economic fortunes and a backdrop of natural growth in the economy. Opinions about the prospects of this are divided, and there is increasing pessimism about the power of government to affect things. In fact, however, some air of panic about the economy may help him push through changes which matter to him more. If he can push them through, there can be little undoing by subsequent governments, and the power of alternative administrations successfully to build up constituencies in the way they have done before will be much reduced. Just as importantly, many voters can be expected to like the consumer sovereignty and notions of minimal government which he may well deliver.

They will not necessarily do so at first, and the biggest risk, from his point of view, is panic on his own side, or being caught in an election cycle before there is any payoff, and before the provider constituencies have been disorganised and disbanded. But his ace in the hole is that he may well be able to persuade enough voters that he merely intends to reorganise the way services are delivered.

A well-targeted voucher system, for example, does not reduce government service to the consumer. Rather, it gives power to the consumer at the expense of the existing provider groups who, hitherto, have received the money directly. If schools, or the different child-care systems, or nursing homes, actually had to compete with each other to redeem the vouchers or to get the tax expenditure, there might be more attention to consumer needs. It by no means follows that standards will fall, or that they cannot be monitored or policed on standards which are set.

Similarly, the corporatisation of government service provision does not necessarily mean reduced services to the unemployed. It can, of course, if one also cuts the case management and labour market programs (as the government, to some extent has), but, by itself, it can actually lead to improved service, a greater focus on actual results, and, sometimes, even a greater capacity on the part of central government to discern areas of particular need, where it can respond with specifically focused programs. And some government agencies that have traditionally been bywords for indifferent service are well capable of sharpening up their acts when their income no longer directly comes from government subvention but from the number of satisfied customers they process.

Very little of this is hard ideology at work, even if it has been in Britain and New Zealand under conservative régimes that one sees most of the examples in action. But the fact is that there are not many ideas being played with that have not been played with by Labor in government, and in many cases, all that Howard is offering is a much accelerated program.

Down the road is not only a much reduced public service (in due course all of the service-provider functions, and not a few specialised functions such as tax collecting, customs and health, welfare and community service-provider functions will be hived off out of the public service proper) but a highly centralised one which is command-oriented, intrinsically political, with a contract mentality. It will be much more élite, will suffer deeply from never getting its hands dirty with the implementation of actual programs, and yet perversely will be far more infected with managerialism than with policy and program development skills. The apostles of this sort of thing believe that running a public hospital or a school is not intrinsically different from running a defence procurement program or a pig export levy scheme.

Politicians, whose every move in 96 years has been to separate themselves from political accountability for the failure of particular programs, will now be able to disclaim responsibility altogether, no doubt taking advantage of a not-coincidentally increasing public cynicism about whether organised action through government can ever actually achieve much anyway. The supposed transparency of the new purchaser-provider arrangements—by which, say, central government buys a package of 'services' from a public hospital with stringent conditions about service standards—will come under deep assault when it emerges. There is not really a competitive marketplace for such services, nothing much can be done (for political rather than managerial reasons) when services do not deliver, and when, in any event, it emerges that the groups, whose disadvantage was the initial rationale for organised government intervention, are not the empowered consumers.

In such an environment, however, the capacity of a smug and complacent government corrupted by years of power—as Labor had become before it was thrown out—to govern through deals with lobbies, well supported by public money, will be much reduced. No doubt there will always be room for any smart party to reward its friends and punish its enemies, but the new style of reduced active government will leave a lot less room for old cosinesses.

But it will also leave a lot less room for concerted action to help particular groups in need, for the injection of public interest considerations into decision-making, for imagination by officials and politicians, and flexibility to react quickly to circumstances. These are changes of longer-lasting significance than a slice, or a nick, in any particular existing program. ■

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

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It's OK up there

From Senator Barney Cooney

Frank Brennan's article 'One vote no' (*Eureka Street*, July/August 1996) deals with matters vital for the well-being of this country. For example Frank weighs up the need or otherwise for an Australian bill of rights and sets out the change in his thinking about this matter.

In the last paragraph of his article, Frank suggests 'A Senate Committee on Human Rights could scrutinise any bill proposing limitations on the stipulated rights' as a means of having Parliament test legislation against the appropriate measures for a good society.

In fact there are Senate committees which largely do this already. I refer to the Scrutiny of Bills Committee, the Regulations and Ordinance Committee and the Legal and Constitutional Committee in both its forms. The work these bodies do shows that Frank Brennan's strategy for maintaining and enhancing Human Rights is the best way of doing so in the present circumstances operating in Australia.

Barney Cooney
Parliament House, ACT

Get it right

From Michael Kennedy

It fascinates me as a unionist that when there is discussion of the future of unionism in Australia, writers always skirt the fundamental issue of membership. Jon Greenaway's article 'Industrial Revolution' (*Eureka Street*, June 1996) is such an article. One has to ask why, as John Howard may have put it, in 13 years of industrial sunshine has union membership fallen from 56 to around 40 per cent of the workforce? Why do unions only cover some 30 per cent of private sector employees?

I do not think there are any simple answers to these questions. It is more complex than saying that the Accord or long periods of relative industrial peace undermined the need for people to be members. At some fundamental level unions are failing to deliver what members want—what else can explain the decease in membership over that time? The membership and the potential membership want more control of the work conditions. Workers are being

given more control over decisions in their work and I think that they are looking for that control in their work conditions. Workers also want service from their union. In the new climate unions will have to provide these services as the Howard Government's anti-union changes take place.

The union movement needs to look at reforming itself rapidly to accommodate and survive the changes that will come into place. I, like many others, am hopeful that it will adapt and learn to prosper. What it must not do is sit back and let whole new areas of work and employment grow up without embracing and improving them. The movement must make the change to be relevant to the young, women, migrants and those wanting to work part-time.

If it can reach out to those it does not now reach and hold on to its traditional base it may be able to turn this legislation to its advantage. You have to wonder however, if the union movement had done this before, would this 'industrial revolution' have ever started?

Michael Kennedy
Balmain, NSW

About persecution ...

From Meaghan Morris

In his comparison of an article by McKenzie Wark about the Demidenko debate with an anti-Semitic cartoon, Raimond Gaita seriously misrepresents Wark's argument (*Eureka Street*, July/August 1996).

According to Gaita, Wark suggests that our past disposition to treat as unthinkable the claim that the Jews got what they deserved 'was merely an expression of the jaded, thoughtless certainties of the Cold War': Wark says nothing of the kind. What he does argue is that Darville's novel has emerged 'in the debris of the world that the Cold War—and the cold warriors—have left us'. In other words: 40 years of ideological warfare and lurid demonisation from both sides of that battle (remember the *real* McCarthy?) have degraded our culture's capacity for belief.

I find Gaita's travesty distressing precisely because my view of the Demidenko affair is much closer to his than to Wark's; I thought Wark's frivolous tone offensive and his remarks about evil silly. However, Gaita's view is more judicious than mine. I am horrified by the glib fluency of phrases like 'the unacceptable face of anti-anti-Semitism' (not used by Wark, but by not a few of my friends). Gaita is capable of calling them expressions of a resentment that needs to be discussed.

He is probably right. But Wark is also telling an unpalatable truth. The Wilkinson cartoon of Darville impaled on a Channukah candelabrum did not appear in a void and it was not made 'thinkable' only by Darville's book. Yes, it could have appeared in *Der Stürmer*. Swap the candelabrum for a hammer and sickle, and it could have appeared in many a Cold War magazine.

More to the point of today's conflicts, it is one of a whole series of cartoons that have ridden the political correctness panic by portraying martyred artists (Helen Garner, David Williamson) being tortured and even *crucified* by twisted representatives of mad minority groups—feminists, lesbians, academics. Turn on talkback radio or watch TV, and you can add 'ethnic lobby groups' and, yes, Aborigines, to the list. One does not have to deny the uniqueness of the Holocaust, treat 'minorities' as interchangeable, or assimilate Helens Garner and Darville in order to see that *the cartoons do all these things*. I agree that Wilkinson raised this grotesque 'art form' to a whole new level, but the other cartoons—which few cold warriors protested when groups they disliked were attacked—formally


This month, courtesy of Penguin Books, the writer of each letter we publish will receive two of the Penguin '60s Classics

made his 'thinkable'.

Like Robert Manne at the end of *The Culture of Forgetting*, Gaita puts a lot of intellectual power into dividing good political correctness (revulsion at anti-Semitism) from the bad PC of 'censorious' groups whose pain is seen as trivial.

Both men are playing with fire, seemingly oblivious to the links between the new respectability of racism in our society and the rise of a sweeping intolerance which cares nothing, in its virulence, for their fine distinctions.

Meaghan Morris
Bundeena, NSW

About debate ...

From McKenzie Wark

On the basis of a reading of only one of the two columns in *The Australian* in which I discuss Helen Demidenko-Darville (31/1/96), Raimond Gaita concludes four things: (1) that I am a 'radical sceptic' (2) that it is nevertheless a consequence of what I doubt that I 'must' believe that in the Holocaust the Jews 'got what they deserved' (3) that I praised Darville's book *The Hand That Signed The Paper* while acknowledging that it advances this 'Jews got what they deserved' notion, and (4) that I am 'thoughtless'. He has fathomed all this from one 1400-word book review, of Andrew Riemer's *The Demidenko Debate*.

If I am (1) a radical sceptic then I would question any dogmatic belief that goes beyond verifiable facts, including (2). Gaita's argument is incoherent. He attempts to rescue it by (4) putting the blame on me for its incoherence. I am too thoughtless to know I cannot profess scepticism and hold a dogmatic belief at the same time, apparently.

As to (3) Demidenko and her novel, I wrote in an earlier column, one that Gaita has apparently not consulted: 'let us feel neither anger nor sympathy for the hapless young woman thrust into the limelight.' (13/9/95). Surely I need not explain why I did not advocate sympathy. And why not anger? I prefer understanding. I leave anger to those whose grievance is genuine, not vicarious.

Referring to the book review in question, Gaita writes that 'Wark's posture of radical scepticism is par for the course—for him and for the times...'. He has deduced this from a sentence in which I assert the opposite: 'To question accepted senses of certainty is not the same thing as "modish relativism".' I question accepted senses of certainty because I think it possible, within limits that we can establish, to make true statements about the world. One questions precisely because one trusts in the ability of reasoning.

To give an example: I believe it is possible to establish what I wrote in this particular book review by consulting it. Upon consulting it I discover that this and all other quotes Gaita makes from me are inaccurate, as is the spelling he gives of my name. I can thus make a true statement, that others may verify, to the effect that neither my name nor the quotes from my words Gaita provides are accurate. I cannot say whether this results from Gaita's carelessness or *Eureka Street's*. That is beyond the limits of what I can know in this instance.

In the column Gaita cites I offered no opinion as to whether Darville's book is most rightly read as expressing this view that the Jews 'got what they deserved.' I have expressed no views about the moral worth of Darville's book. My view on its aesthetic achievement was limited to noting its effect—that it 'opened a space.' I have had positive things to say only about the space it opened—this ongoing public debate, of which Andrew Riemer's book was a significant part. I have praised Riemer's book. That is not evidence that I believe Darville's book worthy of praise. It is even more improper for Gaita to insinuate from praise of Riemer an agreement with Darville.

Gaita may give the reader the impression that, almost alone of Darville's 'defenders', I agree with her detractors that she thinks the 'Jews got what they deserved'. I have no access to Darville's mind and hence have made no such determination. Some of Darville's imaginary Ukrainians seem to me to think that the Jews 'deserve' their violent retributions. I called this a 'delusion' because that is what it is. Their views of 'Jewish Bolshevism' are false and their lust for revenge is unethical. I did not and do not accept Darville's book as a justification, if that is what it is, or even as an explanation, of Ukrainian anti-Semitism. But I do think that, like Geoffrey Wright's film *Romper Stomper*, it provides a way of thinking about questions that, far from being 'unthinkable', always need thinking. Namely, how does the racist think? And further: what desire does the racist fulfil through this hatred of the other?

Only an art free from the injunction to think within unquestioned bounds can give us the resources to think about such questions. The whole point of my second column on Darville is that independent of any judgment of the moral or aesthetic worth of Darville's book, we can nevertheless use it as the material with which to think about such questions, precisely because it is a transgression, in art, of boundaries we prefer not to see transgressed in life. My interest in writing about Darville was not to rush into judgment about the book, but to inquire into the shape of what happened as a result of the book. By misrepresenting what I said and reading a great deal into it, Gaita has made my column out to be something it was not. It was not praise for Darville. It

was not really about the book at all.

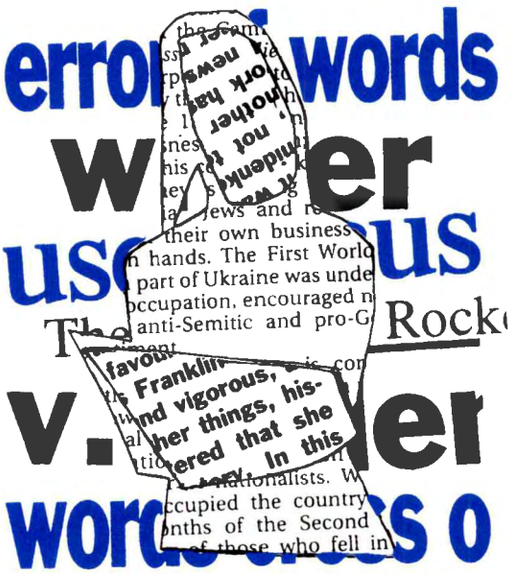
I wanted to inquire into why the 'event' that is 'Demidenko' happened, and, given the irreversible fact that it has happened, turn it into a premise for thinking about things that, far from deserving to remain unthinkable, need to be thought. For Gaita it seems more important to judge the book than to understand it, and to prevent 'bad thoughts' from emanating from it than to originate new ones. For Gaita, Darville's transgression into the unthinkable has to be verbally punished by invoking moral law. For me, Darville's transgression prompts a collective inquiry into the nature of the bounds it highlights through its very excess of them. I have written down my attempts to understand, in which I withheld judgment. Some may find fault with that. Gaita offers his judgments of me without first understanding anything of what I say. I find that a far greater fault.

Gaita may give his readers the impression that I myself 'must' think that the Jews 'got what they deserved.' To me such a thing is unthinkable. Gaita derives this statement I did not make from a baroque extrapolation from a series of misreadings of what I did say. Gaita's chain of insinuation begins from this statement of his: 'What can Wark mean when he says that we should rethink the Holocaust, free of the illusion that there exists absolute evil and absolute innocence?' Nowhere do I say we should 'rethink the Holocaust.' I do refer to 'the grand fables of the early 20th century'—fascism, communism and liberalism. I did say that Riemer 'defends' Darville's 'handling of the everyday quality of evil and its presentation of the idea that evil is never absolute, but always has a heterogeneous quality.' Gaita has felt himself free to make my qualified scepticism into an absolute one, to transfer my scepticism about grand political fables to scepticism about the Holocaust, and to mix that with the attribution of Riemer's reading of Darville directly to me. Clearly, on the evidence here I can at least claim that Gaita's procedure is careless.

Along the way, Gaita actually proves a thesis from Riemer's book that he makes a half-hearted attempt to deny. As I read him, Riemer claims that religious standards of judgment about a work of art can't be community standards in a secular public life. This for two reasons: a religious view necessarily imposes on those of other religions, or those of no faith, standards of judgment based on beliefs that others do not and need not share; and such a view cannot grasp the ethical significance of the autonomy of aesthetic judgment from other forms of judgment.

Riemer runs the danger of making autonomous 'art' a modern religion, and to that extent his tastes are subject to his own critique. Literature cannot function as a 'higher' sphere of judgment in relation to the rest of public life, any more than the various religions. On the other hand, he limits the degree of tolerance he himself is prepared to extend to art, and he thinks the community likewise can legitimately set such limits. He will defend Helen Darville's transgressions, but not the 'bestial' female sexuality of Justine Ettler's novel. Limited autonomy and relative tolerance—Riemer's is the language of a pragmatic liberalism. I do not go 'beyond' that, as Gaita imagines: I think something quite different.

Art is not an autonomous sphere composed of art works and aesthetic criticism. Art is a distinctive kind of practice, which I think ought to be independent of moral constraints in its execution, but which produces objects that can become the starting point for all



kinds of intellectual practice, be they moral, ethical, political, or purely aesthetic. One can read a novel to produce criticism, sermons, philosophy, or another work of art. What I said about Darville hangs on this view of the place of artworks in the matrix of public life.

As a media studies scholar, what naturally drew my attention was the wide range of discourses which had appropriated Darville's book and set their distinctive canons of judgment to work on it. I saw the whole debate an example of what, in my book *Virtual Geography*, I called a media event. A singular event, of which Darville, Riemer, Gaita and many others are all jointly the authors. It says very clearly at the end of every one of my columns in *The Australian* that I am a lecturer in media studies. It does not say that I am a literary critic or a moral authority. My judgments are of the Darville event, not Darville's aesthetics, moral character or knowledge of history. I say what I think from the particulars of who I am and what I do and I contribute that to common world. Beyond that I may usually remain silent—but certainly not unthinking. By what right does Gaita claim to interpret what I do not say? By what right does he claim to impose on me his fantasies of what I 'must' think?

A good public intellectual is to me someone who brings the particulars of who they are and the particulars of what they can think about into dialogue with others, each in their particularity. What is true and what is just is what emerges out of the common world, where particular contributions have been properly heard and adequately judged. On this view, others in public life are to be valued because they think differently, not in spite of it. As in Spinoza, each is a flawed fragment. But we are capable of thinking beyond the fragments, when our differences are assembled in an adequate relation to each other. Right thinking is difference in dialogue. Or at least that's a minimum requirement. Not all ideas are right. This is not relativism. But all ideas, including wrong ones, exist for a reason and must not just be proven wrong but comprehended in their cause. Even Helen Darville must be comprehended, if she is wrong, or that wrong thinking will not be addressed in its cause but merely suppressed or ignored.

This is a conception of public intellectual practice different from the old notion of the intellectual as the representative of the universal, as someone who embodies the mind of God, the spirit of Man, the will of the Proletariat or the resolve of the Free World. That view sees the intellectual's value not in his difference but in the degree to which he represents the good of the community, and acts indeed as if he were the same as the good of the community.

The common world of public life is, on this view, a combat in which superior representatives must beat out lesser ones. It also implies a hierarchy of forms of knowledge that is determined in advance. There is universal knowledge, which is the same as the good of the community, and below that, mere particulars, and outside of that—what is wrong, and thus excluded. I think Gaita's procedure is something akin to this. He certainly manifests its most common fault—a blank inability to hear what others say when they speak at all differently.

My readers may think what they like of me. But I think I may safely put in the place of Gaita's terrible (in every sense) portrait of me, these few points: I am sceptical of generalisations that go beyond the facts. Such scepticism is part of right thinking, not a licence to think any silly thing; I believe that the facts of the Holocaust require us to return to them, always, and think again; the value

of Helen Darville's transgression lies in the reaffirmation, in its wake, of the historical fact of the Holocaust, and its incitement to writing and speaking about a whole range of contemporary issues.

And finally, right thinking can only proceed from the assumption that we are all capable of thinking, and justice can only be served when each particular way of thought meets its limit in the thought of others, in the common world made of public exchange. If one proceeds from the assumption that the other is thoughtless, one sees the other as something less than one's self, and presumes to judge of this other, and on behalf of all others, as if the way one thinks is adequate for all people and events, without that assumption first being tested. And when one tests this assumption of a superior right to right thinking, one finds it incapable of thinking of us all, in all our differences, as at least potentially thinking, ethical beings. It prejudges. Gaita prejudges. His thought is prejudicial. It is still a valid element in the process of creating the common world of judgment, but it is no substitute for it.

We all have our faults. The ethic of a public life is the mutual honouring of faults.

McKenzie Wark
Sydney, NSW

A trained eye

From David O'Brien

I must express my concern and disgust at the cutbacks in funding, particularly to Skillshares but also to the CES, which the Government has proposed.

The Minister (not personally, but through an assistant in her department) replied to a letter which I sent her and included a whole paragraph on what the previous government had spent on labour market programs. The inference was that that money was wasted. It seems to me a little ironic when all we heard from the then Opposition was that the then government wasn't doing enough to bring down the unemployment numbers.

The cutbacks are, in real terms, a hurtful way of dealing with the very people who are doing something to help the unemployed. Already they have been hampered by things such as 'outcome performance biased funding' and so on.

If the Government were to see how their cuts were affecting people, particularly the less fortunate, a good example would be Brunswick Skillshare which has been forced to 'axe' the Arabic job club, modern office procedures course, building and gardening maintenance, security, and the advanced computer course.

While this may not mean much to a lot of people, it does to those who really need some training. It is rubbish to say people will be employed by small business. Has the government seen how many people are unemployed and how many small businesses there are? Maths is not my strong point but I don't know how so many can be absorbed by so few.

Finally, I believe there was a strong commitment by this Coalition Government during election time, that there would be a reduction in unemployment numbers. That may well be, but the question is how can you hide all those untrained, unskilled, unmotivated people who will not be able to get work. At least in the past these people were in training.

Br David O'Brien SDB
Brunswick, VIC

Still wrong

From R.F. Holt

Paul Collins' reply, in the June issue of *Eureka Street*, to my criticism of his article 'Coming Clean' (March, 1996) is, again, disappointing.

First, he inaccurately tries to label my criticism as an example of some unmentionable spook called 'pre-Vatican II scholastic logic', namely the technique of *reductio ad absurdum*. This is nonsense; in both informal and formal logic the *reductio* is a positive method of argumentation for proving a proposition(s).

I was not arguing anything positively. I merely analysed his argument by first paraphrasing it and then making comment on the reasonableness of its individual premises.

Paul Collins also contends that my paraphrases of his premises were 'simplistic and incomplete'. By definition, any paraphrase must be 'incomplete' in the sense of not repeating the original word-for-word. A paraphrase or summary can, however, be fair and accurate. This is also what is at issue and can easily be evaluated by any *careful* re-reading of the article in question.

Second, Paul Collins discusses the history of celibacy in a quite dogmatic, one-sided way but makes no attempt to answer specifically my questioning of whether it is empirically true that the laity and religious would overwhelmingly support optional celibacy, or whether the very longevity of the institution is not perhaps indicative of something other than error.

Third, he reaffirms his belief that Richard Sipe's US figures can be extrapolated to Australia. Clearly, readers already know what Paul Collins believes in this respect. What would be more interesting is whether the belief is based on fact. Finally, the Pope is again vilified as having 'stymied the renewal of the church'. There is no acknowledgement of any achievements whatsoever and we are to just accept that because Paul Collins believes something, then it is so.

In short, I feel vindicated in having criticised the original article because the author's response was essentially irrelevant and not able to confront and refute a single objection.

R. F. Holt
Ashmore, Qld

Open door

From Maria Faggion

In reference to the 'Line on Women' (*Eureka Street*, December 1995) and 'Do Not Pass Go' (June 1996), and the women-as-priests debate, may I say that the Church is not showing consistency in opposing ordination. Since way back the Church has declared numerous women saints: Joan of Arc, St Catherine of Siena, the two Saints Teresa and Thérèse, and so on.

If women can be declared saints, and saints are of enormous influence on the church, why can't they be priests?

Today, the geography and composition of sex has all been mapped out, named, analysed, and jotted down. It is no longer a mystery. Celibates need no longer be afraid of it.

Life today is not the same as pre-war. We have a very different future to face: if we are not careful, we will all fade into 'virtual reality'.

Education has come a long way in modern times; women have benefited even more than men. So, if we don't have enough men with the required intelligence and Christian charity, let's have a few women to fill the gaps, at least.

A better qualified Priesthood, with some 'creative' persons added (women are more intuitive than men), seems to me to be the way to go.

Much as I love Pope John Paul.

Maria Faggion
Epping, NSW

Shut door

From Dominic V. Crain

Ms Uhr, in her speech from which you printed an edited text ('Do not pass go', *Eureka Street*, June 1996) is remarkable in that here we have a woman wishing to be herself ordained, or have ordained women, in an institution for which she clearly has nothing but absolute contempt.

I can only ask—why?

Putting Catholic tradition to one side, she distorts scriptural facts to suit her own ends, and like many radicals throughout history before her, it is the same old story, if you say it long and loud enough, it becomes plausible.

It seems so very odd that if the Catholic Church in its hierarchical institution is such

an anathema to her, why doesn't she leave it?

From her own words, there is at least one which more suitably fits her needs, in the form of the Anglican community, wherein women may be candidates for ordination.

She desires, apparently, a Catholic Church in which there are no exclusions in qualifying to become an ordained priest.

If she happens to read this note, I would hasten to add that I was married to a woman for more than 28 years, who was a staunch member of the Uniting Church of Australia, and an Elder, until she died in my arms, and a better Christian than she I have yet to meet.

Dominic V. Crain
Bacchus Marsh, VIC

In the dark

From Dr Richard De Angelis, Senior Lecturer in Politics, Flinders University

In recent weeks, the press has highlighted problems of gambling, immigration, and the Expenditure Review Committee and its cuts to government programs, like universities or the ABC. I suggest that all three topics are treated, by much of the media and the public at large, much too narrowly and in isolation from each other and with inadequate background information.

First, why should the Budget's most crucial deliberations be secret? Why should the Finance and Treasury officials be able to draw up lists for cuts, anonymously, without having to be questioned in writing or in person to assess the adequacy of their facts and reasons (as happens in the US Congress)? Why can't Australians have a more transparent Budget process, involving parliament and its scrutiny, instead of having to wait for months like peasants to see what the cabinet lords have decided for us [to put through parliament using party discipline, with little discussion]?

Without going to American lengths, (heaven forbid), there could be a much more informed, responsible, inclusive, and adult debate if all the criteria and facts were on the table—as the National Commission of Audit recommends, ironically, in other respects.

Second, a key economic problem needing to be tackled by the Budget is insufficient 'savings'. Could there be a link between insufficient savings and excessive gambling, which is growing rapidly? Yet governments increasingly encourage the latter, and furthermore they let the profits accrue to the (very) private sector—with no assurances that the public costs of gambling will be met (social problems, inequality, etc.).

If governments at least ran the casinos, then the profits could be used to reduce the deficits and make up some of the lost savings (as governments do with drinking). Don't we need a broader discussion of savings, spending and investment, with no taboos? Shouldn't we also know how the vast amounts of investment capital imported into the country over the last ten years were largely wasted, if we are not to repeat the same mistakes again?

Finally, immigration issues are discussed as if the Government were free to make any decisions it likes and has the ability to enforce its will, as if Australia had no binding international obligations nor any legal or moral duties to those migrants and permanent residents already here.

Australia isn't only a club or a business that one has to beg or pay to join. Migrants are not simply a workforce that can be bribed or forced to live in the periphery. Permanent residents are not simply second-class inhabitants to be deprived of rights of sponsorship, HECS or social security to satisfy the whims of bean counters or chauvinists who want to discriminate. Migration involves chains and networks of people, with friends and relatives and a mind of their own. They have rights too and deserve answers without being labelled as 'lobbies' every time a question is asked.

Australia does have real problems; it will not solve them by narrow debates, in secret, with unrealistic assumptions and little consultation.

Dr Richard De Angelis
Flinders University, SA

Nurture not nature

While throwing out—er, recycling—our Melbourne White Pages, we noticed for the first time the caption on the back cover. Under a photograph of a uniformed woman feeding some possum-like creatures from a plastic container appear the words:

'Melbourne Zoo—ring-tailed lemurs in their natural habitat'.

—from a correspondent.

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GEOFFREY ROBINSON

Abuse and trust

Eureka Street *asked questions of* ***Bishop Geoffrey Robinson*** *about the nature and extent of official, episcopal response to sexual abuse within the Church. This forthright article was his answer.*

MANY CLAIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE against Church personnel are being well addressed. Some of those persons who were not responding well are changing. There is discernible movement in this field. But despite this, there are several problems blocking the way to a humble, honest and compassionate response to claims of sexual abuse by priests and religious across the whole of Australia.

1. The issuing of the Pastoral Statement indicated that the bishops were of one mind to address sexual abuse victims from a pastoral perspective. Does this indicate that the weight given in the past to legal advice, which was partly concerned with saving Church funds, has been reassessed? What are the priorities now?

There are 28 Latin and three Eastern dioceses, a military ordinariate and no fewer than 128 religious institutes in the Catholic Church in Australia. Each is independent of the others in this field, following its own procedures and keeping its own figures. Some are responding to complaints well, others less well, with the result that the Australia-wide response is uneven and there is no one who comes anywhere near possessing all the facts for the country as a whole. Furthermore, many claims are being heard in-house, that is, by the superior of the accused (who may have been a long-standing friend of the accused) and there is no realistic appeal and only some checks and balances. As long as this situation continues to exist, the response of the Australian Church will remain uneven and will probably lack credibility in the eyes of the Catholic people and the wider public. There are ways of overcoming the problem, but most of them involve some voluntary surrender of a measure of independence, and this will not be achieved easily.

Some individuals continue to react to claims of sexual abuse with fear—fear for the good name of the diocese or institute, fear of the victim and of the emotional and financial demands that might be made, fear for the financial assets of the diocese or institute, fear of how many other cases might be there to be uncovered.

Some lawyers are learning that it is far better to reach out to victims with humility, honesty and compassion, but others still give the wrong advice of acting defensively. Some people have still to learn that the abuse itself, terrible though it is, is doing less damage to the Church than is the defensive response of some Church authorities.

In relation to offences against adults, some Church authorities are still dismissing them as consenting relationships. In some places there is still

2. How will the bishops and religious leaders achieve the nine-point plan to address this issue? Is the expertise available within present Church structures to yield the desired outcomes?

an insufficient awareness of the inequality of power between, for example, a priest and a parishioner, and of the professional responsibility of priests and religious to guard the sexual boundaries. This professional responsibility is admitted in the case of a psychiatrist, for example, but can still be denied in the case of a priest or religious. In relation to adults there is still some blaming of the victims. There can also be talk of the victims being difficult or emotional or demanding or inconsistent. It must be remembered that offenders do not usually pick on strong, intelligent and self-reliant people, but on the weak and vulnerable. It should not surprise that these victims later have their problems and the diocese or institute must deal with them as they are.

3. Do the bishops accept that they, as the leaders of the Church, nationally and in dioceses, are responsible for addressing the issue, and coming to terms with the shortcomings of their predecessors?

AN OFFENDER IS PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE for the sexual abuse, but more thought needs to be given to the question of corporate responsibility by the diocese or institute or even the whole Church. Catholic family, Catholic school, seminary/novitiate, priesthood/religious life can be such a complete world that many offenders can claim to be 'creatures' of the Catholic Church, that is, they are what the Church made them, with all their psychosexual immaturity, compulsions, fears and anxieties. Clearly there is a difference between a person who in earlier years was accepted into a seminary at the age of 12 and a late vocation who enters at age 45. But it is not possible for the Church to deny all corporate responsibility in all cases. In the light of this, the response to victims is based on justice as well as compassion.

There is a permanent tension between the needs of victims and the rights and needs of offenders. While this tension will always exist, it is all too easy for a diocese or institute to find that it has in practice spent far more money on lawyers and on offenders (treatment programs, place to live, activity to carry out) than it has

4. Can Catholics be assured that their bishops are now prepared to act as a group in a leadership role within the Australian Church? Where do the leaders of the religious orders stand in regard to this issue?

The Bishops' Plan of Action

1. The Bishops and Leaders of Religious Institutes set up in 1988 a Professional Standards Committee composed of appropriately qualified professionals. The Committee will continue to review and update, in the light of the discussion that has taken place at the Conference, the principles and procedures according to which the Bishops operate.

2. The Professional Standards Committee will take advantage of the opportunity presented by the New South Wales Police Royal Commission to make a submission and will take account of any recommendations made by the Royal Commission.

3. Dioceses and Religious Institutes will be asked to engage professional and independent persons to make suitable case studies of how incidents of sexual abuse have been handled and how well or badly the needs of victims have been met and what might now be done to assist victims.

4. Likewise, Dioceses and Religious Institutes will be asked to make a study of how an incident of sexual abuse has been handled in relation to the community in which it occurred, what lessons might be learned, what effect both the abuse and the Church body's response have had on the community, and what the Church body might now do to assist the community.

5. Meetings will be arranged through the counselling services of the Church in which Bishops and Religious Leaders might meet with persons who have suffered sexual abuse at the hands of a priest or religious and hear directly their stories, hurts, concerns and needs. The counselling services of the Church are to be empowered to arrange such meetings whenever they believe that this would be helpful to both victims and church leaders.

6. A widely representative Committee is to be established to prepare codes of conduct for priests and religious. It will consult widely, and seek the advice of victims of sexual abuse.

7. The Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission and Centacare Sydney will be asked to co-ordinate a study of any factors peculiar to the Catholic Church which might lead to sexual abuse by priests, religious or other church workers. The study will include a review of the relevant literature, interviews with experts and with relevant Catholic bodies, and with those offenders who are willing to assist.

8. In collaboration with the leaders of Religious Institutes, it is proposed that a program be established to treat those clergy and religious who suffer from psycho-sexual disorders. This program will contain a suitable spiritual input.

9. The Professional Standards Committee will employ a full-time Executive Officer to co-ordinate the above projects and to assist it in carrying out this mandate.

on victims. There is an ongoing problem of what to do with offenders after they come out of prison and there are no easy answers. It must be recognised that in serious cases the problem can be the very right of the person to use the title 'Father' or 'Brother'.

I have no desire to defend the media's handling of these cases. Indeed, some quite dishonest things have happened. There is, however, a serious problem when this is the only aspect of the matter that a group of priests or religious can talk about. To limit conversation to a criticism of the media, no matter how justified the criticism may be, is a form of denial of the existence of the problem. After people have finished blaming the media, they must admit that the abuse has happened, that it has been widespread and that we ourselves do not know just how much more remains to be uncovered, especially when we go beyond the current topic of abuse of minors and consider all forms of abuse. It is only when we acknowledge the reality that we can begin to deal with our own sense of shame and humiliation and then have the energy to move on from there and seek the causes of abuse.

THERE IS ALSO A NUMBER of impossible dilemmas facing the Church in this field. I shall here oversimplify, but people with experience in this field will recognise what I say.

If we reach a private agreement with victims, we are 'buying their silence', but if we do not, we are putting them through the trauma of a court case. If we set up an inquiry we are not believing the claimant, but if we believe the claimant without an inquiry, we are judging the accused without right of defence. If we tell a person that we are unable to investigate a complaint and they should go to the police, we are rejecting the complainant and we are guilty of the trauma that the police inquiry causes, but if we investigate the matter ourselves, we are guilty of a cover-up. If we house offenders and give them some activity and treatment, we are putting offenders before victims, but if we do none of these things, we are guilty of putting untreated offenders out on the streets.

I have no magic answers to these dilemmas. It is good to be aware of them and then try to find the best balance in each particular case.

We should be grateful to those victims who have had the courage to reveal the abuse they have suffered, especially those who have revealed the abuse caused by members of our own religious institute or diocese.

There must not be a complacent belief that the time of crisis will pass and, without any special effort on anyone's part, life will then be back to normal again. The revelations have been so shocking that the very word 'normal' will have a different meaning after this. ■

Geoffrey Robinson is an auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of Sydney.

ALAN NICHOLS

Under the roof of the world

FOR MORE THAN TEN YEARS, three million Afghan refugees have languished in refugee camps in Pakistan while civil war rages over their country. For nine months they have received no assistance of any kind from the United Nations. They have been abandoned.

But in recent months the United States has started taking notice, because they fear 'extremist Islamic forces' might win the war. This refers to the Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamic army of religious students who sprang up in the Pakistan camps. The current phase of the war has two factions, joined under President Rabbani in Kabul, opposing the Taliban, which is apparently losing the support of the population under its control because of its discipline: no music, no football, no entertainment of any kind, severe punishment for stealing or immorality.

I had the chance to visit two refugee camps, Khaki and Inchian, while in Pakistan to conduct a course in refugee studies for Christians working with local agencies. In Inchian, north of Mansoureh, we met with the health committee—15 turbanned men who are elders among the refugees. They had very clear views about their homeland: they blame foreign powers entirely for the continuous supply of arms to keep the war going after the Soviet army left. One man said: 'We have a Persian poem which says, "If one part of the body is hurt, the whole body is hurt." We are all brothers—whether Hindu or Muslim or Christian.' I asked whether this saying was not in the Qu'ran also, and they agreed that it was.

The solution to the war in their view is simply to stop the supply of arms. One man said: 'If you don't have lips, you can't say "boom".' We had to work out that what he meant was, 'If you don't have arms, you don't have war.'

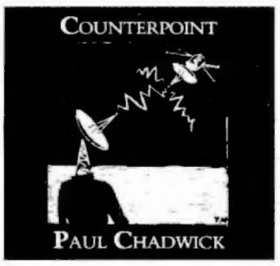
Another member of the health committee said: 'Within one month of foreigners ceasing arms supplies, all these refugees will go home', and he waved his hands to the hills around where 16,000 refugees live. 'Once we go home, then we will work out a government.' The implication was that all the factions operating in Afghanistan and in the refugee camps are part of the natural order of things in Afghanistan, part of the diversity of tribal and ethnic rivalries, and that if left to themselves they would work out a government.

These elders listen to the BBC, and they recognise the complex demands of international agencies for aid in Bosnia and Rwanda. Their plea was for assistance with educating their children. They did not say that only boys are educated, that women and girls have a literacy rate of only nine per cent, and that they are not permitted by culture to leave their immediate home environment, even in the refugee camps.

Meanwhile, it is impressive that Christian agencies such as Church World Service Pakistan are hanging on in these camps, offering at least basic health services, and keeping the camps open to the occasional visitor who can take the message of the refugee leaders out to a wider audience. ■

Alan Nichols is an Anglican priest who works with World Vision Australia.

Above: camp elders at a refugee health committee meeting. Photograph by Brett Parris.



Another Indonesia

IN LATE JUNE, IN THE FIRST days after the Suharto Government had ousted Megawati Sukarnoputri from the leadership of the Indonesia Democratic Party (PDI), I glimpsed a more democratic Indonesia.

Now, as the killing and beating resume, arrests persist, dread revives and officials disinter the communist bogey, it seems impotent to record that brief time and the grim optimists who contributed. But I am no expert witness. Read others for context.

Why were some of us who were to speak at the conference allowed to enter the country while others were denied visits? A host replied sardonically that the wonderful thing about the Government's repression was its inefficiency. The conference theme, 'Open Skies: towards an open society—the challenge of public broadcasting in Asia', was displayed on a small banner outside the hotel venue. This act alone raised comment among some Indonesia watchers.

The co-hosts were the Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists and Indonesia's Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI). The *Jakarta Post* refers to AJI as 'unrecognised', which is not the same as illegal. Membership of AJI has cost some journalists their jobs. The sole government-approved journalists' association attacks AJI. Former AJI chairman, Ahmad Taufik, and two colleagues, including the office boy, were jailed in 1995 for 'insulting the President' under a rule which the Dutch colonialists had used against an earlier generation of Indonesians.

AJI was formed in 1994 after the authorities closed *Tempo*, *De Tik* and *Editor*, publications which were testing the limits on press freedom. Their disclosures of government corruption obviously angered someone. They were silenced when their publishing licences were withdrawn by the Minister of Information, Harmoko. *Tempo* editor, Goenawan Mohamad, unexpectedly won two court challenges against the banning order until the Supreme Court, in conditions of tight security, upheld the Minister's appeal on 13 June.

Lack of judicial independence characterises the Indonesian Government's self-defeating approach. Serious allegations of judicial corruption by a whistleblowing judge were met with a public call from more senior jurists for silence lest the people's confidence in the courts be diminished. When Megawati's lawyers sought to challenge the legality of her removal from the leadership of the PDI by a government-sponsored 'breakaway group', the hearing was postponed on the risible excuse that the chief judge had a toothache.

If they can't go to law where else do people go but the streets?

Given AJI's status, it was an open question whether the three-day conference would be permitted to go ahead. A senior government official cancelled his appearance at the last minute—an ominous sign. But Abdurrahman Wahid ('the Desmond Tutu of Indonesia'), chairman of the 20-million-member Muslim organisation, Nahdlatul Ulema, pointedly took his place on a panel—a good sign. Wahid asked whether it was better to be bold and closed, like *Tempo*, or euphemistic, symbolic, even meek, but still publishing, like *Kompass*.

Although this was a recurring theme among the older participants, you sensed the impatience of the young. To them, a softly, softly approach to criticism and disclosure has shielded corruption. The distorting effects of self-censorship were everywhere. When young journalists from various media outlets arrived to cover the conference and discovered AJI's role as co-host, some were uncertain about whether they could listen, let alone write. Conference participants were reminded that when *Republika*, in a rare interview, asked President Suharto his view of criticism, he had replied: 'I like criticism, as long as it is of quality and polite'. In Indonesia, I'm advised, 'polite' can also mean 'deferential'.

When Megawati's supporters had clashed with riot police the previous week, neither the state broadcaster nor commercial TV had reported the violence. Foreign news crews had been denied their usual access to state TV's facilities to beam their pictures to the world. (Some got around it by flying the footage out for dissemination from, of all places, Singapore.)

One evening at dinner, a German who had grown up in Leipzig nodded towards the TV. The government channel was broadcasting a parade of scouts receiving smiles and wisdom from Suharto. 'Just like East Germany before the Wall came down,' he said. 'So much about this country right now reminds me of that time. All the little lies'.

Confidence that the conference would be unmolested grew with the appearance of Peter Gontra, chief executive of the major commercial TV network, RCTI, licensed in 1987 Bimantara Citra, a public company headed by Suharto's son Bambang Trihatmodjo. Gontha is an impressive man whose years as an executive in American TV were evident in his aggressive charm and a speech that hailed technology and the market as the paths to the future. Question time bought some sharp exchanges, conducted in a mix of Indonesian and English. His theme was 'I don't want to fight and die. I'd rather retreat and come back later'. Yes, he said, freedom of the press was limited, but Indonesia had gone too fast. 'If you go full speed you get riots.'

Why didn't his network cover the riots? Asked a Briton from Article 19, the anti-censorship organisation. Ah, it's a very Javanese culture here, and you have to read between the lines, said Gontha. 'I want to keep my licence. I want to protect my investors, my staff. I don't want to go as fast as you. But I can say today that Indonesia has corruption. In Malaysia, if you say that today they detain you.'

THE NEXT SPEAKER BEGAN, and just as I was thinking that Gontha's performance, and at this particular event, were signs of a greater openness, Gontha interrupted to say his farewells and suppress coverage of his remarks. In a disarmingly low-key way he said: 'I appreciate that the discussion here is for this room and I not be quoted. So let's keep the gentlemen's agreement'. Next morning, the *Jakarta Post* reported only his prepared speech. Some of the local participants assured us that Gontha fully expected his remarks to be circulated, and that he had simply been covering himself. (I do not regard myself as bound by a unilateral, retrospective claim that remarks made in a public forum are off the record.)

Between sessions rumours abounded about the then fresh occupation of PDI headquarters by Megawati supporters. The police would storm it that night. Next day, when they hadn't, the new prediction was that the authorities would wait until the departure of the legion of foreign visitors in Jakarta for an airshow. One

democrat, too experienced to be excited like the young activists, was troubled. He said that among the occupants of PDI HQ were Balinese who had sworn to fight to the death. Perhaps some did. After troops did storm the building on 27 July the official death toll was listed at two. Friends in Indonesia tell me that the unofficial estimate is 47 dead and 120 unaccounted for.

HAVE THE AUSTRALIAN MAINSTREAM media (excepting SBS TV) made the same concerted effort to discover how many members of one of only two legal opposition parties in Indonesia were recently killed by the authorities as they made, say, after China put down its pro-democracy movement in 1989? Is our scrutiny the same as we applied to the Eastern Bloc or Marcos' Philippines?

As the conference ended we learned that a squad of police had arrived at the hotel and were questioning the organisers. The chairman of the final session, a Dane, insisted that since the conference was perfectly legal and the police had not actually entered the room, proceedings would continue. The police were still posted around the lobby as we foreigners were farewelled. Don't worry, said those we were leaving, the police are only here to intimidate us, to remind us that when you go they will still be watching.

Indonesia is changing. It is imperative that Australia engage with all elements of our populous and diverse neighbour, not just those with the most money and guns. Signs of recognition of the need for change are evident, from subtle criticism by former senior army officers to the recent statement by the influential Muslim Intellectuals Society. Its secretary-general, Adi Sasono, an adviser to a Suharto ally, Minister for Science and Technology, Dr Jusuf Habibe, said he was 'sad that many young people are being arrested. I feel sad that they are being accused of being communists when what they really are are angry young men frustrated by the current system'.

Goenawan Mohamad told some of those young people at the Open Skies conference: 'You are the ones who will make the change. Our task is to create the hope that change is possible'. ■

Paul Chadwick is Victorian coordinator of the Communications Law Centre.

For further information see the Article 19 report *Muted Voices: censorship and the broadcast media in Indonesia*, June 1996. *Tempo* is publishing again, this time on the Internet at *http://www.idola.net.id/tem*

The long time trial

THEY CALLED IT A BREAKTHROUGH, a wonder of modern technology. The reporters and commentators even gave it a nickname, the RMIT Superbike. It was going off to Atlanta to collect cycling gold.

Well, as it turned out, the superbikes and their human partners barely had a sniff of gold. But even more of a disappointment was how poorly the story of the development of the superbike was reported. Here was a great tale of Australian ingenuity, yet few of the tellers took the trouble to look behind the technology clichés.

The 'breakthrough' actually took 13 years of work. Far from depending on some inspired 'revolutionary' advance in bicycle technology, the Superbike gained its superior performance through a whole series of small changes. The success of the project was due not to some eccentric boffin with a brilliant idea, but to an experienced engineering team who measured and deduced and altered and measured again. They are still working. There's plenty of improvement to be made for Sydney 2000. (In fact, researchers from the same department at RMIT— Aeronautical Engineering—have also redesigned the tackle for the women's 470 sailing dinghies, and have been working on new types of paddles for the canoeists. But none of that was reported.)

While the bicycle design was not rewarded with gold in Atlanta, it has collected medals for engineering excellence. What's more, the project has resulted in a saleable product. As the bicycles competed in Atlanta, the Premier of Victoria opened a factory in Heidelberg just near the site of the 1956 Olympic Village. For the first time in 20 years, bicycles are being manufactured commercially in Australia. The Superbike and the technology of its production has been patented in 16 countries.

The leader of the bicycle design team, Lachlan Thompson, started tinkering with bicycles in 1983. He thought he could make them go faster by making them 'slipperier'—more aerodynamically sound. Thompson decided to prove his ideas in the early '80s with an assault on the bicycle land-speed record, and his team went very close. Later, he approached the Australian Cycling Federation with proposals for the Seoul Olympics, but the Federation was not ready for him. Modern bicycle racing is like Grand Prix car racing: a partnership between a manufacturer and the competing team is essential. Radical changes can only be made when the sponsorship environment is right. So Thompson and his group had to be content with designing and redesigning the bicycle helmets for Seoul and Barcelona and Atlanta.

But the years of waiting were not wasted. The design team gradually won the confidence of competitors and sponsors alike— and were rewarded in December 1992 with the go-ahead for Atlanta. Among the many advances made in the project, there were two inspired moves—one in research and the other outside it. The first was the recognition that it was impossible to improve the aerodynamics of a bicycle without taking the rider into account. So the design team fashioned polystyrene models of cyclists in lycra suits to be wired up and sit astride bicycle prototypes in a wind tunnel. It may seem absurd, but no other designers in the world thought to do this.

The second moment of inspiration did not seem so inspired at the time. Head cycling coach Charlie Walsh insisted that any changes made to the bicycle had to fit in with the existing technology of the sponsor of the Australian team, the Italian bicycle manufacturer, Campagnolo. In retrospect his decision was a boon. It meant the team concentrated on making really valuable changes to working technology, rather than redesigning the bicycle wholesale from the ground up. The result was a bicycle that could go into production immediately—for a research budget of about $300,000.

In contrast, the RMIT team's counterparts in the US spent about $12 million to produce a specialised bicycle that performs no better than the Australian model. And because the US group had no manufacturing constraints, it could vary anything it liked. The result was a bicycle with few parts that are interchangeable with current technology; all up, a model that appears unlikely to be a commercial proposition in the near future. So, what Australia lost on the competition swings it may well pick up on the commercial roundabout. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

BRETT WRIGHT

Neither fish nor flesh

LLOYD SAMUEL IS ON A WAITING LIST, waiting for a second-hand kidney. He joined the queue in early 1994 after a drug treatment poisoned his kidneys and ended his career as a full-time lecturer in business studies. Today he can just manage three to four hours of tutoring a week, and some voluntary work as treasurer of an association for renal patients. Three times a week he's at Melbourne's Alfred Hospital, connected to a dialysis machine.

'It cuts three half-days out of your week and, with travelling there and back, you are looking at the loss of nearly 18 hours a week,' he says flatly. Without dialysis he can last about three days before fatigue and nausea set in. 'If I try to go to a fourth day, I start to get very ill.'

A strictly-controlled diet, high blood pressure and anaemia are among the daily burdens dialysis places on his willpower and quality of life. 'Living life like this, often waking up nauseated and tired, is no fun. You need a determined attitude to keep at it,' he said.

Lloyd Samuel is one of more than 4,000 Australians on dialysis, a growing group of medical dependents who typically endure a partial or complete loss of good health and work prospects. Less than a quarter are capable of full-time work, the rest work part-time or not at all.

In the past decade, the number of Australians on dialysis has almost doubled. The rapid rise is due, not to an epidemic of kidney disease, but rather the success of medical technology in keeping alive the people who once died. About 1,600 people in Australia are currently waiting for a kidney donation. But the supply of donated organs is meagre—fewer than 500 kidney transplants are performed each year. The rest of the recipients wait on the list, which continues to lengthen, month by month. Despite changes in the laws regulating the procurement of human organs, and the establishment of transplant co-ordinators in hospitals, the donation rate has risen only slightly since the early 1980s.

Despite the difficulties, Lloyd Samuel is among the lucky. He at least can survive indefinitely while waiting for a transplant—it's not a luxury extended to those in the queue for a new liver or heart.

Nevertheless, the direct cost to the community of the shortfall in available kidneys is high. Dialysis for one patient costs $25-30,000 a year, to which must be added the indirect costs associated with illness and unemployment, and some patients are spending five years waiting for a transplant.

Organ transplantation is one of the medical milestones of the late 20th century. Its success is largely due to the development of drugs—beginning with 6-mercaptopurine in the late 1950s—which could suppress the human immune system sufficiently to stop or slow organ rejection. But the very success of transplantation

Above: Martin Pearse, Senior Scientist in Clinical Immunology at St Vincent's, Melbourne, leaning over the DNA profiles that are part of his transgenic experimental research. Photograph: Bill Thomas

has created a demand that is outstripping supply in most Western countries. In 1994, about 40,000 Americans were waiting for an organ transplant, five times the number of people who donated an organ in the US that year. According to the US Institute of Medicine (IOM) in Washington DC, half of those on the waiting lists die before receiving a suitable organ.

Short of a massive shift in public attitudes towards organ procurement, transplant doctors are having to look elsewhere. Some European nations, such as France and Austria, have a 'presumed consent' system requiring you to refuse the use of your organs upon death, but even in these countries, the donor rate is dropping due to lower road tolls and improvements in public health. In many countries, including Australia, doctors need written permission from a donor, and even if that has been obtained, it may be overturned by the donor's family upon death.

The science of genetic engineering now appears to offer a solution—a solution based on creating transgenic animals for use as organ banks—and big business senses a bonanza.

For a moment, consider the monetary value of a second-hand organ. Hospital costs for a kidney transplant typically total about $50,000, of which $10-15,000 is the cost of collecting ('harvesting' is the technical term) and transporting the organ from its donor to the recipient. A transgenic animal kidney, collected on-site from an animal worth maybe a few hundred dollars, would essentially eliminate the harvesting and transport costs, and therefore may be worth up to $15,000. Harvesting a viable heart is more costly, usually about $30,000, because the organ must be collected and transported quickly by plane or helicopter to the operating theatre. An animal heart suitable for transplant may be worth about $30,000.

Given that the annual demand for transplant organs in Western countries is about 80 per million of population, you begin to appreciate why animal-to-human transplantation has got the company directors as excited as the doctors.

But two major questions are unanswered: Are animal-to-human transplants safe? And are they ethical? The researchers themselves are at odds over the risk posed by unknown AIDS-like viruses crossing the species barrier, while the ethicists are only just beginning to ponder the tangled issues of cost-benefit, informed consent and animal welfare. Time is running out for a reasoned debate. In May this year, the Melbourne *Herald-Sun* newspaper alleged in breathless paragraphs that Melbourne's Austin Hospital was 'gearing up' for a pig-to-human liver transplant. The page-one story claimed 'the next patient on the liver transplant waiting list is likely to be hooked up to a pig's liver if a human one is not available'. The Austin denied the story as 'speculative in the extreme,' but there is little doubt such procedures are likely to be attempted in Australia in the next two to five years.

Solving hyperacute rejection

THE HUMAN BODY HAS AN ANCIENT and powerful defence mechanism known as complement, so called because it helps the better-known antibodies and white blood cells which guard against intruders.

Complement comprises more than 30 proteins in the blood which can attach to certain molecules on the surface of a foreign cell, and trigger biochemical reactions which cause lysis—literally rupturing the cell's membrane—or clumping of cells.

When cells and an organ from other species are attacked by the immune system, the cascade of reactions initiated by complement is known as hyperacute rejection. This process quickly leads to the destruction of the foreign cells or the organ. To stop the complement system attacking the body itself, each human cell has proteins called complement regulatory factors (CRFs) on its outside membrane which either prevent complement molecules attaching to the cell, or destroy any complement which manages to attach.

In order to overcome the hyperacute rejection that results from the transplant of pig tissue into a human, genetic scientists are exploring several research strategies. The main strategy is one of counterattack, finding ways to 'shoot down' the complement proteins before they do too much damage. Researchers have succeeded in inserting the human genes which express several CRFs into the genetic makeup of, first, mice and more recently, pigs.

When organs from these transgenic animals are exposed to human blood, they survive for longer periods than organs from unmodified animals. Some recently-published research showed that heart grafts from a transgenic pig could survive in a baboon for up to 30 hours, compared to one hour for normal pig grafts.

A second strategy proving fruitful is akin to the military use of Stealth technology to hide your aircraft from enemy radar. Human blood contains naturally-occurring antibodies to pig cells. About three years ago, researchers found that 80 to 90 per cent of these antibodies located foreign cells by detecting a particular carbohydrate or sugar molecule known as GAL. This sugar occurs in all animals except humans, apes and Old World monkeys.

Several research groups are busy looking for ways to reduce the quantity of GAL in the cells of the donor animal. One approach, which is to inactivate the gene responsible for the offending sugar has been achieved in the mouse, but is not yet possible in the pig. Experiments at St Vincent's using this method have produced transgenic mice with organs that last six to seven times longer in human blood than organs from normal mice.

Some are tackling the problem by adding a human gene into the animal DNA which makes the animal cell produce high levels of a particular human enzyme known as H-transferase. This enzyme competes with the enzyme which makes GAL. By this method, lower levels of GAL ought to be made in each animal cell, thereby making the cell a smaller target for attack by the human immune system.

Other strategies include the introduction of human bone marrow into a baboon so its tissues can 'learn' to mimic some of the immunological features of human tissues, while some researchers have already begun looking beyond the first hurdle of hyperacute rejection at the longer-term rejection problems which must be conquered before xenotransplantation becomes reality.

—Brett Wright

Animal-to-human transplantation, or xenotransplantation, is a practice medical researchers and surgeons have toyed with for decades (one of the first serious attempts was a pig-to-human kidney transplant in 1902). But expectations have remained low due to the immense immunological problems associated with cross-species transplants (see 'Solving hyperacute rejection'). Experiments conducted since the 1960s have shown that non-human organs (usually from chimpanzees and baboons) can function in humans and support life. Before the rise of the dialysis machine, a small number of critically-ill renal patients received kidney transplants from chimpanzees. Of these, the longest survival period was nine months. Perhaps the best known case was the Baby Fae experiment in 1984 in California where a newborn baby with a fatal heart condition received a baboon's heart. She survived for 20 days.

An organ transplanted into a human from an unrelated species is subjected to a massive immunological reaction known as hyperacute rejection, so-called because of the ferocity of the response, compared with the more manageable rejection associated with a organ from another human. Hyperacute rejection is a biochemical blitzkrieg which can destroy a kidney or a liver within minutes or hours. The attack is mediated by a group of proteins in the blood known collectively as complement. If xenotransplantation is ever to become a viable medical practice, the researchers must first learn to repel an attack by complement.

The solution offered by genetic engineers is not to suppress the immune system of the recipient with drugs, as you would with a human-to-human transplant, but to modify the genetic make-up of a donated animal organ to make it last longer inside the human body. The high-profile leader of this research is David White, the research director of Imutran Ltd, a British biotechnology company. In 1992, White's team at Cambridge University developed the world's first transgenic pig by injecting human DNA into a pig embryo. The technique produced a live, otherwise normal pig with organs and blood vessels which express certain human proteins that neutralise complement and make the pig's cells less susceptible to attack by the human immune system. Pigs are the favoured candidate for xenotransplantation because they are more plentiful than baboons or other primates, less likely to attract animal welfare objections, and large enough to yield organs of use in the human body.

Since White's early work, research has proceeded rapidly in Europe, the United States and Australia. Last September, Imutran was acquired by Sandoz, the giant drug manufacturer and maker of Sandimmun and Neoral, two important immunosuppressive drugs. A statement issued by Sandoz at the time said 'results from research with primates receiving genetically-modified pig hearts showed that Imutran had overcome the problem of hyperacute rejection.' Trials in humans are expected to begin later this year.

Sandoz's commitment is no isolated case. In the United States, a $25 million firm, Alexion Pharmaceuticals, made significant advance with the development of a genetically-engineered protein which the company hopes will allow researchers to implant a pig heart into a human. In July last year, Alexion signed a $10 million deal to fund pre-clinical research into xenotransplants with US Surgical, the world's biggest maker of surgical staples. Under the deal, US Surgical bought 10 per cent of Alexion.

Another US firm, the Boston-based DNX Corporation, has also been a leader in the xenotransplant field. In August 1994, DNX entered into a joint venture with Baxter Transplant Holdings, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Baxter Healthcare Corporation, a world giant in health care products, with annual sales of $12 billion in 100 countries. Then in September 1995, at about the same time as the Imutran acquisition, Baxter bought out DNX's share of the joint venture.

These strategic movements and investments are being watched closely around the world. Yet little has been said to date about the impressive research activity underway in Australia, and the commercial interest this research is attracting from overseas. A team of 35 researchers at St Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne have developed a transgenic mouse which expresses human proteins capable of blunting complement, and have begun to reproduce the work in pigs at Bunge Ltd's research piggery in Corowa, NSW. The researchers have also identified a promoter gene which would ensure a high level of protein expression, and a technique for inserting several genes at once into the DNA of the pig. These developments and others by the St Vincent's team are protected by patents or are the subject of patent applications.

Another, smaller team of xenotransplant researchers, based at the Austin Research Institute (ARI) in Melbourne, made headlines in the medical literature in 1993 with the discovery that pig cells contain a particular sugar molecule that 'gives away' a cell's presence to human antibodies. This laid open the possibility that if the gene responsible for the sugar could be knocked out in a transgenic pig, then hyperacute rejection may be averted. Although the 'knock-out approach' is not yet possible in the pig, the ARI team is making progress by finding ways to make pig cells express lower levels of the sugar molecule. They too have patents protecting areas of their research.

Xenotransplant research is also underway at Melbourne's Walter & Eliza Hall Institute, where a team under Dr Tom Mandell is investigating the use of pancreatic islets from animals as a cure for juvenile-onset diabetes. The condition affects 50,000 Australians and is the leading cause of blindness in adults and a major cause of kidney failure.

Overseas interest in the Australian work is well established. The St Vincent's research was initially

funded by Baxter Healthcare Corporation to the tune of $400,000, and the Austin research was conducted until last year under an agreement with Alexion. According to Martin Pearse, a senior scientist at St Vincent's immunology research centre, the researchers have a continuing legal obligation to Baxter. 'If we become commercially successful, they (Baxter) have first right of refusal on anything that comes out of it,' he said. The project is now funded through a $15 million R&D syndicate involving Bresatec, an Adelaide-based biotechnology firm. Bresatec, which is working to market transgenic pigs that grow quickly and produce a high yield of lean meat, recently attracted criticism from the Australian Consumers' Association, which argues that genetically-modified food should be labelled.

ARI's collaboration with Alexion—worth about $100,000—ended with the arrival of US Surgical, but Alexion retains the licence for some of the technology developed here. The ARI is now looking for a new commercial partner.

THE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS here and overseas are a significant concern because they appear to be pushing the pace of research ahead of public debate. Norman Ford, director of the Caroline Chisholm Centre for Health Ethics in Melbourne, says xenotransplant researchers have to demonstrate that the costs of the procedure, financial and personal, are matched by the benefits. 'First, you would be putting people through a lot of hell, and that has to be worth it for the patient. And second, there has to be cost-benefit; don't ask the taxpayer to fund exotic means of keeping people alive just as an ego trip for a few doctors,' he said.

Moreover, almost nothing is reliably known about the risks of infection arising from xenotransplants. Most researchers feel the risk of unknown viruses passing from baboons to humans is substantial, but are more comfortable about using pigs because humans have lived close to pigs for thousands of years. But similar views were held about the likelihood of humans becoming infected by the agent which causes mad cow disease.

What can we meaningfully predict about the behaviour of viruses and other agents in pig tissues that have been genetically engineered to elude the human immune system?

A report by an IOM committee concluded in July 1996 that clinical trials should move forward only after carefully-co-ordinated federal guidelines and other safeguards had been put in place. The report echoed warnings from Britain's influential Nuffield Council on Bioethics in March. The report also examined the problem of informed consent. How can a single patient, especially one desperate to live, responsibly give consent to a procedure which may produce harmful effects, such as the spread of a deadly new virus, for the community at large?

The issue is not a hypothetical one. Late last year, a transplant scientist at the University of Pittsburgh, Suzanne Ildstad, gained approval from the US Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to transplant bone marrow from a baboon into a critically-ill AIDS patient in a last-ditch effort to save his life. The experiment, which apparently failed, was widely criticised by researchers, including some prominent transplant scientists, for being premature and potentially dangerous. Like much of the research going on in xenotransplantation, Ildstad's technique is a patented invention.

In explaining its reasons for approving the experiment, the FDA said there was little risk of the patient infecting others with an unknown virus as 'it's unlikely he will survive long enough'. But a number of virologists have said the FDA's approval of this experiment 'opens up the door' for further experiments and the risk of a deadly virus spreading through the human population.

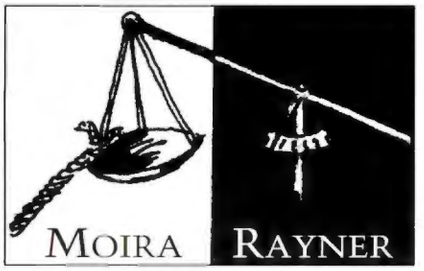
Many scientists, here and overseas, are in favour of regulatory controls above and beyond the in-house ethical review processes followed in hospitals and research institutions. Four Australian States have laws governing in-vitro fertilisation, a well-understood technology adapted from animal husbandry, but there are no laws specifically for the procedures entailed by xenotransplantation. At present, parliaments in Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia stipulate the terms under which a woman may be assisted to conceive, but not the terms under which she might receive a heart from a genetically-modified pig.

The head of the molecular immunogenetics laboratory at the Austin Research Institute, Mauro Sandrin, has begun to organise the formation of a committee to draft guidelines for Australian researchers and gain public support for this research. Sandrin, who believes pig-to-human liver transplants are likely within three years in Australia, says more research is needed on the risks posed by viruses and retroviruses. 'We don't know what the long-term immunological impact of these organs will be, and we need to get some public input,' he said.

'If the public says "We do not want to use animals for this", we would have to abide by that decision.'

At the Alfred Hospital, Lloyd Samuel is preparing for another four-hour session on the dialysis machine. These days he personally inserts the large intake and return lines from the machine into a modified vein, without a local anaesthetic, and settles down to watch television or work on his laptop computer. At 53, he worries if it is too late for a kidney transplant, when it comes, to help him rebuild a career. 'The longer it goes on, the less chance I have of putting it to use.' ■

Brett Wright is a freelance journalist.



Borderline law

THE ONLY REALLY POPULAR IMMIGRANT is a merchant banker or an Olympic athlete. We have little affection for the kind of folk welcomed by Emma Lazarus's verse on New York's Statue of Liberty:

> Give me your tired, your poor,
> Your huddled masses yearning to
> breathe free,
> The wretched refuse of your
> teeming shore.
> Send these, the homeless,
> tempest-tost to me,
> I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

In Australia, of course, we lift the airbridge and send them 'home'—if, to a Timorese, Portugal can be.

Chris Sidoti, imprinting his own stamp on the endangered office of Human Rights Commissioner after Burdekin, had to take legal action when he tried to inform 'boat people' about their rights. Immigration authorities unlawfully intercepted his letters to those detained in our northern camps, which told them the procedures—they have to *ask*—to claim refugee or humanitarian status, and get an advocate. The Department of Immigration does not want legal challenges and other delays or impediments to asylum-seekers' processing. Its response to the Federal Court's critical ruling was, as ever, to get the Minister to change the law, thus depriving the winner of the fruits of victory in litigation, by legislation. The bill, and the policy, duly received the support of Her Majesty's loyal opposition: rights and due process should only be given to those who already know about them.

The rights of asylum seekers are an unpopular cause. Australians believe, or want to believe, that they are being overwhelmed by boat people: in fact just 60 individuals a year, on average, have entered fortress Australia this way in the last six years. Are they, as the immigration authorities believe, greedy, selfish, dirty and dangerous, just 'economic migrants' and queue-jumpers? Who knows, if you never ask? I have never forgotten the story of an escapee from one of Stalin's gulags who walked thousands of kilometres across the Siberian tundra to America's frozen north, to be picked up by American coastguards and, without enquiry or qualm, handed straight back to the Russian police.

I have just returned from the Latvian Human Rights Office. This tiny Baltic nation deals with its asylum-seekers using a cruder but similar approach to our own. The Republic of Latvia, population 2.8 million (half Latvian, 34 per cent ethnic Russian—many Latvians now live in Australia), shares borders with Lithuania, Belarus, Russia, Estonia, and the Baltic Sea. Across that body of polluted water, if asylum-seekers can get there, Scandinavia offers a refuge. With a history of hundreds of years of occupation—by Swedes, Russians and Germans—for 50 years, from 1941, Latvia was a reluctant state of the USSR, only reclaiming its sovereignty during the abortive Russian coup. Now, it has its own parliament, president, and courts, but without a functioning economy, and one of its major banks went bust last year. There is poverty—old women and children beg diffidently at the door of the glittering new, international boutiques, with their security guards. Those who live in hardship feel it is indulgent to be concerned about the rights of the 150 asylum-seekers—56 of them children—who have been detained in a Camp called Olaine on the outskirts of Riga since the beginning of 1995.

In July 1996 I fulfilled a contract to train Latvian Human Rights Office ('HRO') staff how to resolve complaints of human rights abuse through conciliation. On our first day, one of them asked what they should do to 'conciliate' a complaint against a government department, or even the police: I gave a flip and inadequate response. On day two, I revised both the answer and the training program. Svetlana Orehava, a Russian Latvian woman, brought a complaint which brought the HRO into direct conflict with bureaucrats in a country which does not have a tradition of respect for the rule of law.

LATVIA HAS INCORPORATED and made enforceable a raft of international human rights obligations. The HRO is responsible for monitoring and enforcing them. Taking UN conventions into a domestic legal system is more than Australia or the US have ever done. The incentive was not a pure desire for political and individual independence in the post-Soviet era, but because a country which lacks the rule of law and cannot guarantee the protection of rights is a political liability, and this is an obstacle to political and economic investment—and it needs both.

Latvia has not, however, adopted the UN treaties, conventions and guidelines on the treatment of refugees. The Human Rights Office—established in October 1995 with UNDP assistance—had been well aware of claims that Latvian officials were illegally trafficking would-be refugees across borders to Russia and Belarus before Svetlana, Muslim wife of an Iraqi asylum-seeker, Adel Hamza, made her far more serious claims in early July. Her husband, she believes, has been beaten and might lose his life as the result of his treatment by immigration officials. She is afraid.

Adel should be, but isn't, in Olaine, the asylum-seekers' camp. Conditions there are not good—in April 1996 the UN Commissioner on Refugees in the Baltic States expressed serious concern about the well-being of the asylum-seekers detained there since the beginning of 1995. None of their claims to refugee status has been documented, let alone investigated. Camp residents recently wrote direct to Geneva pleading for help, saying that they are being beaten, abused and threatened, and that humanitarian aid for them is misused or stolen. Rumours that Latvian officials intend, or have already been complicit in, forcing their illegal return across borders, were confirmed by an immigration police officer in unguarded remarks to local journalists on 15 July. Access to official records has been denied, and it was not possible to confirm reports, through CARITAS, that some of the Olaine detainees have mysteriously turned up in Moscow, without the knowledge of the Russian authorities. Latvia has no bilateral arrangement with Russia or any neighbours for the return of would-be refugees, and this could damage already strained relations between the two countries over the treatment of ethnic Russians living in Latvia.

Svetlana Orehava's marriage has been short, and difficult. She married Adel in August, 1995, five months after he crossed the border illegally from Russia, hoping to

reach Sweden, he claims, to save himself from being killed for plotting against Saddam. Within a month Adel had been arrested as an illegal immigrant, and detained in a police station, then in Olaine, where he claimed he was maltreated, and Svetlana was prevented from seeing him. No effort was made to document or substantiate his claim to be a genuine refugee. Svetlana claimed that immigration authorities forced her husband to cross the Latvian/Russian border illegally, or be shot: he came back, was caught again and, he claimed, beaten by Latvian officials at the border, and again detained. While he was in detention in Latvia his parents were killed: he escaped and tried to stow away on a ship, to avoid what he described as 'no law' in Latvia and what he feared would be indefinite imprisonment. He was terribly beaten, and again tried to escape. He then 'disappeared.' Svetlana was denied contact with him, because her marriage was not 'official'. According to Svetlana, one day two men wearing sunglasses, who claimed to be immigration officials, went to her mother's home, made her accompany them to Svetlana at her workplace, and insisted that Svetlana persuade her husband and his friends to cross the border. The next day they telephoned her, and put her husband on the line, and she could hear him complaining of pain, panting, breathing hard, and he said that he had received treatment for a heart condition—she believed he had been beaten. She went to the Human Rights Office for help. Then, she said, matters became far, far worse for her husband, other illegal immigrants in Olaine, and herself—and immigration officials told her that if she did not co-operate she would lose her job, and Adel would 'hurt.'

When Human Rights Office investigators visited Olaine that day, they were told that Adel had not been seen for a month, and his whereabouts were unknown. The records were unavailable. After an approach to the Minister it was admitted that he was being held, in a prison elsewhere. HRO lawyers interviewed, briefly, two former Olaine residents whowere obviously injured and said they had been beaten. When, three days later, they went back with an interpreter for a full interview this caused consternation to officials. At Olaine HRO efforts to talk privately to other residents were crudely obstructed: the camp Director and a plain-clothed, self-described 'unofficial representative' of the Immigration Police videotaped every conversation and interfered with efforts to talk to camp residents in private. At the prison, the two HRO lawyers were obstructed, threatened when they refused to inform officials what had been discussed in the interview, then detained because they refused to hand over the tape. Their interpreter was forced to talk to officials alone, and returned intimidated, and refused to complete his duties.

Unnamed detainees in Olaine have since written directly to the United Nations in Geneva, pleading for help. They say that, because of the Human Rights Office investigation, police visited Olaine and tried to force the three men who had spoken to 'journalists' (HRO investigators) to 'go back to Moscow' and, when they refused, closed the doors, used gas and beat them with sticks, breaking one's hand, and took them away by force. Conditions for the remaining detainees have deteriorated since: Svetlana says she was told they would be taken to the border in groups of 4 and forced back.

Latvia does have a system of laws, courts and judges, but it does not have the same tradition of respect for court orders, which Australians used to take for granted, nor for novel statutory powers. Clearly, bureaucrats and police are accustomed to doing as they please. The Human Rights Office, operating under interim legislation, continues to negotiate and bargain with senior bureaucrats and the Ministers on how it may carry out its responsibility to protect the rights of the most vulnerable people: strangers in a strange land.

HRO STAFF WILL NOT DISCUSS the claims made by Svetlana, other detainees or their relatives, though shortly after I left Riga Svetlana went, in desperation, to the local press and told some of this story. Nor would the lawyers in the Human Rights Office wish to be heard to complain about their treatment, but I saw them, and they had been very frightened. They are, in fact, very young, braver than they know, and learning a lot, fast.

In the Human Rights Office, Latvia

How strange it is to return to Australia and find nobody really interested in the moral of this story. These events in a tiny Baltic state which has only a five-year 'history' of representative democracy, have their echo in Australia, with 'democratic' and individualist traditions going back hundreds of years. I do not believe that we beat, starve or dump illegal immigrants at the borders of hostile neighbours. I trust—or I used to trust—that Australian officials would not lie about, or obfuscate, the rights of immigrants and their proper treatment. Yet it would seem that, in the 1990s, immigration authorities of both nations have roughly equivalent respect for the orders of courts, and the role and responsibilities of statutory watchdogs such as Sidoti and the Commonwealth Ombudsman. Has our global village become a global citadel? Advance Fortress Australia? ■

Moira Rayner is a lawyer and freelance journalist. Her e-mail address is: 100252.3247@compuserve.com.

Wests v Illawarra. Photograph by Andrew Stark.

In the outer

The traditional Australian football codes are in a state of flux. ***Jon Greenaway*** *asks if the games are on the way to marketing themselves out of existence.*

FOOTBALL: for a diversion it is very serious business. Consider for a moment that during winter the Melbourne Cricket Ground regularly plays host to crowds which exceed the population of Darwin. Consider also the corporate muscle that Rupert Murdoch has flexed in order to get the jump on Kerry Packer by forming his own rugby league competition. And consider that as the 1996 seasons draw to a close, it is the strength—or rather the monetary value—of our collective passion for watching grown men run into and jump over each other in the pursuit of a bit of inflated leather, that will have fans of either complexion wondering where their game will be, come Autumn 1997.

The AFL will have added one new team in Port Adelaide to the national competition, but it is the ones that may be taken away that concern supporters. The merging of Melbourne's clubs, punctuated by the disappearance of Fitzroy, is seen as the inevitable consequence of the push to nationalise the VFL that began with the relocation of South Melbourne to Sydney in 1982. As *Eureka Street* went to press, the Footscray/North Melbourne merger looked to have stalled but Melbourne/Hawthorn was pressing ahead, despite the efforts of some former greats to remove the Hawks from the equation.

Followers of Rugby League may have harder questions to ponder: such as which competition to follow. Not only are many Sydney heartland clubs facing an uncertain future but there is Rugby League's civil war as well. As the matter stood before News Ltd's plans were delayed by a decision of the Supreme Court in April, eight existing clubs were to be excised from the current competition and two created in Adelaide and Newcastle to form the new competition. An appeal lodged in the federal court by Super League will be heard in coming months. Added to this mixture of uncertainty for the punters is Rugby Union, which having discarded the quaint overtones of amateurism, is picking up fans with an expanded Super 12 regional competition.

Somewhere in the middle of these grandiose designs, supporters will have to accommodate their loyalties—and their simple desire to see their team run around on the weekend. The new reality of being a supporter of one of Australia's two main codes is well described by an advertisement which is currently showing during the telecast of AFL matches. The game's stars hoist a banner which declares 'always for the fans' in the middle of the MCG and through it bursts a gaggle of supporters. The ad closes with the Coca-Cola logo superimposed atop the empty southern stand.

The attendant irony of a corporation instructing us on what football is about would not be lost on those who see the commodification of football as the factor that will determine how fans consume their brand of footy in the future.

Phil Cleary, the former federal member for Wills and captain/coach of Coburg in the VFA (now called the VFL) commentates on the local Victorian competition for ABC TV. He believes that in the national game the role of the terrace as a point of contact between football teams and their supporters has diminished and the role of TV has increased. This has witnessed the diminished role of 'the club' as a social force: 'The club was a central part of the game—the interrelationship between the club and the people and the locality,' he says, 'but now we don't talk about clubs because they're just a collection of footballers who play on mobile stages and are understood more in terms of the television set.'

Cleary feels that this severing of the connections between community and club, occasioned in the first part by social and cultural shift, has also been exacerbated by the move to a national setting for the 'niche' game of Australian Rules. He concedes that the expansion of the competition, particularly the creation of artificial clubs in Western and South Australia, has been necessary

given the increased number of mass spectator sports in the market place. But as a consequence, the parochialism which has carried the game for so long is draining away.

'The old assessments were a bit sentimental in a way—"We're changing the game, it'll never be the same". Well, you can put that to the side because it's not the most important question any more. The more important question is will football *survive*?'

Australian Rules is now played at the elite level in grand stadiums across the country—Football Park, the WACA, the SCG, the Gabba, Waverley and the MCG. The old suburban battlefields, like Essendon's Windy Hill and St Kilda's Moorabbin, with their club lore written in the stands and the outer, have been passed over for the anonymity and greater spectacle of the bigger venue, just as the ANZ and Sydney Football Stadiums preside over League. In Footscray—the heart of Melbourne's West—a muddied, gravel-ridden relic still holds time back a little.

The Western Oval was renamed the Whitten Oval after the death of Footscray legend Ted Whitten last year, and according to historian Chris McConville—who has contributed to a history of the club yet to be published—it is a symbol of a club that has tried to stave off mergers and financial ruin by localising the club in its heartland. It is a tactic which he says has been an economic failure:

'Footscray has colonised other suburbs, [for their support] it's just that unfortunately the other suburbs it colonised are economically bankrupt. It just happens to lie in a very poor area,' he says. A telling move in recognition of this failure, for McConville, was the changing of the ground's name: 'Part of it was the euphoria surrounding the death of Ted Whitten and marking the legend, but it sort of signalled to me an identity with a media figure, rather than an identity with the locality. Footscray expressed through the character of Ted Whitten, rather than the Western Oval.'

McConville says the symbolic value of grounds such as the Whitten Oval are important for maintaining a connection for people who grew up in an area but moved away to live in other suburbs in later life. The homogenisation of the game and its venues will lead to a drop in the number of season tickets purchased, he suspects, as the association between team and supporter becomes less certain.

The rancour that consumed Rugby League prior to this year's season abated

Once upon a Roy-boy

SINCE THIS RAG DEALS WITH THEOLOGY it seems the best forum to tell you about a spiritual journey. My rebirth happened in a small town in the south-west corner of the Kimberleys. One particularly mild winter afternoon—32 degrees Celsius to be precise—I was doing what was required of young male teachers: playing footy. Drafted to the Mowanjum Hawks, a team of bush blackfellas, I found myself on the ball and even though I was told regularly that I was 'big for nuthin', I, not unlike Luc Longley, started to believe I belonged there.

A new team from the next suburb, Fitzroy Crossing, located only about 150 miles up the road had entered the competition and they were making their debut against us. I remember warming up, putting on my guernsey, the bounce of the ball hitting the turf, and then the bounce of my head in a similar manner. It made me remember something a parachutist once said. On being asked if he was ever worried about falling to the earth with an unopened parachute he replied that it wasn't the fall that worried him as much as the sudden stop at the bottom.

I looked up from my sudden stop at the six-foot-four, dark-skinned, muscled mountain staring down at me with ivory teeth flashing. The sun obscured by his head radiated like a halo around and through his loosely curled locks. He stood like an apparition proclaiming the word, well not so much proclaiming as wearing the word. Resplendent in a maroon and blue guernsey with a yellow monogram. I was 5000 miles away but Fitzroy had struck home to me in more ways than one.

I was born into the Fitzroy faith but had turned my back on it, much to the disgust of my pappy. Dad was a Roy-boy born and bred. He got his first punch in the eye in the boxing ring the Fitzroy Marist brothers used to sort out schoolyard squabbles. My return to the Fitzroy faithful made the prodigal son thing look like some kind of Bible story. On my return to Melbourne I was met with exultant enthusiasm, and while no fatted calf was killed, the family dog got a bit excited over the whole commotion and received a roost up the backside when it tried to shag Aunt Zoe's leg.

Since that day I've eaten, drunk, breathed, slept and bathed Fitzroy. I have preached to Carlton supporters with the persistence of a Seventh Day Adventist. Those who have fallen by the wayside and left the club I have dragged back to the river, Baptist style. The wealthy have been subject to my best Jimmy Swaggart and those unaware of the politics of the situation have seen the Bob Santamaria in me. Unfortunately, it has been to no avail: our little Tibet that is the Fitzroy Football Club has fallen prey to the might of the AFL. The Chinese rolled into the monastery down at Two Charles Street Northcote a couple of months ago, appointed their own Dalai Lama, looted the joint, and told us the faith hadn't changed, but just moved to Brisbane.

What! Try telling the Muslims that Mecca isn't in the Holy Lands but located just behind the Ford factory in Campbellfield and you'll get the same response Fitzroy disciples gave.

That brings me back to the point. Where do us Lions go from here? Much has been said and written on the merger-takeover topic. I've heard all about economic rationalism, fiscal policy and the new managerialism. I've read tracts on cultural genocide, social upheaval and Darwinian theory. It's all blah blah. What we've lost is our religious direction. It's becoming more and more clear to me that the whole Fitzroy saga is like the plot of Kung Fu. Just as David Carradine roamed, so the Roys have roamed the suburbs of Melbourne, displaced from our spiritual home. We at Fitzroy need the new AFL chief to appear shaven-headed to assure us grasshoppers that Fitzroy is not dead but reincarnated. That as the Brisbane Lions, Fitzroy can finally walk the rice paper without leaving a mark. That we can be proud of the past and truly look forward to a bright and prosperous future.

But then again, a few of us might wander down and see how the Coburg Lions are going. ■

Simon Egan taught at Derby District High School during 1992-93 before returning to minister to his ailing Fitzroy Football Club. RIP Fitzroy.

somewhat when players and teams settled down to play the game. The existing competition has been saved by the fact that most clubs are internally cohesive with the administration and players siding with one camp or the other. An exception is St George—a club which throughout the history of the game has a tradition of success rivalled only by the now battling South Sydney. The club is split down the middle.

Roy Masters coached the Saints for six years during the '80s after being at Western Suburbs for four. He now writes on the game for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and believes that there is some bitterness down at Kogarah Oval; however, their on-field performance has been far from shabby, as they look a good chance to make the finals. What he would prefer to see is a compromise between Packer and Murdoch so that the game can earn back the good faith of the fans: 'If [the Federal Court] decision falls in favour of Super League to the extent that they can get up next year, then we'll have twin competitions, and eventually the ARL one will die because they won't be funded to the extent that Murdoch will fund Super League.'

His words were echoed soon after we spoke by the almost rueful comments of the chairman of the South Queensland Crushers, Dick Turner, after the ARL refused to bail his club out of financial strife—John Quayle, ARL's chief executive, argued that if they gave money to the Crushers, they'd have to give money to all the clubs which had asked for help. He observed that if his club had sided with Super League, the fiscal malaise which threatens its future would have been avoided.

However Masters suggests that there is still the possibility of all the clubs consolidating under one competition: 'If, on the other hand, they get relatively small gains as a result of the appeal it will create the ground for compromise. There will be some discussion between Packer and Murdoch on that, I'd say.'

THIS HAS ALL HAPPENED in a climate which couldn't be less favourable for Rugby League. The Sydney Swans have a struck a purple patch and possess two of the game's big stars in Tony Lockett and Brownlow medallist Paul Kelly. Professional Rugby Union through the Super 12 concept, which has regional sides in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa playing one another—followed by a test series between those three nations—is packing in the crowds. The falling attendances at League games seemed to have been matched by the numbers that trotted off to see these other spectacles.

Masters believes, however, that whichever way the matter is resolved, the fans will return, if for no other reason than that they are fickle. In an article published in last Spring's *Meanjin*, Masters described the difference in the way Sydneysiders and Melbournians support their teams: 'Melbourne is the city of the painfully durable marriage. Sydney is the city of the one-night stand. So it is with football'.

'It is a very resilient game,' he offers. 'It has been "deaded" about three or four times in the last couple of decades and has always come back.'

He suggests, however, that while traditions will continue at the grass roots level, with the differing class associations of Rugby League and Union (League was brought about in 1910 in large part by the issue of compensation for injured players unable to work. The working man suffered more under the intransigence of the administrators of the day.) With Murdoch's influence there is the potential for a hybrid game to emerge for the benefit of cable TV. Masters believes that this is the express intention of Maurice Lindsay, the head of English Rugby League, who initiated a series of games played under both sets of rules between the Rugby club, Bath, and League

Essendon supporters all. Top left: vocal locals. Above: David and Stephanie Lewis, from Princeton, New Jersey, USA, where they follow Essendon's fortunes on the Internet. Photographs by Bill Thomas.

team, Wigan, earlier in the year.

The suggestion, however, is effusively denied by Peter Fitzsimons, a former Rugby international who is also a sports writer for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He believes that Rugby's star is rising so dramatically that it will go it alone now that the game has turned professional:

'Rugby just doesn't need League's business,' he argues. 'It may be that League will increasingly need Rugby's business. Basically the attitude of Rugby will be that the leaguies can do whatever they want to do.'

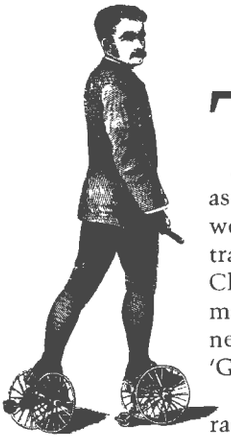
Fitzsimons does concede that there will be greater movement of players between the codes, particularly from League to Union instead of the reverse which was previously the case, but that there will now be open competition between the two codes for the viewing customer. 'The standard of Rugby Union in the Super 12 has given the game an enormous injection', he believes. 'In Australia, Rugby Union has for a very long time been the poor relation of Rugby League... and now things have changed around. It's too early to say that we are the glamour game in town but it's odd that Rugby has come good in the public eye at the precise moment that League is wobbling terribly.'

Perhaps Rugby Union will be a test case for the effect commercialism has on a game, having for so long been protected by amateurism. Apart from the recent World Cups, it only came under greater public scrutiny when inter-Tasman rivalries were excited by a Bledisloe Cup match. As Peter Fitzsimons himself attests there is really no way to tell if it will lose its 'soul', but that within the game the thinking has changed: 'We've got to make this a television spectacle; if it doesn't live on television it doesn't live. It's the name of the game in the modern sporting age.'

While football fans in Sydney or Brisbane might feel their patronage is being auctioned to the highest bidder, in Melbourne, loyalty seems to be more honoured in the breach than the observance.

Markets, TV deals, star quality: these are the bywords of a new era. And as the games are increasingly played around the country and around the world, television underlines their character. No longer part of 'Us v. Them', the channel- surfing sports fans of the future may be too ambivalent to barrack. ■

Jon Greenaway, *Eureka Street*'s assistant editor, learned his sport north of the Murray.



Hold your tickets

THE OFFICIAL RESULTS OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES are based on the sporting assumption that the world is one big level playing field. What if, instead, we were to recognise that being dirt poor (for example) might affect your track times? What if we were to refuse to concede that New Zealand and China have equal populations? These questions began to gnaw at me as, morning after morning, I entered that curious state of altered consciousness known as Channel 7. By the time my infant son had learned to lisp 'Goodonyer Australia', I had begun to look up global statistics.

The official results as they appear in the newspapers are based on a ranking system to delight the heart of Norman May. Success is rated by the number of gold medals, and where those are equal, mere silver is counted, and so on, down to dreary bronze. This system yields a ranking, but what's needed, if other factors are introduced, is a score. The score in the table is calculated by allowing 3 points for a gold medal, 2 for a silver and 1 for a bronze. The second column of figures shows the Gross Domestic Product, expressed as a percentage of the United States figure. At $25,850 for every soul within its borders, the US is the world's richest country, and it seems fair to assume that this constitutes some kind of advantage. The next column shows population, and again, the more people you have (other things being equal) the more Steve Moneghettis are out there pounding the streets. The final score was arrived at by this formula:

Score, multiplied by 100, divided by %US GDP per capita, divided by population.

The results will not be popular down at the stock exchange. *Cuba!* The trade embargo is clearly not working —or then again maybe it is, because the resultant poverty boosts the figures nicely. Out of the top ten countries, seven are present or past Marxist states, and others like them: Ukraine, Poland and Russia, all come in much higher than the US. Who won the Cold War, anyway? These results will fortify John Major in his campaign for an Institute of Sport because they strongly suggest that the winning combination is government dollars plus dragooning.

Then again there's Jamaica—and Kenya—and Ethiopia. Each of these provokes a different logic. I stop short of saying the last shall be first—no set of numbers is that beautiful. No, the figures are not influenced by Marxist thought: they actually come from *The World Factbook 1995*, a publication of the CIA (Available on the Net at http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/95fact/index.html.)

Australia at 17th still looks pretty good, although outperformed by New Zealand, which is a strain on the ANZAC spirit, and even Ireland, which is surely some kind of joke? Britain's popular press was carrying on about losing to Kazakhstan; it should cheer them up to note that they crossed the line 38th in a tight-knit bunch with other big losers like China, (35) the US (36) and Japan (39).

It won't last. In four years' time, the sporting machines of the former Soviet states will have fallen into disrepair: the velodromes will be pinball parlours. That can only mean that the wildcard will prevail, so get your money on outsiders. At the closing ceremony in Atlanta, IOC President Samaranch called upon the youth of the world to assemble in Sydney in the year 2000. Are you listening, Moldova?

Country	Medal Score	% US GDP (per capita)*	Population (000,000)*	Final Score
1. Cuba	51	4.87	10.9	96.0
2. Jamaica	11	11.80	2.6	35.9
3. Bulgaria	28	14.82	8.8	21.5
4. Kenya	14	4.53	28.8	16.9
5. Romania	35	10.79	23.2	14.0
6. Hungary	30	22.05	10.3	13.2
7. North Korea	10	3.59	23.5	11.9
8. Belarus	23	19.84	10.4	11.1
9. Kazakhstan	21	12.38	17.4	9.7
10. Ethiopia	7	1.47	56.0	8.5
11. Czech Republic	22	28.43	10.4	7.4
12. Ukraine	43	12.65	51.9	6.5
13. New Zealand	14	64.37	3.4	6.4
14. Greece	20	34.31	10.6	5.5
15. Ireland	10	54.39	3.5	5.3
16. Russia	136	18.64	149.9	4.8
17. Australia	68	80.15	18.3	4.6
18. Denmark	15	76.83	5.2	3.8
19. Norway	13	85.76	4.3	3.5
20. Finland	10	62.44	5.1	3.1

* Calculated from *The World Factbook 1995*

Bruce Williams' day job is as Head of the School of Arts and Media, La Trobe University.

J.S. GREGORY

White Australia, Asia and *'la longue durée'*

IN AN SBS *INSIGHT* PROGRAM EXAMINING MULTICULTURAL and immigration issues (February 29) the journalist and broadcaster Terry Lane stated: 'We are not part of Asia except geographically. Culturally we are this utterly impossible experiment in the relocation of European culture as far as you can get from the metropolitan centre of that culture, and I like that. I think it has been good and I'd like to keep it that way'. Earlier in the program he described multiculturalism as 'the fad of the late twentieth century', and asserted his preference for the melting-pot ideal as 'the ultimate hospitable belief which says in effect to all immigrants "you are welcome, but please leave your guns and arguments at the border"'. The great danger in multicultural policies, he maintained, was that they would make this country an 'ungovernable patchwork quilt of tribes—everyone bleeding for something or other'.

The program had begun by drawing attention to a 1994 poll of one thousand voters of whom over 60 per cent agreed with the proposition that migrants should live and behave 'like the majority'. Only 35 per cent agreed with the alternative proposition that we should 'welcome differences'. The main point made, though, was that even those of migrant origin in the poll (number not specified) showed the same preferences, 57 per cent and 38.6 per cent respectively. It was suggested that the poll seemed to show that although ethnic lobby groups push strongly for multicultural policies, the majority of migrants actually prefer assimilation, at least as the ultimate objective. The Federal member for Kalgoorlie, Graeme Campbell, appeared briefly to emphasise this and to reject charges of racism against critics of current multicultural and immigrant policies. Another newspaper columnist and a former Federal minister, Barry Cohen, said 'I don't see why it is racist to feel comfortable living, enjoying and being proud of the culture I was brought up in. I feel more comfortable in it. And the Chinese don't play cricket—at least not yet!' Both Lane and Cohen said they supported closer ties with Asia, but rejected the idea that Australia can or should become an Asian country, as of course did Graeme Campbell. These views were presented in separate interviews, not in a face-to-face discussion.

The odd man out was Phillip Adams, who warned us that 'the simple fact is that China is about to resume its ancient dominance of the world ... It will go into the next century the way it used to be, as the dominant political fact on earth. Anyone who pretends that isn't happening is crazy. And we are in a potentially perilous situation if white Australia does not recognise that the world is changing and that our place in it has to be rethought as a consequence'. The program went on to ask briefly whether discussion of immigration and multicultural issues was being curbed by

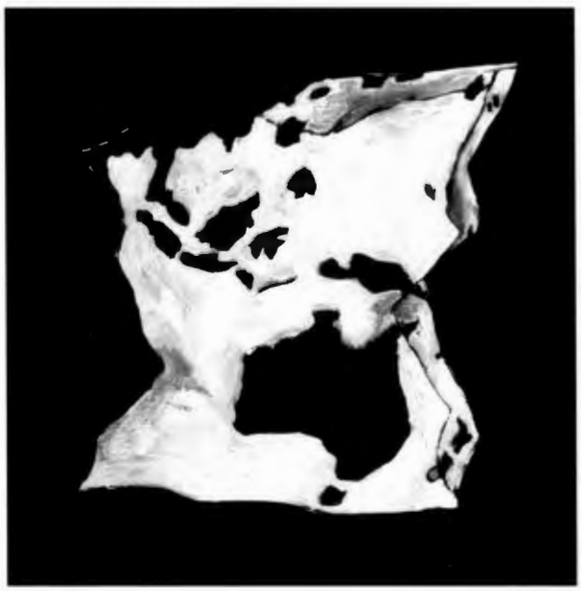
charges of racism. 'It's an important question we are not facing up to in this country', Cohen complained, 'because there's a fear that the minute you question immigration you are *ipso facto* a racist. And that's not fair'. Adams did not think that the debate was being seriously silenced, but thought it should be cautious. 'We live in difficult times and don't want to inflame sensibilities', he rather uncharacteristically suggested. Cohen also raised the issue of the optimum population for Australia, and expressed a fear that the environment would be seriously affected by a high intake of migrants.

It was, like so many SBS programs, well worth looking at, though inconclusive and open-ended, in the end perhaps not conveying much more than some strong views. Although, unfortunately, I inadvertently wiped the tape I made of it, and so could not check my source as thoroughly as I would like, I have continued to mull over the program. Only a few days earlier I had had a short opinion piece published in the Melbourne *Age* questioning, on the basis partly of my personal experience, the fear of the 'Asianisation' of Australia expressed by some candidates in the Federal election. In that article I suggested that some of the main forces changing the culture in which I, like Barry Cohen, was brought up, were of white, Anglo-Celtic origin, certainly not Asian, and that some Asian influences on our culture were as likely to be positive as problematic.

Yet despite having used such arguments, I could sympathise with much of what Lane and Cohen said, agreeing that we should try not to allow multicultural policies and pressures to turn us into some kind of patchwork society; that those concerned about immigration policies are not overtly racist (though I think some, even of the most responsible ones among them, are effectively so); that the transplantation of a European culture to this remote part of the world was a remarkable achievement, whatever the rough justice it involved for some, and that it would indeed be nice for my grandchildren if we could, as Lane said, 'keep it that way'.

BUT AS A HISTORIAN FOND OF LONG PERSPECTIVES, especially Chinese and European, I found myself having to agree to some extent with Phillip Adam's emphasis, even though his sweeping generalisations about China's 'ancient dominance of the world' made me wince. Do we not, as he asserted, have to rethink our place in a radically changing world? Can we really expect (as distinct from hope) to 'keep it that way'? Can we really limit the population on this large island continent at some level we white Australians decide is comfortable for us?

If we are ready to look at such questions, the concepts of the great French historian, Fernand Braudel, derived from his study of the Mediterranean region, seem to be worth some consideration, difficult though it is to translate them to this part of the world. Braudel made a distinction between the long-lasting 'structures' of a region, the shorter but not brief 'conjunctures', and the passing events; between geographical time, social time and individual time; between 'submerged history, almost silent and always discreet', and 'conspicuous history, which holds our attention by its continual and dramatic changes'. In historical analysis, he concluded, the individual is 'imprisoned within a destiny in which he himself has little hand, fixed in a landscape in which the infinite perspectives of the long term stretch into the distance both behind him and before ... the long run wins in the end.' (*The Mediterranean*) What is 'the long run', *la longue durée*, likely to mean for Australia, white, black or whatever, given its geography and history, the structures within which it must operate?



The eminent Indian economic historian K.N. Chaudhuri has applied Braudelian insights to his study, *Asia Before Europe*. How might Australia, specifically white Australia, fit into the scenario of Asia *after* Europe? Is it part of the structures of that wide region, or a separate structure, or just a fairly substantial conjuncture which will, in the end, be overtaken by geographical time? What relevance for those white Australians like Terry Lane, desirous to keep Australia European in culture, does this kind of conclusion have: 'To man as an individual no feat of exploration, no odyssey is impossible ...(but)... mass removal by a group or society is more difficult. A civilisation cannot simply transplant itself bag and baggage ... For at bottom a civilisation is attached to a distinct geographical area, and this is one of the indispensable elements of its composition ... a civilisation exists fundamentally in a geographical area which has been structured by men and history. That is why there are cultural frontiers and cultural zones of amazing permanence: all the cross fertilisation in the world will not alter them'. Has white Australia, transplanted two centuries ago from its metropolitan base, made this continent its own distinct geographical area (*pace* the displaced indigenes) and created on it a structured

civilisation capable of withstanding the mounting presence and pressure of Asia after Europe? Can white Australia seek cross fertilisation, economic and other, from this modern, aware Asia and not be fundamentally altered by it? The answers to such large, even over-large, questions are blowing in the wind, but it is perhaps worth flying a kite or two in search of them.

A little reflection on what we mean by Asia might be as well at this point. The word, and therefore the concept, is not at all Asian in origin. K.N. Chaudhuri observes that there was no equivalent word in any Asian language, though of course it has entered them now. But in Chinese, for example, the word for Asia is not, like most place names in that language, a descriptive two-character compound (as in Beijing=northern capital; Shantung=east of the mountain; Hong Kong=fragrant harbour), but a construct of three characters which, when pronounced in standard Chinese, produces a sound approximating to the English 'Asia'. It is a compound which would have thoroughly confused Confucius, both linguistically and conceptually. Modern Asians are, of course, not confused by the concept, and some now use it frequently, indeed glibly, to assert the distinctiveness of their values and cultures to keep undesirables like Australians at arm's length. But in doing so they are behaving like Europeans, or at least using their terminology and concepts.

For Europeans the term was first used by Greeks and Romans to name quite limited regions, but came to be extended to apply generally to the world east of Suez. It helped, as did later saying like 'the inscrutable East', to make some kind of unified sense of that world. Whether or not any such distinct Asian entity actually existed was secondary to the European need to feel there was one. Whatever it may be, it is certainly very diverse, a good deal more so than its putative opposite, Europe, which is, heaven knows, diverse enough. But Europe, or a great part of it, at least shares a good stretch of history from Roman times, and also a dominant religious tradition which for quite

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a few centuries, made it not total nonsense to call the whole region Christendom. One cannot say the same for Asia, despite the wide spread of Buddhism throughout the region. The religious, cultural, linguistic and ethnic differences between, say, India and China, as well as other major players in the Asian league, seem far greater than the word 'Europe' conjures up. Whether used by Europeans or Asians, the term 'Asia' is a catch-all word, very indefinite in both its content and its geographic extent. Does it extend west to the Middle East and to what Europeans call Asia Minor, as well as south to Australia?

WHITE SETTLEMENT IN AUSTRALIA BEGAN just over two hundred years ago, when European civilisation, with the British as its vanguard, was pushing forward very firmly and extensively in Asia. Various European powers had been present in some force in Asia since the sixteenth century, but the later decades of the eighteenth saw the British make a great leap forward by laying the foundations of their extensive empire on the Indian subcontinent and knocking very firmly, though at first politely, on China's door to urge that 'the central kingdom' be more widely opened to the outside world. Apart from these two most populous civilisations of Asia, its other regions, from the various smaller states of South East Asia to the hermit kingdoms of the Far East, Japan and Korea, either had already or were soon to feel the force of the Western presence.

From 1788 on the indigenous tribal peoples of Australia also felt it. Had they been capable of putting together such a document they would no doubt have echoed the sentiments contained on the Chinese emperor's condescending dismissal in 1793 of the British and their urgings—'We have never valued ingenious articles, nor do we have the slightest need, of your country's manufactures'. But neither great civilisations nor non-literate hunter-gatherers could escape the force of the expansion of Europe. Within a few decades China had been obliged to begin to open its doors as the Europeans wished; British rule, direct or indirect, extended over most of India; and British settlement, convict or free, spread over the Australian continent.

Just how far the British decision to send the First Fleet to eastern Australia was prompted by its contemporaneous push into Asia is a question historians debate but need not detain us here. It

seems clear that British settlement in Australia was conceived at least in part as 'a halfway house on the new trade routes' to Asia, as Geoffrey Blainey has put it, by 'harnessing the westerlies across the Southern Indian Ocean, rounding Tasmania and then sailing past Norfolk Island and the east of Papua and New Guinea. This seems a strange way of sailing from the Thames to Canton. In time of war, however, it had advantages, for it avoided the narrow Indonesian straits where French and Dutch frigates could lie in wait' (*A Land Half Won*). Such strategic considerations soon faded however, and Asia did not become in any sustained or positive way a focus for early white Australian energies, interest or enterprise, as it surely would have done had such strategies remained relevant into the nineteenth century.

THROUGHOUT THAT CENTURY, AND WELL INTO THE TWENTIETH, white Australia could avert its eyes from Asia and look almost exclusively towards Europe and the motherland. Nevertheless, to some extent Asia remained always in the consciousness. Misguided convicts escaping from the first settlement are said to have imagined they could find some road out of Botany Bay to it, while the gold rush years stimulated the fear that large numbers of Asians might find their own roads to Botany Bay and beyond, prompting severely restrictive immigration policies from white Australia. Asia was always there, if only remotely, uncertainly. Things are now a good deal changed, though not entirely. Over-optimistic businessmen may substitute for the misguided convicts, and Botany Bay airport provides too easy a road into Australia from Asia in the view of many white Australians. But the European-based empires that once provided a protective bulwark for white Australia are gone, and the peoples of Asia now assert themselves in the world with a good deal of confidence and success. Europe and the West remain tremendously powerful and influential, but the world

What is 'the long run', la longue durée, *likely to mean for Australia, white, black or whatever, given its geography and history, the structures within which it must operate?*

does seem to have moved back towards something like the old global balance, when no civilisation dominated the whole, as was the case during most of white Australia's history. There may well be a down-side to this evening-out of world power if the predictions of the American political scientist, S.P. Huntington, prove accurate, and a clash of civilisations becomes the dominant feature of international politics. Better perhaps a dominant Europe than a rampant Islam or China. But there can be no doubt that the place and power of the West in the next century will be very different from what it was during the first two centuries of white settlement in Australia.

All this is obvious enough, though often obscured in the hurly-burly of day-to-day politics, in the detail of Braudel's 'conspicuous history'. White Australians are probably rather more aware than some, of the sweep of this long wave of history, however, because we are more out on a geographical limb than most other white societies. South Africa is another even more exposed, but we are well aware, and I think to some degree always have been, that our European-derived culture does not match our geography very well. Hence the somewhat frenetic attempts of some to assert that we are part of Asia. We have so far coped with this imbalance by a combination of good fortune and a measure of good sense and flexibility.

The good fortune lies in the fact first that, though relatively close to the main lands of Asia we are not all that close, and have well-defined frontiers. Second, for most of our history no Asian country, save one, ever had a capacity to challenge our security seriously. When for a time Japan did so, great and powerful friends were at hand to help defend us. We were united in the face of that threat, as we were in the creation and implementation of the policies we felt we needed to keep Australia white.

HOWEVER, THE WAR CHANGED OUR PERCEPTION of the wider world radically and we moved away from our narrowly Anglo-Celtic traditions towards what is now called a multicultural society, a society that since the seventies has even admitted a significant number of migrants from Asia to its citizenship. Despite arguments over the proper level and best mix of our migrant intake, plus concerns that too great a mix will produce a society lacking cohesion and any shared cultural

focus, over the past half-century Anglo-Celtic white Australia has shown a degree of flexibility and, despite some pockets of protest, of general tolerance and acceptance toward others, including Asians, of which it has reason to be proud.

However, there appear to be limits to this tolerance. In recent years the increased numbers of Asians settling among us, whether legally or illegally, and in whatever capacities, have created some resentments about such specifics as jobs and tertiary education places, as well as more general, vaguer fears about the possible undermining or 'smothering' of our culture and way of life. This has prompted demands for tighter restrictions on our only-recently liberalised immigration rules, especially towards Asian migrants. No one, so far as I am aware, is suggesting a return to the old White Australia policy, which signifies a realistic recognition that the world, including the Australia of the late twentieth century, is not that of the nineteenth or early twentieth. On that basis the advocates of more restricted policies, even when they direct their arguments mainly towards the Asian intake can, reasonably enough, deny any charge of racism. They are not racist in any crude, graffiti-scrawling sense, and no doubt some of their best friends are Asian. But they do insist that we have moved far enough away from the old, crudely racist-based policies; that if we move further our society may lose any cohesive cultural core.

To call for a reduced program of migration overall is one thing, and this may be Terry Lane's position as it was that expressed by Barry Cohen on the SBS program. But to call, as some appear to do, for reductions aimed against particular, though ill-defined, groups is quite another. Such a policy would mark a significant step backwards towards an irrecoverable past, and would not be easily sustainable, either nationally or internationally. It seems unlikely that white Australia could now be united behind such a policy as it once was behind the old, overtly racist, restrictive policies, while among the now much more aware-of-the-world and mobile Asians, it would be likely to stimulate an already allegedly high rate of illegal migration, not to mention other possible reactions. White Australia would then need to deploy an ever-larger proportion of its resources to policing its borders and to seeking out and deporting illegals.

A policy aimed at restricting all immigration to stabilise our population at a level deemed acceptable on environmental or other grounds by some white Australians would also surely have some difficulty in winning general acceptance, both within and beyond the country. Without attempting to comment on the morality of, say, 25 or even 50 million Australians deciding to keep the population at that level, (by one or two-child family policies as well as immigration controls?) I quote this passage from an essay by a recent cultural counsellor at the Australian embassy in Peking: 'By virtue of its size, sparse population and, apparently, abundantly exportable natural resources and primary products (wool and iron ore are the best known in China), Australia is seen as a rich land given rather unfairly to a small group of whites rendered lazy, if not slow and stupid, by the ease of their circumstances. Australia is felt not only to need people, but poses a challenge to a Chinese sense of proletarian justice, or at least a sense of what the Chinese could put to good use' (Nicholas Jose, *Chinese Whispers*). Whether or not Phillip Adams is right about China going into the next century as 'the dominant political fact on earth', there can be little doubt that an attempt to keep this continent quite sparsely populated by heavily restrictive immigration policies, especially of a discriminatory kind, would provoke some hostility and would sit oddly with any other policies directed towards close economic and diplomatic ties with Asia.

Some of the basic elements of that culture and tradition, such as our Christian ethic and our democratic institutions, are currently under far more pressure from some of our Anglo-Celtic leaders than from any Asian element in our population.

White Australia may well decide to try to pursue such policies, but they would seem to require creating, in the not very long run, some kind of fortress Australia. Given the ongoing globalisation of the world, apparent in the rapidly increasing mobility of financial resources, information and ideas of all kinds, as well as of people, the capacity of nation states to control in detail many important developments within their borders, and across them, is eroding. We are witnessing the demise of the nation state, according to some theorists. Borders of all kinds are under increasing stress, especially those of wealthy Western societies. Australia is fortunate in having no permeable land frontier of the kind the US has with Mexico, but we too are wealthy, technologically advanced, offering attractive possibilities, while our frontiers, though difficult of access, are long. Whether

any Asian communities are likely to mount the kind of pressures Mexicans currently do on the US is impossible to predict with certainty, and would depend on many developments far beyond our influence, but given the balance, or rather the imbalance, of factors involved—of space, wealth, numbers—the possibility seems real. Immigration, the control of our frontiers and entry points, is certainly likely to be a long-term problem for this society.

A desire to preserve and nourish the main tap-roots of our inherited culture is a perfectly reasonable national aspiration. But white Australians need to beware of seeing that culture as some kind of immanent, ark-of-the-covenant thing, that only those of a particular line of descent can be trusted to preserve, nourish and enrich.

Of course there is a connection between race and culture, but it is accidental, not biological or innate. We should not underestimate the capacity of humankind to undertake odysseys, to cross cultural frontiers, fuse values and share standards. Why otherwise make an issue of human rights on the international stage? Of course a rapid and large infusion of new arrivals from a single source would be threatening, but we are not faced with that kind of situation. 'Asia' is not a single source thrusting a unified alternative culture at us. Politicians, commentators and opinion makers who argue as if this is the case, and who generally present a defensive, nostalgic and inward-looking cultural ideal for this society as it enters the 21st century, are surely pointing us away from the future that actually lies ahead. Of course no-one, historian or other, can predict with any certainty what that future will be, but some basic realities of the kind Braudel emphasises—the external pressures of geography, world politics and economics; the internal pressures of shifting perceptions, values and social structure—mean that Australian society must anticipate that it will become ethnically much less predominantly white/European than it has been over the past two centuries.

What this will mean culturally is an open question, but it is very unlikely to mean, within any kind of foreseeable future, the 'smothering' or subversion of our inherited culture, insofar as we can define what that still is. Some of the basic elements of that culture and tradition, such as our Christian ethic and our democratic institutions, are currently under far more pressure from some of our Anglo-Celtic leaders than from any Asian element in our population. Asian influences will no doubt, over time, change that culture in ways both desirable and not so desirable, but white Australia has been doing that itself since first settlement.

A FLEXIBLE, NON-DISCRIMINATORY MIGRATION POLICY remains the most realistic and defensible path, both morally and practically, for white Australia to follow. Multicultural policies that tend to entrench and emphasise group difference should certainly be rejected by governments. In this regard the education policies of the new Federal government, commented on by Judith Brett recently (*Age*, 7 June), are disturbing. The melting-pot ideal that Lane argues for is an honourable one, but we need to recognise that the old Anglo-Celtic core will have to melt a little as well as the new additives. To shift the metaphor, our objective should be to create a tapestry, not a patchwork quilt. The pattern of that tapestry will no doubt take on an increasingly Asian coloration over the next century or so, but need not be the less attractive for that. The Anglo-Celtic strands in it will certainly not disappear, for our inherited culture, though less dominant in the world than earlier in our history, remains very strong. Its distinctive geography and history provides white Australia with a structure that should enable it to preserve the main strengths of its ever-changing culture well into the future, even if we maintain our current, non-discriminatory immigration policies.

But it is also a structure closely linked, by virtue of the global forces of geography, economics and Braudel's 'submerged history', to the large, long-lasting structures of Asia. Ultimately these may determine the nature of civilisation in this part of the world. But that, surely, is for the *très longue durée.*

Meanwhile we might, to revert to one of Barry Cohen's worries noted at the beginning of this essay, try encouraging the Chinese among us to take up cricket. They may develop as much aptitude and respect for that icon of Anglo (not so much Celtic) culture as some other Asians have!■

J.S. Gregory has taught East Asian history at Melbourne and La Trobe Universities and has also published a study of the secularisation of the state in Victoria.

The Italian job

When asked, as he frequently is, whether he will be the next Pope, ***Carlo Maria Martini*** *SJ, Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, responds by saying that his great hope is to spend his remaining years in Jerusalem.* **Geraldine Doogue**, *interviewing the Cardinal during his recent visit to Australia, focused on issues closer to home.*

Handling the press: Cardinal Martini in Melbourne. Translating questions from left field: Fr Mark Coleridge. Photograph by John Casamento.

GERALDINE DOOGUE: *We might focus on what works in the Church rather than what doesn't work.*

Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini: I think it's a very good question. I take this as a principle: whenever there is a problem or some lamentation or something wrong, I also ask myself what does work. We always have to start from the certainty that the Holy Spirit is doing something in the church.

But personally, what really works for me in the church? First of all, the scripture. The church gives to me the scripture from which I derive all my praying and believing, all my spiritual life. The scriptures are a great strength for the entire church. I experience this continually with young people.

The second thing which works is the Eucharist. When we have this, we have everything. When we put in the centre the scripture and the Eucharist, we see that church can do an immense good for people.

The third thing which works for me in the church is a sense of communion. Of course, a communion which is made of human defects, divisions—they were already in the first church. We read of them in the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles of St Paul. But all in all there is such a great communion and unity which is a continuous miracle. The fact that you may go to another place and be received as somebody of the family and be perfectly at ease is something unique in the history of the world.

Another thing which works really in the church is saintly life, not only in the saints of the past, but the saints in the present. We are very much closed to examples of sanctity because we are blinded by some examples of wicked conduct. I'm sure that if we look at our communities—I think of many families, many sick people I meet on pastoral visitations who are really saintly people, who are masters of spiritual expression.

Sanctity doesn't get a great press in Australia. It's not something which makes the front pages. The church sometimes feels that it has less to say to modern society than it once did. What do you think is the church's contribution? What is the language it may use in order to get heard?

We should not confuse the real mind of people with what is on the front page of the paper. We must examine the media thoroughly. There is much good in it but also a certain inability to cope with the real mind of the people.

What contribution does the church have to make to modern society? How can it speak in a way that people hear?

I think, paradoxically that the church should not be too much worried about what modern society thinks. What is modern society? It is something theoretical. We have to deal with real people. Real people have great despair, anger, desires, loneliness, emptiness of heart. The church can give them very much. I think I am actually very fortunate, lucky to have met so many people—unbelievers also—who long for a meaning in life. Maybe they don't come to church very easily. They have prejudices against the church but they want something meaningful for their life. I said yesterday to a journalist that I regularly meet people who are far from the church.

WHEN I INVITE UNBELIEVERS to speak about the reasons why they don't believe, they come in thousands. We have very good conversations. I always say to them I don't mind whether you believe or not, I just ask that you are thinking. If you want to think, you are welcome. Many people want to think and want to have reason for going forward in life with some hope.

How would you compare and contrast the struggle to believe of the modern generation with, say, your generation?

My generation received the traditional beliefs and accepted them superficially. It was not driven to strong decision. Now we are in a generation where everybody thinks they can do whatever they want and discover the beauty and the danger of freedom. He or she discovers that it is necessary to take decisions in life and to have values and orientations.

I remember in my generation, for example, men didn't listen to the sermon. They stayed out and when the sermon was finished they went back into the church. This is absolutely unthinkable today. There are fewer people, but those who go want to go, and they want a good sermon. They are very exacting. They really want the gospel explained.

I say that Christianity is the most difficult reading. You have in the gospels different readings for one text. Easy readings are false readings. Difficult readings are really the readings which explain all the problems. We have the difficult readings of life. Easy readings are easy to accept but don't really explain life and death. This is what the church has to offer.

Are you saying that the church embraces society or is at odds with it. You asked 'what is modern society?' Where then is the church to pitch itself?

I am a bit uneasy in speaking of church and society as of two geometrical things which have to be interconnected or opposite. I speak of people and ideas. I would speak of philosophers, thinkers, poets, people from the sciences. Society is a general concept. It looks at a general movement. There are persons. A person can be trained scientifically or according to a certain philosophy. With this you have to have dialogue. Not so much with society.

I think in Australia a lot of the people who might be searching never get to meet the church in any form. You seem to have found new ways of bringing the church to them. For example, your monthly dialogue with Umberto Eco. Could you tell us about that?

I met with Umberto Eco, whom I knew already. We were asked to write each other letters to be published monthly by a general magazine called *Libera*—not religious but general.

We decided to write not by quarrelling but by saying to each other what are the reasons you believe or do not believe. We took many problems. About life, morality. The last one especially was very much considered by non-believers. I asked him, 'Please explain to me how you, who are a non-believer, can found your morality?' He was in a certain uneasiness, but he tried to give an answer.

There is another thing, which I call the chair for non-believers. I had this idea: I am a believer but I have in me a non-believer who claims every day his reasons. There is a struggle in me. I said, why not give voice to this inner struggle? So I decided to ask non-believers to come and to explain why they don't believe. Thousands of people came who didn't come to church. They didn't want a sermon. They wanted to be illuminated about the purpose of human life. I did this for five or six evenings in the state university. The difficult thing was to stop people from coming because the place could only hold 1,400.

This is one way of contact. But there are many ways. Every appearance of the church is the occasion not so much to give a sermon but to speak about the real problems of life which are without end. When I do these things I always put myself in question. They ask me to explain my interior ethic of these problems and I put myself in the same position as many others. We search.

This is a new model of authority you're talking about.

I don't pretend to represent a new model of authority. But I think a good example was Paul VI. He was a great searcher. Each of us has problems. Dark points.

Difficulties. If we give expression to them and confront them with the gospel we see how much light we see in our lives.

Do you encourage your priests to do that? Do you think parishioners are ready for that?

Not all parishioners. This is more for intellectual people. But parishioners should be aware of the fact that we are ready to listen to hard questions.

So you don't seek to provide an answer. Certainly not in the first instance.

I am certain that people cannot receive an answer if their question is not spelt out.

I'm thinking of the people who will read this: they may say, 'that's all right for him, his faith is not is serious doubt. Mine is.'

I think that my faith is tempted as is the faith of everybody. I don't think there's a difference. I think that if you read the great mystics, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila and the little St Thérèse you see the most difficult temptation in faith. We are in the same struggle.

Do you ever get exhausted?

I am very often at the verge of exhaustion but I am saved.

I keep thinking that the Italy you describe, with all its problems, is a much more spiritually minded place, or has a spiritual tradition greater than secular Australia. Yesterday you were asked, I gather, what you thought about a country which called its leading footballer, Gary Ablett, God. Have you gained any impression about the secular style of our society, which I think is a great challenge?

It *is* a great challenge. It is also an area in which you have many good things which we don't have. You don't have anti-clericalism. It is very strong in Europe. Italians are believed to be religious people but there is a good deal of superstition and superficiality. At times it is harder to fight against superficial ideas than it is to fight against non-believers.

I think every country has to find the grace of the place. I think your grace is not the same as ours but the problems are not very different. There is no place where faith is easy; it requires a continuous struggle. Also, it requires prayer and silence.

It's not done a lot in Australia. I'm thinking about the institution you describe, with its extraordinary number of priests—I had no idea so many. The challenge in Australia is to work with the laity almost to create a new style of institution. How would you describe that challenge?

We have the same challenge: a great number of priests but a greater number of people. In Milan we have five million baptised people to look after. Of course, they don't all come to church. If they all came, we wouldn't have places in the churches. The priests are not enough. We are starting to put together what we call a pastoral unity—small parishes where we need the help of lay people.

We have also ordained permanent deacons. We've tried to form a laity, not to take the place of priests, but to do the things which priests are not called to do. Sometimes we want to clericalise lay people, but their place is in the professions, the family, in politics, administration and so on. But we need also the help of many people who are ready to collaborate in the church.

It might be good to end on structures. I notice that the former Archbishop of San Francisco, John Quinn, recently called for quite a lot of reform. He particularly singled out the curia. He said we needed a more collegial approach. He said he saw, at the moment, a model of control rather than a model of spiritual discernment . He said this model of control reflected a lack of trust in the Holy Spirit. I wonder whether you agree with him?

He sent this paper to me—he's a good friend of mine. I met him two years ago when I gave a retreat in California. I think it is a well thought-out paper, but it should not be read polemically. He is very balanced. He tries to derive the consequence from what the Pope has said in the last letter on unity.

He derives from that some insights which are not all to be accepted as such, but are good points for discernment. I think it is a good contribution but I could not have written the same thing. It was very much appreciated, at least in Europe, by Protestants and other denominations.

As for this point of opposing control and discernment: it is hard to give a general judgment. I could also examine myself in my diocese. But I try very much for discernment. I think we have to teach people to take decisions in their own scale and their own competence. But they have to take the right decision by listening to the Holy Spirit.

Often people feel paralysed by that moment of waiting. You don't feel paralysed?

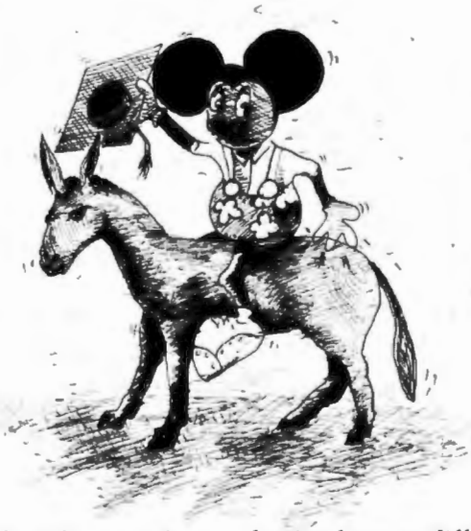
On the contrary, I feel very much excited. Because I feel that this spirit which is working in me and in every man and woman of goodwill is the one who will guide us. We will make many mistakes. I have made many mistakes. We always hope. We trust in the Lord not to make too many or too big so we are not discouraged. But the spirit is guiding us to correct mistakes and to make things better.

This is what works in the church, to answer your first question. The Holy Spirit works. That's the answer. ■

Carlo Maria Martini sj is the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan. **Geraldine Doogue** is a journalist, broadcaster and presenter of ABC RN's *Life Matters*.

J.J.C. SMART

Academics and the amateur spirit



WHEN VERY MANY years ago I was for two years a Junior Research Fellow at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, I used to sit next to William Phelps, the Senior Fellow, in the Senior Common Room while the port and madeira went round. I loved his conversation and I imbibed much ancient wisdom from him.

One saying of his has stuck with me, and is pertinent to my major concerns here. It is 'you can't do anything wholeheartedly unless you do it lightheartedly, and you can't do it lightheartedly unless you do it wholeheartedly'. I have sometimes retailed this story to anxious students.

Now one of Phelps' characteristics was his desire to preserve what he called his amateur status. He was a truly excellent and wide-ranging classical scholar, but he (to my knowledge) never published anything. He was a brilliant teacher of undergraduates. R.C. Robertson-Glasgow, the noted cricketer, was a pupil of Phelps, and in his biography *46 Not Out* said that Phelps would 'transform a *Times* leader into Greek or Latin in the time that a practised debtor would take to compose a letter of regret to his tailor'. Phelps took pride in the fact that in the above mentioned book Robertson-Glasgow referred to him as 'nonpareil'. Others with more classical scholarship than Robertson-Glasgow (which would not be all that difficult) have gone far to supporting this assessment.

On one occasion someone posed a question of classical scholarship to Fraenkel, the immensely erudite Corpus Professor of Latin. Phelps remarked to me 'I know what he will say: *"I'll look it up"*'. Fraenkel had been a professor at Göttingen and a scholar of international renown and his move from Germany to England, enforced by the Nazis, quickly led to his chair at Oxford. (Fraenkel's son Gustav was largely instrumental in building up the fine medical school at Flinders University.) One might say that Fraenkel was very much the professional, and with it a man of humanity and friendliness. If I mention Phelps as an amateur I can mention Fraenkel as the professional, but I shall still argue the contrast should be taken with a grain of salt. The good professional should have something of the amateur in his or her make-up. Also Phelps' amateur status was merely one of mental bent: after all, he was paid an excellent stipend, and besides his teaching duties he served the college, as was usual with Fellows, in administrative and pastoral ways, having been at different times Dean and Senior Tutor. ('Dean' and 'Senior Tutor' have different meanings in Oxford colleges from that which they have in Australian universities.) So without making a black and white distinction between the amateur spirit and the professional spirit in the academy I shall now come out with what prompted me to write this essay. I am distressed by the way in which government and bureaucratic interference has greatly eroded the amateur spirit in Australian and British universities, very much to their detriment. To make this clear I must say something about the word 'amateur' and the various, sometimes contrasting, ways in which it or its derivatives may be used.

Primarily, perhaps, 'amateur' is used in a way consonant with its philological derivation. To be amateur is to do something simply because one loves doing it. The word 'professional' has to do with practising one of those activities commonly classified as 'professions', such as medicine, law or engineering. In contrast with 'amateur' it typically also has to do with being paid to do an activity. Hence in application to sport we have the distinction between 'amateur' and 'professional'.

Normally to be paid to do something one has to be pretty good at it and so nowadays 'professional' has come also to be used in order to characterise what are, strictly speaking, amateur activities. A coach of an amateur team may complain that its play has not

been professional enough. There is also the curious notion of a professional foul, where even an amateur player may be so unfair as to give away a free kick to prevent the probable scoring of a goal. No doubt this is not in the true amateur spirit, even though it is easy almost unthinkingly to be tempted to it in the excitement of the moment.

We also have the pejorative word 'amateurish'. To have the amateur spirit certainly does not imply being amateurish. To have the amateur spirit stands to being amateurish somewhat in the way in which being childlike stands to being childish. To be childlike is to have the virtues of a child, innocence, frankness, curiosity, or whatever, while being childish is to have vices characteristic of children, such as sulkiness, proneness to tantrums, and lack of concentration. 'Childlike' is a word of approbation, while 'childish' is pejorative.

Thus I do not wish in the least to imply that having the amateur spirit need imply a lack of professionalism. I am a professional philosopher, and yet I want to extol the amateur spirit among philosophers, as among other academics too.

A lecturer with an amateur spirit will enjoy lecturing and will try to enthuse the students with the subject matter. In doing so, he or she will of course be concerned to inculcate competence. Turning out enthusiastic ratbags is not what we should want. Indeed enthusiasm motivates hard work. Remember Phelps' aphorism about lightheartedness and wholeheartedness. Similarly an academic should publish an article or book because he or she is delighted to have discovered new arguments, facts, hypotheses or experimental results and wants other people to know about them. Even purely pedagogical or exegetical papers or books should be imbued with the missionary spirit: 'Here is great stuff—you *must* know about it'. This attitude is of course by no means restricted to academia. An engineer can be wildly excited about, say, welding problems with steel tubes, just as much as (say) a neurobiologist may be excited by unravelling the perceptual systems of insects. One may all the same regret some (but not all) of the emphasis, due to government pressure, on essentially R and D work, some of which allows industrial firms to avoid doing this work in their own laboratories.

Of late the biggest threat to the amateur spirit in our academies has been due to government pressure on universities. Partly in consequence universities themselves have become managerial rather than collegiate. Vast bureaucracies have grown up. There are reviews, quality assessments and demands for information. The situation is bad here and perhaps worse in the United Kingdom. A year or so ago the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Glasgow, in a column in the periodic newsletter for alumni, pointed out the escalating effect of government requests for information. First they must go to the governing body of the university. Then a lot of verbiage will have to go on to the senior academic committee or board. At every stage there is an escalation of verbiage and time taken which could have been spent on teaching and research. All this arises from lack of trust. In the old days universities were trusted to look after their own affairs. University bureaucracies were relatively small. At the University of Adelaide in my time we had a great Registrar who prided himself on keeping his department small. He knew everything and you could ask him something at lunch instead of sending him a letter. Now the university is managerial and the Registrar's department is huge. This increase in university bureaucracy, due in no small measure to government lack of trust, means another reduction in efficiency, since money spent on administrators could otherwise be spent on teaching and research.

An English friend of mine had her lectures assessed by an educationist. It was in what had been a good polytechnic and which had become a university. The chap said 'Your lecture was good but it was too academic'. She said 'I thought this was supposed to be a university'. The chap said 'We are competing with television'. It makes one want to weep. There must be better ways to deal with the unemployment problem.

Some of my younger academic friends tell me that because of this sort of thing administration takes up 20 per cent of their time. Suppose for the sake of argument that all these reviews, quality assessments and the like eliminate five per cent inefficiency. Then there could well be a net loss of 15 per cent. Consider the question of dead wood in universities. (I speak here of the older pre-Dawkins universities, of which I have some experience.) In my subject I find it very hard to find much that is dead wood. Certainly there are some who publish nothing or little, but this often comes from modesty or perfectionism rather than an inability to do so. Such people can be fine and lucid lecturers who keep up with their subject and who are far more valuable than some who on paper might look better on 'publish or perish' criteria. But suppose that there is two per cent of dead wood. Would it not be better to carry this dead wood than have the other 98 per cent wasting so much of their time on reviews, quality assessments and dead wood eradication meetings? Moreover now that tenure is so much reduced (an anti-dead wood measure) lecturers are distracted from their proper work, by worrying about the future and filling in the long and

unnecessarily complicated job applications that nowadays seem to be the norm.

I have said that publication should come from having something to say that one believes is worthwhile and from having the missionary spirit. I applaud the desire to publish from these motives. I plead and plead with younger colleagues when they delay publication through modesty or perfectionism even though they have something important to say. It is a shame when their fine manuscripts stay in a drawer and the philosophical public are unable to read them. It is the pressure to publish from 'publish or perish' motives that I deplore.

Actually those who publish from this motive, or mainly from it, are less likely to be the ones who have something interesting to say. To satisfy the publish or perish mania, second-tier journals get started to accommodate the articles that do not get accepted by the first-tier journals. Then third-tier journals to accommodate articles that miss the second tier. And so on it goes. (See W.V. Quine, *Theories and Things*, Harvard University Press, 1981) Then libraries have to buy the journals. This costs money and library shelving space even though most of the articles are read by few people other than their authors and the referees. Is this really the 'productivity' that governments speak of? It is, I gather (fortunately I retired quite a few years ago), the case now that the *length* of articles is taken into consideration. Is this not an invitation to reject one of the most admirable of literary virtues, namely conciseness? Thus I would argue that reliance on the amateur spirit would reduce bureaucracies and waste of academic time, and would increase efficiency and the right sort of productivity, the unmeasurable sort.

Sometimes, of course, the fact that an article has few readers may not be a criticism. The subject matter may be a difficult one. My father once asked the very great astronomer Eddington how many people would understand a book that Eddington was writing. 'Six', said Eddington. That is all right.

SIMILARLY I DEPLORE THE USE of student-staff ratios so much to determine the structure of faculties. Some subjects, such as classical languages attract few students but are highly deserving all the same. Mathematical physics has few students because few students are clever enough to learn it. There is a danger that university faculties will be numerically dominated by the softer subjects. There is also a danger that the less soft departments may be tempted to attract more students by putting on soft or Mickey Mouse branches or offshoots of their subjects. This is self-defeating. What is the good of getting more students in this way if you have to appoint Mickey Mouse lecturers to teach the Mickey Mouse courses? Indeed there is a danger that, over all, the giving of money to universities on the basis of student-staff numbers may lead to depressed standards even in the totally demanding subjects. Governments like to maximise the number of posteriors on lecture room seats so as to reduce unemployment figures. An English friend of mine had her lectures assessed by an educationist. It was in what had been a good polytechnic and which had become a university. The chap said 'Your lecture was good but it was too academic'. She said 'I thought this was supposed to be a university'. The chap said 'We are competing with television'. It makes one want to weep. There must be better ways to deal with the unemployment problem.

This lack of trust, leading to government reviews, quality assessments, and judging by outside research grants, comes partly from cultural cringe. In my subject we philosophers know how highly Australian philosophy is regarded overseas, especially in USA and UK. I am sure that the same thing applies in many other subjects, astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, medical sciences, and so on. With more knowledge on the part of bureaucrats and politicians there would be more trust.

A WORD AGAINST EMPHASIS on outside research grants. In some subjects, such as mine, most of us need only a pen and paper (or perhaps a laptop). We should be praised (and not disadvantaged) for doing good research without troubling the taxpayer. (I concede that nowadays some younger philosophers may need grants to provide relief teaching, now that student-staff ratios are so bad.) We *know* that our best universities are good by world standards. There is a story told to me in 1950 by Father Finn, Rector of Aquinas College, University of Adelaide. God was pleased with the three orders, the Dominicans, the Franciscans and the Jesuits and said that he would give each a boon. 'Deepen our apprehension of the distinction between essence and existence,' said St Dominic. 'Deepen our traditional humility and piety' said St Francis. 'What about you?' said God to St Ignatius. Ignatius said, 'We have been doing pretty well, just leave us as we are'. It would have been well if all vice-chancellors had told this story to Dawkins at the time of the notorious Green Paper.

Let me end with another Phelps story. (This essay is meant to be both wholehearted and lighthearted.) When Phelps was young, Tommy Case, the President of Corpus, a philosopher and old cricketer, came up to him and said 'Young man, philosophers are like mules. They never produce anything, but they try very hard'. A nice story, though grossly unfair to philosophers. (Indeed Case himself had, in an idealistic age, commendably written a worthwhile philosophical book *Physical Realism*.)

Be that as it may, as an Australian let me say 'Better an unproductive mule than a productive rabbit.' ■

J.J.C. Smart is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Australian National University.

JACK WATERFORD

The light in the hill

The House on Capital Hill—Parliament, politics and power in the national capital, Julian Disney and John Nethercote (eds), Federation Press, 1996. ISBN 186 287 223 6 RRP $29.95

'We shape our buildings and afterwards, our buildings shape us', Winston Churchill said, speaking of the rebuilding of the House of Commons after World War II.

When Australia's Parliament moved from its temporary house on Camp Hill to an amazing bunker set inside Capital Hill, it had immediate impacts on the lives of all of the denizens: the ministers, who colonised about half of the space and made it the centre of executive as well as legislative power; their staffs, increasing in size and power relative to the bureaucracy; the public administration, increasingly losing power to activist ministers and minders; backbench government members, now more isolated from all of the other players but far better equipped with facilities; Oppositions and their staffs, increasingly called upon for comprehensive detail of their alternatives; and the media, vastly increased in size and resources but also more restricted in access to the players.

Not all of the changes are functions of the new architecture; some of the planning followed rather than led the shifts in power. But the organisation of a building—itself the size of a large country town—and the way in which it either supports and reinforces or denies or hinders power relationships, has had a marked effect on federal politics and administration. From the point of view of the public not all of it has been good, though not all has been bad either. Just which is which depends, of course, on fundamental ideas of how things should be.

The building, for example, is well adapted for any transition into a republic, even if it lacks, so far, a presidential suite. For the public, it is as much identified with executive government in action as with parliamentary government: it is the television backdrop for the announcement of Cabinet decisions or extra-parliamentary statements by ministers. Prime Ministers have set aside space for presidential-style statements or pseudo-submission to press enquiry, and very few ministers now use offices in departments. The public service waits in the corridors, and even non-executive politicians must make appointments, They will not readily run across the masters in the ordinary intercourse of the building.

It has weakened the power of the individual parliamentarian and emphasised his or her remoteness from the real decision-making, but it has strengthened the hand of parliamentary committees and groups of politicians who organise together. And the geography has helped build up the power of a Senate, in which Government has lacked numbers, yet has also helped make some politicians and journalists strangely oblivious of how that power balance has changed.

This book, which would serve well as a general political science text, consists of reflections about power structures and balances, made by various players in the House on the Hill. Its origin lies in seminar papers given by each of the authors to a public policy course at the Australian National University.

John Kerin, who ended his career as Minister for Trade but was also Treasurer in Bob Hawke's dying days, discusses styles of Cabinet government and dealings with the bureaucracy, the media, ministerial staff and parliament. These are his golden rules for practitioners: 'You are always on your own; other people will always let you down; you will inevitably let others down; in the long run, the best policies are the best politics, but do not tell the rank and file, the Prime Minister or the mob; policy analysis always beats the divining of chickens' entrails, opinion polls or the consensus of editorials; some of the best policies are carried out by stealth; the choice between seizing the moment and compromise is always vexed; and (quoting Enoch Powell), "all political careers end in failure" '.

Ian Sinclair argues that Cabinet, the barometer of success of government, is becoming less accessible, but that ministers need to shed administrative burdens and add to their creative time.

Fred Chaney's rueful discussion about life as a minister and the frustrations of being in a shadow Cabinet ends with a tale of a press gallery corridor party, and some wonder at the stamina of Paul Keating and Peter Walsh in taking on all-comers in debate. It led him to recall being told of a journalist's being reproved by Paul Kelly in the early 1980s for writing a favourable article about Chaney and Aboriginal affairs: Chaney, declared Kelly, would go nowhere in politics. 'Given Kelly's considerable influence in the media over the next 10 years, I wonder that I lasted as long as I did and curse the fact that I had neither the intellect to impress Kelly nor the stamina to impress his lesser colleagues'.

David Hamer, John Langmore and David Connolly reflect on opportunities and obstacles confronting backbenchers, committees and oppositions. Two very experienced bureaucrats, Vince Fitzgerald and Sandy Hollway, discuss some of the changing balances between the public service and political advisers, and on life in the modern ministerial office. Hollway, now Secretary of Employment, Education Training and Youth Affairs, at one stage ran Hawke's office, and later, as a Deputy Secretary in the Prime Minister's department played a critical advisory role to Keating, particularly on *Mabo*. The shift of power to the minister's office, he argues, should not be resisted by the bureaucracy, but accepted as legitimate and value-adding: it is the job of bureaucrats to establish with such people a relationship with is 'both intimate and proper'.

An old-style political adviser, Patti Warn, looks at the modern minder, bemoans the lack of training, and worries about codes of conduct. Ministers seeking to change the way Australia works, neglect the workings of their own offices at their peril, she says. Stephen Mills, a former Hawke (and Gareth Evans) speechwriter discusses how those offices are put together. Hawke was a successful politician, Mills says, because he was skilled at explaining, through his speeches, the purpose of the oftenpainful or simply unexpected decisions the Government took.

Michael L'Estrange, now a person of power in the new government's Cabinet office, discusses the role of opposition staff and different ways of devising opposition strategies. And two very experienced journalists, Mike Steketee and Michelle Grattan, discuss the press gallery at work, and the problems of having different dogs in the same kennel. Steketee argues that the media are not overly powerful: the great bulk of the press gallery's output is driven by priorities set by Government or Opposition.

Grattan discusses the simultaneous

intimacy and isolation of life at Parliament House: it is still a hard building to 'work'. The modern press gallery, she says, is 'much more socially fragmented; political journalism has become more a job and less a way of life. Formal academic qualifications of gallery journalists are high, but, partly because of high turnover, a sense of history is generally lacking'. Showing that her own sense of it is in no way deficient, she cites a speech by Joe Gullett, attacking Menzies for hardly ever attending to debate in Parliament and giving an impression that Parliament did not matter. ■

Jack Waterford is the editor of the *Canberra Times*.

BOOKS: 2

BRIAN TOOHEY

The defence rests

Discourses of Danger and Dread Frontiers, Graeme Cheeseman and Robert Bruce (eds), Allen & Unwin, Sydney. 1996. ISBN 186373 975 0 RRP $24.95.

AUSTRALIAN policy elites regard economic change in Asia as unequivocally a good thing. Think of the export opportunities! Political change in Asia is another matter. It creates instability and ultimately threatens our national security in a far more disturbing fashion than anything during the Cold War. To our policy-making elite, stability is represented by President Suharto, kept in power with the help of Australian-trained Special Forces. The threat to regional security is represented by pro-democracy demonstrators.

Danger and Dread Frontiers poses a refreshing challenge to the neo-realist foundations of a defence policy established by Labor and largely continued by the Coalition. Edited by two academics, Graeme Cheeseman and Robert Bruce, the book consists of a series of interrelated essays by nine authors who attack the unquestioned assumptions behind the notion that security is synonymous with the possession of military power. As the authors note, the orthodox debate in Australia proceeds as if issues such as poverty, human rights, environmental degradation and conventional arms control had no bearing on the security of a nation's citizens.

Instead, Australian security is sought in a return to a 19th-century-style balance of power. Never mind that the balance often collapses into war: Australia's best hope is to keep the US 'engaged' in the region and to 'enmesh' its own military forces more closely with those of its South East Asian neighbours. That way, China, Japan, Korea, Russia and India might just be held in a delicate equipoise. Meanwhile, Indonesian generals and their Australian counterparts will have participated in so many joint exercises that there will be no room for misunderstanding between the two countries. Moreover, there will have been so many intelligence 'swaps'— backed by a media finally bludgeoned into 'understanding Asia'— that dissidents should no longer pose a security threat by advocating self-determination for Irian Jaya, East Timor, or Aceh.

David Sullivan's chapter highlights the way in which the roles of scholar and policy adviser have become dangerously intertwined in developing a defence posture which can construe the plight of the oppressed as a threat to our national security while fêting their oppressors as our strategic saviours. Sullivan says that crucial assumptions about security issues:

> have so thoroughly seeped into official defence policy and planning that (some) defence academics and defence officials are for all intents and purposes now one and the same. The university has become the dumping ground for career officers and civilians seeking refuge from the rigid nature of bureaucratic life. The institutional symbiosis of university and government concerning Australia's defence became most noticeable under the tutelage of Professor Paul Dibb: present head of the ANU's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre and former/present senior defence bureaucrat.

As Sullivan observes, Dibb is in the unusual position of holding down a scholarly job while insisting that his prescriptions for the 'real world' are uncontaminated by theory. When he talks, for example, about the balance of power as the central organising principle between nation states, he claims that he is merely making an observation which 'remains true'. Another contributor, Lachlan Strahan, notes that Dibb adopts an inflexible realist model of the rise and fall of great powers in which he 'accepts the *a priori* premise that large powers must fight for supremacy; he anticipates conflict and, therefore, the need to build up a formidable array of weapons to meet the impending challenge'.

The chapter by Jim George traces the dominant policy edifice back to a neo-realist view of international relations as a form of ungoverned anarchy which can nevertheless be understood in rational terms as the outcome of nation states engaged in the utilitarian pursuit of self-interest. To take two examples which have emerged since the book went to the printers, neo-realists succeeded in subordinating concerns about global warming to the interests of the Australian coal industry. Likewise, if the Americans weren't so antagonistic, Australia could now be in a position to brandish a nuclear 'mailed fist' along the neo-realist lines advocated by Labor's Foreign Minister, Bill Hayden.

It is all a long way from the more progressive notion of internationalism which once shaped Labor's perspective and appears to have persuaded the Coalition Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, to ban land mines and condemn Port Moresby's recent assault on Bougainville. But Downer is being rapidly pulled into line as the security orthodoxy asserts itself just as surely as its economic counterpart retains bi-partisan support.

Labor's decisions to acquire the furthest-ranging conventionally powered submarine in the world and additional F1-11 strike bombers, project military power far from its shores. With the Coalition's subsequent decision to boost the Army's mobility, Australia now seems well placed to return to a policy of 'forward defence' as predicted in Cheeseman's chapter.

Cheeseman and Bruce note that the idea for the book came from a conference Australian Defence Force Academy conference in December 1994 to mark the release of the Keating Government's Defence White Paper. The 'self-reverential and triumphalist tone was encapsulated by the declaration of one of the participants at the conference and drafters of the White Paper, Paul Dibb, that "no one had laid glove on it".'

This claim provoked Cheeseman and Bruce into organising a response which tries to recognise that human history is replete with examples of the folly of adhering to orthodox perspectives 'which act like intellectual Maginot Lines, ignoring alternatives, resisting dissent, and preventing adaptation to change'. Notwithstanding Dibb's boast, the authors have succeeded in laying a glove upon the orthodoxy. ■

Brian Toohey is a freelance journalist and radio commentator.

PETER PIERCE

All in the telling

Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism, Alan Sandison, Macmillan, London, 1996. ISBN 0 333 62067 4 RRP $104.00

IN *TREASURE ISLAND*, Alan Sandison drolly remarks, 'a parrot gets the last word, and turns out to be a two-hundred-year-old deconstructionist'. The parrot, named for the infamous pirate Captain Flint, although it is actually a female, exclaims 'Pieces of eight!' and Stevenson's wonderful tale is done. But not done with: its study forms an arresting section of Sandison's first-rate, if cumbersomely titled critical study, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism*. Sandison, known for his brilliant work on the literature of imperialism, *The Wheel of Empire*, followed Stevenson's path, leaving a chair at Strathclyde, in Scotland, to head south, where he was Professor of English at the University of New England, Armidale, for eight years until his retirement in 1993.

Sandison's intention is to explore a remark of Gertrude Stein concerning 'a future feeling', a proleptic modernism which she detected in Stevenson's fiction. (But she discovered it everywhere, especially near at hand.) Convincingly Sandison demonstrates that Stevenson was a proto-modernist whose writing was imbued with concerns for authority and 'self-engrossed textuality', with 'ceaseless questing among forms', a self-consciousness alert to his own practices. 'My theories melt, melt, melt', Stevenson avowed, 'and as they melt, the thaw-waters wash down my writing and leave unideal tracts—wastes instead of cultivated forms'.

Stevenson's polished, relentlessly varied works are anything but 'wastes', not even the last of them, *The Weir of Hermiston*, left unfinished at his death. To the world he gave the classic studies of beleaguered children, *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*, which once were read by young people who cherished these stories into adult life. He revised the *Arabian Nights* in two volumes of stories; after a long delay wrote *Catriona*, sequel to *Kidnapped*; produced one of the classic horror stories in *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (the absent article suggesting the sensationalising bent of a newspaper headline); wrote extensive travel literature (although any exertion might have been fatal for one in his tubercular condition), besides novels for which he is still renowned, such as *The Master of Ballantrae* and others now nearly forgotten. 'What is *Prince Otto*?' Sandison properly, if a touch sardonically enquires.

His reading of Stevenson's books sends us eagerly back to them, through judicious, often unexpected turns of analysis, and phrase. That Stevenson is 'a serious theorist in the art of fiction whose concerns are very modern' is demonstrated at more length than was needful. Sandison's own theory is always most agile and illuminating when directed to the particulars of texts. For instance he understands that Stevenson's is essentially a melodramatic imagination, alert to the vertiginous sense of loss which can suddenly disrupt the most placid of lives. The dissection of terrors, imposed from without, or generated by characters' own inadequacies, is one of Stevenson's master themes.

While Sandison persuasively suggests the influence of Stevenson's fiction on Joseph Conrad, one comparative context is not offered at length. Sandison might have dissected Stevenson together with other fervid imaginations of the 1880s and 1890s: Rider Haggard, H.G. Wells, Conan Doyle. Source-hunting will only explain in part this ultimate phase of Romanticism, with its remarkable flowering of invention and prodigality of strange story; its discovery of correlatives in exotic lands and London streets for the flights and torments of the early modern consciousness. In the words of an acute admirer, G.K. Chesterton, Stevenson's romance realises the ideal 'which is promised in its provocative and beckoning map; a vision not only of white skeletons but also green palm trees and sapphire seas'. Stevenson wrote *Treasure Island* in a cottage in the Scottish Highlands, one wet September, to amuse his stepson Lloyd Osbourne. The book made him rich and famous; gave him the means to seek such an island for himself.

Notwithstanding that he had written 'For my part, I travel not to go anywhere, but to go. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move', Stevenson settled into legend in Samoa, rejoicing in the honorific 'Tusitala', teller of tales, while remaining sufficiently nostalgic to dress his extended Samoan household in kilts. His walking tours of Europe have been brilliantly retraced by Richard Holmes in *Footsteps* (1985). Journeying to the United States, Stevenson married an older woman, Fanny Osbourne. This has licensed much psychological speculation, some of which Sandison entertains. Stevenson was, he says, 'the only child of devout Calvinist parents who doted on him and on each other'. He had 'personal difficulties with procreation and heredity' (this is obscure, not necessarily snide) and perceived himself 'as genuinely and irredeemably trapped in, if not childhood, at least late adolescence'. Of marriage, Stevenson sagely advised that 'no woman should marry a teetotaller, or a man who does not smoke'. And let him have the last word on his parents' legacy: 'the children of lovers are orphans', Stevenson mordantly observed.

Four time, early in the 1890s, Stevenson came to Australia, having sailed across the Pacific from Samoa. He met J.F. Archibald at the *Bulletin* and visited Julian Ashton's artists' camp a Balmoral in Sydney. There are scenes in the Sydney Domain in the novel *The Wrecker* (1892) which he wrote with Lloyd Osbourne. Fêted by the Australian press, Stevenson used its attention to inveigh against missionaries, profiteers and others kinds of European and American who preyed upon the people of the Pacific. In Samoa he died suddenly of a cerebral haemorrhage. Prudently he had written his own epitaph:

> Here he lies where he longed to be;
> Home is the sailor, home from sea,
> And the hunter home from the hill.

Stevenson's veritable home became Government House until it stood once too long in the way of a cyclone. But *he* lives. To re-read *Treasure Island* is to summon something of the wonders and clarities of childhood. Here is a world where Blind Pew tips the black spot to Billy Bones, Israel Hands climbs the mast to murder Jim Hawkins and pirates really do sing 'Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum'. Sandison be thanked for bringing a great writer in a minor key back within our ken. ■

Peter Pierce is senior lecturer at the National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash.

Quick change artists

***Geoffrey Milne** speaks to three Australian actors who thrive on the shuffle between stage, film and the TV screen.*

OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS, *Eureka Street*'s theatre pages have focused on playwrights and their plays, theatre companies, festivals and other organisations, as well as trends and developments in Australian theatre.

But we have rarely paid any direct attention to the frontline troops: the actors who have the immediately visible task of making the plays come alive on the stage.

What is often not so visible is the vital role played by actors in the difficult process of getting a play from the page to the stage. Leaving aside the kinds of commercial considerations that drive theatre companies great and small to employ actors with popular screen exposure in order to get audiences into the theatres—it is nonetheless of incalculable value to have intelligent, dedicated, and experienced actors in the cast of any play, and especially a new play.

Film and television are also voracious devourers of acting 'talent'. TV (and commercial TV soap opera in particular) is especially inclined to swallow up young actors, make them stars (or tabloid celebrities) for a week or a year or two and then spit them out again. Mature and experienced actors are used more sparingly in this demanding medium (often winning challenging guest roles or ongoing secondary roles in serials, as well as character parts in mini-series and some often excellent one-off telefilms), but they are more likely to survive the ordeal and to achieve a longer-term screen career.

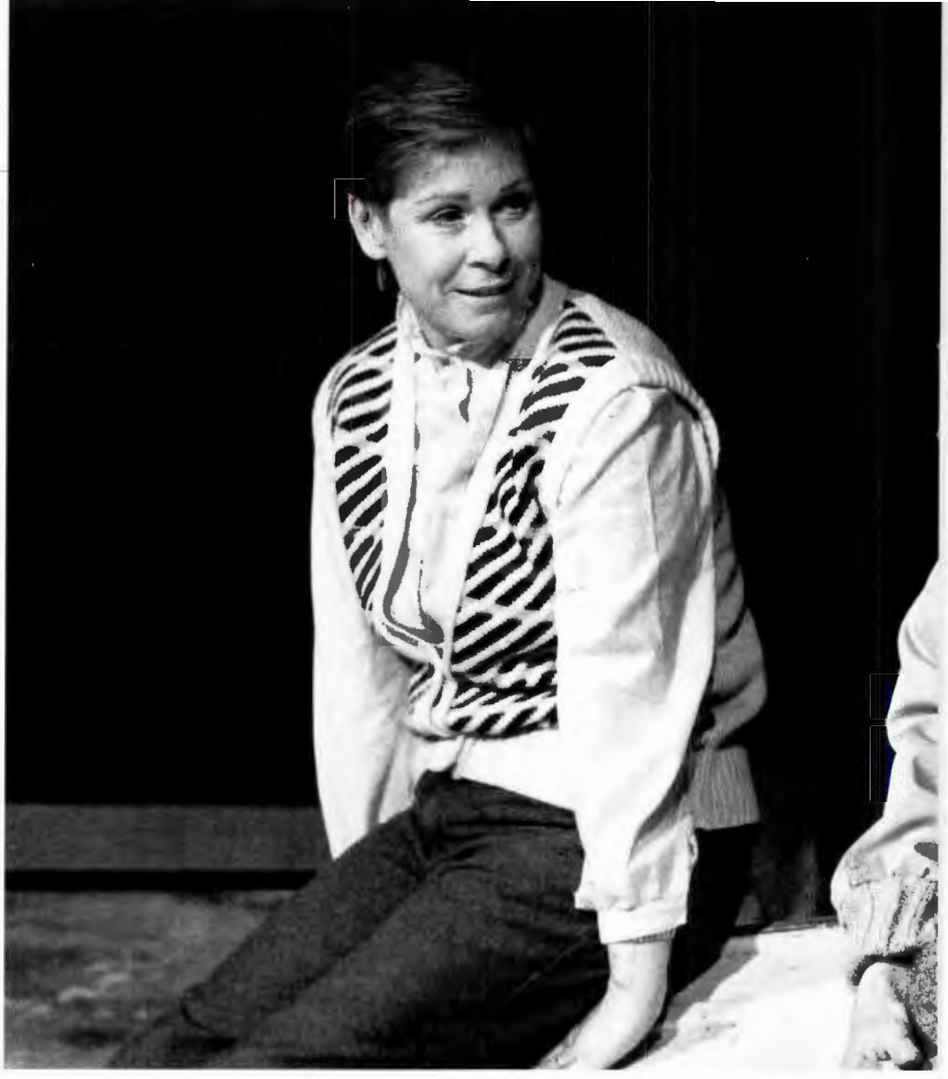
Film—and feature film more particularly—is inclined to be even more selective; it takes a pretty good and versatile actor to withstand the manifold pressures of working on a major film and then to get invited back again. The best of our actors, however, seem to make the transition from stage to small screen to big screen and back again to the stage with regularity and apparent ease.

Julia Blake, Monica Maughan and Roger Oakley have each had distinguished careers on stage and success on screen. I recently discussed the craft of acting, and the differences between stage and screen work with these very experienced Australian players.

Roger Oakley, above, in Michael Gurr's Sex Diary of an Infidel.

Julia Blake studied academic drama at Bristol University and then trained for the stage at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School before going into British Rep in 1960. After marrying Australian actor Terry Norris, she migrated to Australia in 1963. Blake is proud of the fact that she has never had to earn money at any trade other than acting, but she is also deeply conscious of the luck involved. There was sufficient work around in those days, she told me, in radio serials (ABC and commercial) and one-off dramas, and in the burgeoning TV industry (playing guest characters in long-running police dramas, for example) as well as on stage, for both husband and wife to be able to work in Melbourne, bring up three children and lead a pretty normal life. Radio drama was especially useful for pregnant actresses.

1988 was a memorable year for Blake, and in some ways it typified



Julia Blake as Marge, right, above, with Elspeth Ballantyne as Hilary, in Hannie Rayson's Hotel Sorrento, *at the Playbox, Melbourne, 1990.*

the way our leading actors have to diversify their focus—and to travel, in more ways than one—in order to satisfy demand.

After finishing a Melbourne Theatre Company engagement early that year, in Tom Stoppard's adaptation of the Ferenc Molnar farce, *Rough Crossing*, she went to Sydney for Neil Armfield's production for Belvoir St Theatre of Ibsen's *Ghosts* (to much critical acclaim), then back to Melbourne for a feature film (*Georgia*), then back to Sydney for the multi-award-winning TV adaptation of Sumner Locke-Elliott's *Edens Lost* (an ABC co-production with British TV interests, also directed by Armfield whose risk-taking approach was vital to its success) before embarking on the national tour of Rattigan's *The Browning Version* with Paul Eddington.

Despite greatly enjoying some film work (such as the widely-acclaimed *Travelling North*, *Father* with Max von Sydow and the more recent sequel to *The Thorn Birds* for Warner/CBS), Blake has a distinct preference for work on stage, particularly new Australian work. She has given luminous performances in Playbox Theatre Centre productions of Michael Gow's *Away*, Hannie Rayson's *Hotel Sorrento* and—most recently—Joanna Murray-Smith's *Honour*. Both of the latter were première productions and Blake derived considerable satisfaction from their success, not only for her own performances but also for the writers and the company.

MONICA MAUGHAN BEGAN her acting career in 1957 with the old Union Theatre Repertory Company and continues it this month with its successor, the Melbourne Theatre Company (MTC), in Arthur Miller's *The Last Yankee*: (for which 'I have to learn to tap-dance', she told me—'at my age!'). In the interim, Maughan has practically done it all, from stage to film to TV, although she confesses to lacking confidence and the necessary craft for radio drama. ('I was just written into a long-running radio serial for the ABC,' she said, 'and then after four episodes I went into a J.C. Williamson's tour'.) Her stage roles have included Elizabeth Proctor for the first MTC production of *The Crucible* and countless others for that company, including a memorable part in Robert Hewett's *Gulls* in the late 1970s and, more recently, multiple cameos in Armfield's productions of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* and Patrick White's *A Cheery Soul*. In both of these productions, her capacity to transform in different roles was such that hardened critics and seasoned subscribers alike were sent diving into their programmes during the intervals to see 'who was that actor playing so-and-so?'.

She, too, has had recent success on the screen, most notably as the title character's mother in the ABC's *Damnation of Harvey McHugh*. But, like Blake, her nominated career highlights were mainly on stage.

Roger Oakley—Maughan's partner in *Harvey McHugh*—is a New Zealand-born actor who has worked in Australia for the past nineteen years, mostly in modern drama and often playing what he calls 'arseholes'. There is something satisfying, he says, about playing arseholes; it is also good to have the chance to play against type sometimes. Memorable stage roles have included an uncle in Ayckbourn's *Season's Greetings* (his pathetic puppet show being a particular highlight of that MTC production) and the totally sleazy (and utterly different) Max in Michael Gurr's *Sex Diary of an Infidel*. Another very satisfying play for Oakley was David Mamet's savage *Glengarry Glen Ross*.

Most recently, he has transformed yet again for the decent backbench parliamentarian, Cameron Rickman, in Gurr's *Jerusalem*. The Gurr plays were both premières, and their critical success had as much to do with the quality of the acting as with any other production aspect.

OAKLEY, HOWEVER, IS QUICK to deflect praise for his performances: 'It all starts with the script', he says, with as much emphasis on the TV scripts as the best stage plays he has done. He has no preference for stage or screen, but is happy to do either,

so long as the script and the cast and crew are strong and a good match.

He nevertheless painted an unflattering picture of what it can be like to work on television. Directors, he claims, are so preoccupied with organising the shots and the geography of the equipment that there isn't much time to devote to the performances; 'You have to teach yourself', he says. For the first six months of his two-year stint in the TV soap opera *Home and Away*, he had to force himself to watch himself in order to learn the business; 'a real education', was his wry comment on that experience. While it is probably the best training ground for actors nowadays, TV is still a cruel job for youngsters, who tend to slip into a particular pattern of performance that they find hard, subsequently, to break.

Monica Maughan agreed about TV work: 'TV is nearly all close-ups and it is a medium of the moment, whereas in stage work you can explore the moment much more; you're more part of the wide shot.' She, too, bemoaned the lack of response actors get in TV. There's no live audience, you depend so much on the director and crew for response, she said, citing a Melbourne ABC cameraman, Roger McAlpine, as providing a particularly supportive 'audience reaction.' (Oakley agreed with this, stressing how good the *Harvey McHugh* crew had been.) The other problem is the lack of rehearsal, which all actors complain about in television. A typical 3-day rehearsal period (prior to a 4-day shoot) can be mostly taken up with setting camera angles, dealing with wardrobe and script adjustments; 'there's barely two half-days for actual rehearsal.' There is one compensation: for TV and film, you can work more normal, daylight hours, instead of the endless nights and weekends of stage life.

AN EXAMPLE GIVEN by Julia Blake sums up the experience of screen performance most clearly: 'You can work like mad to get the part right, do a marvellous scene and be really satisfied with the result, and then you're told that a camera was out of focus or a dog was barking and you have to do it all over again.'

Working at this level of intensity (on stage or screen, for that matter) causes a great deal of emotional wear and tear, but at least on stage the actor has more control over her work. Blake likened theatre life to family life, whereas film work is a much more separate, isolated affair; sometimes, you don't even meet the other characters, let alone work with them.

Two things seem to me to emerge from all this. One is that, whatever misgivings actors might have about TV work, there is no doubt that the diminution in drama production that must inevitably follow government cuts to the ABC's budget will have a catastrophic and depressing effect on the industry. The other is that the best and most experienced of our stage-trained actors, like Blake, Maughan and Oakley, arguably make very fine screen actors.

Next month: some of their up-and-coming younger colleagues. ■

Geoffrey Milne teaches theatre and drama in the School of Arts and Media at La Trobe University.

Triple jeopardy

Flirt dir. Hal Hartley (independent cinemas). There are no threesomes in this trilogy of stories, but there are triangular relationships, and they make anxiety and confusion enough for those involved in them. Actually, *Flirt* is a trilogy of one story told three times, in three different cities: New York, Berlin and Tokyo. And if 'trilogy of one story' seems to strain at the meaning of words, that's all right, because failures of language, and how they mesh with the moral frailties of language users, are what this film is about.

This is vintage Hartley country, familiar to viewers of *Trust* and *Simple Men*. Honesty is difficult not only because we may be selfish enough to deceive those we love, but because the words and gestures we have to use to convey our feelings are themselves open-textured, and the ambiguities they generate become further sources of temptation for the selfish.

There are those who find in this a convenient counsel of despair, and become the flirts of the film's title. A flirt is someone who prefers to luxuriate in the ambiguities of sex language and sex play—real or imagined—rather than embark upon the lifelong task of making his or her words and deeds congruent with each other; someone who cannot be bothered presenting a morally coherent self to the world, and so pretends it is not possible.

Hal Hartley is not that kind of relativist. The protagonist of each of the segments in *Flirt* is a person who has to choose whether he or she will continue to live as a flirt. By transposing the same story into different cultures and sub-cultures (not all of the film's flirts are heterosexual) Hartley concedes that *of course* context always affects our choices—and then deftly reminds us that acknowledging this will not let us off the hook.

—Ray Cassin

The grey areas

Secrets and Lies dir. Mike Leigh (independent). Hortense (Marianne Jean-Baptiste) is a young black woman living comfortably in London. Adopted at birth, she has found life relatively pleasant. Up until the death of her mother, that is, which is where the film opens. Now with both adoptive parents dead, Hortense decides to find her birth mother.

Cynthia (Brenda Blethyn) is that person. A single mother, Cynthia does it hard, living on the wrong side of town with her sulky, unpleasant daughter. Cynthia tries hard to keep some hope. And some secrets—she has never told Roxanne about the baby she gave up at birth. When Cynthia takes a phone call from Hortense, her world splits wide open. And further still when they subsequently meet. Cynthia—white Cynthia—had repressed the memory that the baby she gave up all those years before was black.

Slowly a tentative relationship develops, a bridging of different worlds, but, true to life, there are complications. Like Cynthia's younger brother Maurice. Married to Monica, he lives in the better part of London and makes a nice living as a studio photographer. Guilty about having neglected Cynthia, he throws a small, family 21st birthday party for Roxanne. Cynthia invites Hortense, introducing her as a workmate, but as the party progresses the truth is confessed. The secret is out, and so are the lies.

Roxanne is devastated. Emotional chaos pours off the screen. Then, like an act of grace, the turmoil quietens as, amid the incriminations, Maurice and Monica share their secrets. Nobody is perfect. It is cathartic all round.

If it sounds intense, and altogether too serious—well, it might have been but for brilliant scriptwriting and great characterisation. It is only the secrets and lies which carry the sadness. And this is where the film really wins. It is about relationships, our relationships. We see ourselves, our families, in these people. Their arguments, regrets, disappointments ... we recognise them.

The acting is terrific with none better than Blethyn. Deservedly she won Best Actress at this year's Cannes Festival. Leigh, much acclaimed for *Life is Sweet* and *Naked*, took the prestigious Palme d'Or and the International Critics Prize for his directing. Sometimes the Cannes decisions are difficult to follow. Not this time. The secret is out.

—Brad Halse.

New Age Fiction

Phenomenon dir. John Turtletaub (Village and Greater Union). For a couple of reels, it's difficult to work out what sort of a film this is supposed to be. When George Malley (John Travolta) is struck by a beam from outer space on his 37th birthday, you think that you're in for science fiction and settle back for some decent effects. But the only effect is that George, an unthreatening yokel, becomes a genius. He works out how to hack into defence department computers, how to predict earthquakes and how to solve the parking problems in the quaint town of Harmon. Once he starts to beat the town doctor (Robert Duvall) at chess, you realise that this is a comedy and get ready

Eureka Street Film Competition

Legendary silent western star Tom Mix is caught here taking shelter under his horse Tony. We figure there is something going on here that's worth captioning. The best entry wins the $30 movie-trip prize.

The winner of the June competition was Kirstie Dalgliesh of Tamarama, NSW who thought Cary Grant might have been saying: 'Whoever heard of "Polly wants a whisky?"'.

for some innocent fun. But then George falls in love with a single mum called Lace (Kyra Sedgwick) and the fun turns serious. This is a romance. No, George is dying of a brain tumour. It's a medical malpractice film. Wrong again. The tumour has liberated George's brain from all normal constraints. The penny drops for the final time.

It's a film about the inner self. It's about teaching kids that eating apples is important so that the apple can continue its journey; death is a stage in the journey. There is no real pain in living, an idea which can be refuted by the simple fact of sitting through the last hour of this arduous film. *Phenomenon* could well be to New Age Spirituality what *The Ten Commandments* was to biblical fundamentalism.

—Michael McGirr SJ

I don't wanna ...

Kicking and Screaming dir. Noah Baumbach (independent). Amongst the torrent of twenty-something, life-in-a-bucket-of-chips movies that the dedicated cinemagoer has been wading through of late, the odd one has managed to avoid the descent into banality which has claimed the others. *Kicking and Screaming* is one of these.

The film succeeds as a story because it tackles the trivial head-on, via five disarming, feckless characters: Chet, the erudite sophisticate, Otis the neurotic, Max the cynic, Skippy the try-hard, and Grover the jilted lover. A group of friends, having finished university, who aren't exactly striding out into the great wide world to carry all before them. Hamstrung by their idiosyncracies, they spend an entire year doing absolutely nothing, yet somehow managing to get themselves into the stuff of life: love, rejection, and betrayal. When these greater moments arrive, Baumbach ensures that they are well disguised by the commonplace. The effect is not unlike Raymond Carver doing comedy. There are no jokes in this movie, but it is very, very funny.

At the centre of *Kicking and Screaming* are the memories Grover has of his time with Jane. She left him to go to Prague, and, by his way of thinking, turn into a bug and complain about American coffee. His writing, mixed with the re-creation of their courtship, colours the world around him. The only real disappointment of this film is that it doesn't really go anywhere during these sequences, and overall the effect would have been improved without them. At the end, though, we still have the whimsical portraits of five slightly bent fellas trying desperately to stunt their growth.

—Jon Greenaway

Duh NAH!

Mission Impossible, dir. Brian De Palma (Greater Union).

There has been a lot of busy people running from TV studio (and archive) to movie set in the last few years, trying to couple the popular reach of television with the blockbuster summer movie (*The Flintstones*, *The Fugitive*, *The Addams Family* and many more). The results have been patchy at best. Inflating a television to the size of playhouse doesn't give you cinema. And with the rise of product placement you're often not even missing out on the ads. In the race to win the TV audience with a great big Yabbadabbadoo the difference between the two mediums can, sadly, be forgotten.

We ought to be grateful then that Brian De Palma not only understands the difference but uses it to great cinematic effect. He pays his dues to the serial format that was the original *Mission Impossible* by creating credits that give the audience glimpses of possible past or future missions, all choreographed to one of televisions most familiar and infectious themes, (ending on a 'Duh-NAH! no less).Then you find yourself in Kiev, in the wind-up of a mission: a slobby, drunken spy type—'give me the name'; the coiffed waitress with poisoned drinks, Beauty dead on the bed, and rubber masks.

It's TV magic, cinema kitsch—De Palma paying homage.

He is often criticised for his clever but imitative style, which makes his choice of *Mission Impossible* an interesting one. Certainly it isn't original material, but one can't help feeling that De Palma delights in the challenge of making this beast his own. First he does a little house-keeping, losing a few of the extraneous members of the team in the fog of a Prague night, and injecting the rest with a little darkness and distrust. This couldn't be the same group of people that TV taught us were the ideal espionage team: highly motivated, incorruptible, patriotic government agents—country first, team second, oneself last. But it could be De Palma cinema. Or at least it's a good start.

De Palma does more than just start: he sees this piece through. His penchant for the crazy camera angle keeps your eyes alive, he breathes life into computer technology—e-mail is an engaging central character—and in the film's best set-piece he gives Tom Cruise an opportunity to perform balletic feats worthy of the Bolshoi.

—Siobhan Jackson

Telling the truth

Brilliant Lies, dir. Richard Franklin (independent cinemas). David Williamson's play has been adapted by the director and Peter Fitzpatrick into a fair enough sort of film that uses flashbacks to convey different characters' points of view about a case of alleged sexual harassment. All the ingredients are there: backlash polemic, systemic victimisation, undercurrents of dark sexual antagonism, and yet, and yet ...

The trouble is, despite the worthiness of the subject matter, the result never rises above your average *G.P.* or maybe *Blue Heelers* standard of dramatic intensity. Certainly not as real or compelling as *Mercury* or *Phoenix*: the television comparisons keep cropping up because somehow this work just isn't big enough for the big screen, and the direction keeps reminding one of a TV series—the slight cosiness of it all, the fact that, with the exception of Anthony La Paglia, who has a very compelling screen presence, the actors seem to *recite* their lines.

The script doesn't help this. It hasn't eradicated Williamson's tendency to make his characters speechify rather than speak. Michael Veitch, so good as Rocco in *Mercury*, is wasted here—only given flashes of real characterisation; the rest of the time he has to be a cardboard buffoon. The Carides sisters, Zoë and Gia, occasionally warm up and interact with Ray Barrett, who hams it up disgracefully as their wheezing wreck of a father, but there ain't no *poetry* in it, damn it.

Maybe the problem is that *Rashomon* did it all so much better.

—Juliette Hughes

Americavision

I COUNT IT a stroke of real luck that I was home for the best episode yet of *The Simpsons*.

The evil genius, Sideshow Bob, escaped from jail and held the archetypal American town of Springfield to ransom, using a stolen atom bomb from the loosely guarded stockpile. All television was to stop; all stations were to shut down, and yes, he was fully aware of the irony inherent in giving such orders using the detested medium. Of course he was defeated—but by his own weakness, having been unable to resist the cute retro look of a '50s vintage bomb that failed to detonate at the crucial moment. The clever humour, the allusions to *Dr Strangelove* and various Hitchcocks, made this a joy.

The Simpsons is full of the healthy self-mockery one associates with the best of British television. Sideshow Bob is a brilliant creation—the burned-out, marginalised American intellectual—literally the cultural terrorist. He has been embittered by having to work as the sidekick to Krusty the Clown, wildly successful presenter of violent cartoons and vulgar commercialism.

There are resonances here—consider the *real* sideshow in American 'high' culture: the PBS poor relation that, underfunded and cast out to fend for itself ever since Reagan, still informs and challenges the American viewer though programs like *American Visions*, Robert Hughes' *tour de force* of American history-as-seen through things made by men and women (seen first, in fact, on ABC television).

Hughes fulfils the most important criterion of good criticism: he shows us how to enjoy good things more deeply and understand them better, even if we do not always agree with all his judgments. The 'visions' under his consideration are mainly the handiwork of Americans, their architecture, painting and sculpture, and the thinking behind them.

If that limits his scope by excluding consideration of the impact of cinema and television, we don't often feel the gap; the richness he offers is so satisfying, so frequently delightful and fascinating. Hughes goes one further than Sideshow Bob: he uses television as his mere tool without bothering to contend with its grip on the perceptions of most other people. That other expatriate commentator, Clive James, knows the power of the medium, and continually exposes its ploys and pretensions. But somehow I feel safer with Hughes. He is a wonderful aphorist, in a heavier vein than James' but he is also a strong moralist who values honest effort and has a fantastic eye. When he lends it to you, you see things in a light that is harsh yet magnanimous. His disapproval of the Crazy Horse project, (where numerous offspring of a dead immigrant Polish sculptor carry on his life's project, busily blasting a mountain twenty miles from Mt Rushmore into 'an Art Deco paperweight the size of a small Alp') is somehow genial, benign. They're working so damned hard after all, even if the aesthetic result is in the same street as those Franklin Mint decorative plates.

His regret over the loss of the natural mountain to kitsch is part of an important thread running through Hughes' thesis: the importance of our links with the natural world. The early episodes of the series deal with the way that Americans saw the incredible abundance of the place, its spiritual significance and the way this translated into art that held somewhere a narrative of hope—the artist as 'God's stenographer'.

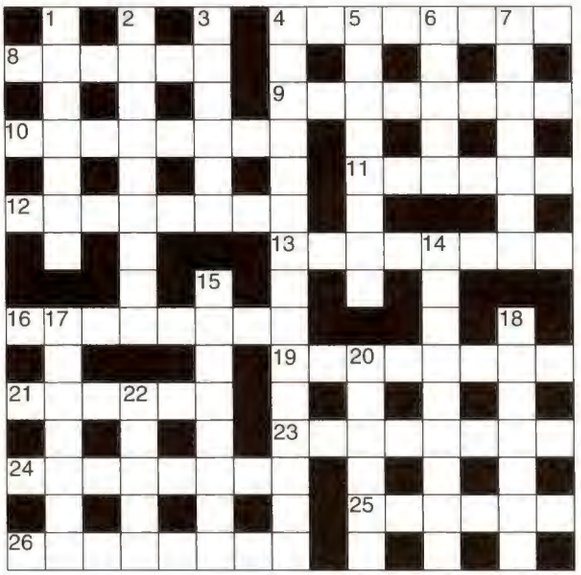
I was intrigued then, that he did not consider Barbara Kruger's work on the American flag, particularly since he showed Frederick Church's famous Civil War painting 'Our Banner in the Sky', with its clear evocation of patriotism as fixed, literally, in the stars, a manifest destiny indeed. But perhaps she comes under his disapproval as one who seeks inspiration from the media rather than from nature: Susan Rothenberg's horses get far longer shrift than Jeff Koons' kitten. The contempt in Hughes' voice is barely contained as he questions the smarmy Koons about the 'spirituality' of his giant plaster kitten-in-a-sock. Koons replies that he is going to beef up the spirituality by giving the image long Bambi-like eyelashes. 'Very spiritual, Bambi, yes ...' says Hughes, and for a moment I thought he might hit Koons. I was reminded of Micawber confronting Uriah Heep: truculent quixotry versus sleek confidence trickery.

Hughes pulls few punches about this sort of thing: the '80s, he says, produced some 'low, dishonest' work. The triumphant, slightly incredulous laugh of the auctioneer, as some rich philistine wins Andy Warhol's flea-market collection of cookie jars for $21,000, reminds us that this is the country where the sucker is never given an even break. If he is a little curmudgeonly about Warhol et al, you can't help respecting his implicit demand that craft and aesthetic must be able to carry the weight of the idea. Postmodern etiolation angers him. In his conclusion to the series he sees 'inventiveness and that sense of possibility flagging badly'. The final episode, 'The Age of Anxiety', isn't *quite* a jeremiad though: he mourns the loss of American art's 'plain empirical speech and spiritual hopes' but then quotes Scarlett O'Hara's 'tomorrow is another day.' There is an anticipatory gleam in his eye as he seems to visualise some parousial new broom. Right on, I say. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer and reviewer.

Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 46, September 1996

Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM



ACROSS

4. Poor Claude's course, just beginning, has come to a dead end. (3-2-3)
8. The scent wafting round near the front of the hospital is malodorous. (6)
9. Returned later, but included refutation. (8)
10. Reproving teacher? (8)
11. Journalist, at the end, returned dead happy! (6)
12. The camp I organised, I insisted, was important. (8)
13. As the result of a prudent U-turn in policy, fortunes were on the rise. (8)
16. That was some catch! A US fraudster disguised as a woman at home in Germany... (8)
19. ... Was she the lady of the house or the schoolteacher? (8)
21. A season bound to bring new promise. (6)
23. When upset, I eat mint in private. (8)
24. The doctor found traces of diseased tissue—hence this prognosis. (8)
25. Go back afterwards, round north, to make payment for accommodation. (6)
26. Make a recording of the badger in its burrow, in case you are asked for the tape. (8)

DOWN

1. Some unusual masters in the world of 7-down prefer their classes divided according to ability. (7)
2. Judges out east are chasteners of those who grab bags from old ladies, for example. (9)
3. Strong desire to remember worst rhyme first! (6)
4. Having a spine with a peculiar mulic curvature, I thought I'd better take my educational history to the job interview. (10,5)
5. Free French to include top tenor in opera script. (8)
6. Run over? (5)
7. Ace made different play in the olive grove of ... (cf. *Paradise Regained* Bk iv). (7)
14. Salesman on edge and getting a rebuke. (9)
15. Unlike 7-across, father has a gift with a sweet and pleasant smell. (8)
17. Subtle aroma, pH level ascertained, emanating from ancient Greek vase. (7)
18. Off the right track about the beginning of Havana cigars? Put the butts in this container. (7)
20. Took examination on anger as a form of irony. (6)
22. Creepy crawly mites are miserable things. (5)

Solution to Crossword no. 45, July/August 1996

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

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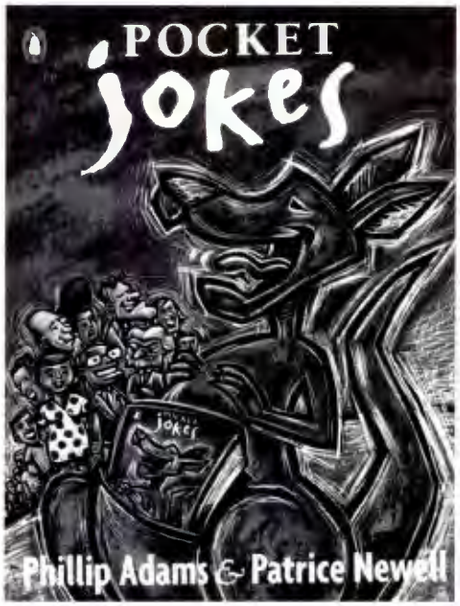

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