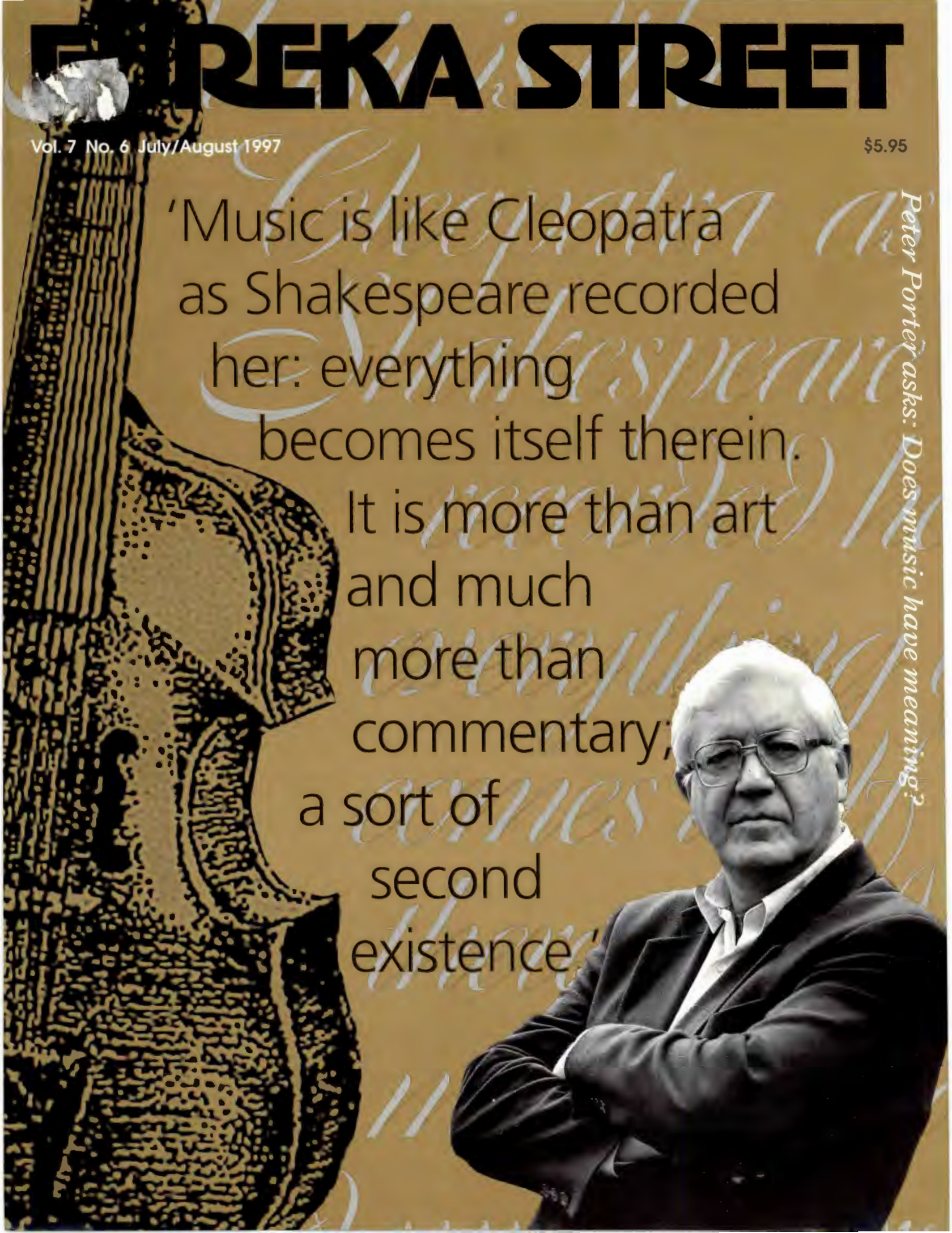
EUREKA STREET

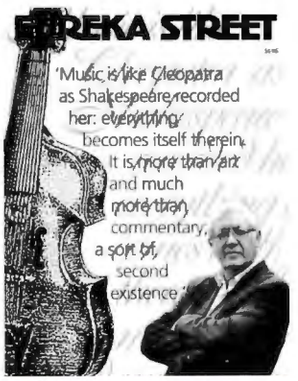
Vol. 7 No. 6 July/August 1997

$5.95

'Music is like Cleopatra as Shakespeare recorded her: everything becomes itself therein. It is more than art and much more than commentary; a sort of second existence.'

Peter Porter asks: Does music have meaning?





'I experience music as a whole world—not just an alternative universe to the visible and tactile one around me, but as a different and confirming grid in which the bewilderments of existence are straightened out.'
—The poet on meaning and music:
Depth Soundings
by Peter Porter, p.26

Australia Council for the Arts

This project has been assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

Cover: Photograph of Peter Porter by Greg Scullin. Design by Siobhan Jackson.

Photographs: pp26, 34
by Greg Scullin
Graphics pp5, 14, 18-19, 20, 22-23, 24-25, 36, 40-41, 43 by
Siobhan Jackson.
Cartoons p12 by Dean Moore.
Graphic p16 by Lucille Hughes.
Photograph p45 by Bill Thomas.
Cartoon p52 by by Pat Campbell.
Cartoon p53 by Peter Fraser.

Eureka Street magazine
Jesuit Publications
PO Box 553
Richmond VIC 3121
Tel (03) 9427 7311
Fax (03) 9428 4450

EUREKA STREET

A magazine of public affairs, the arts and theology

Volume 7 Number 6
July/August 1997

CONTENTS

EUREKA STREET
A magazine of public affairs, the arts and theology

Publisher
Michael Kelly SJ

Editor
Morag Fraser

Consulting editor
Michael McGirr SJ

Assistant editor
Jon Greenaway

Production Manager:
Sylvana Scannapiego
Production assistants:
Paul Fyfe SJ, Juliette Hughes,
Chris Jenkins SJ, Siobhan Jackson,
Scott Howard

Contributing editors
Melbourne: Andrew Bullen SJ,
Andrew Hamilton SJ
Adelaide: Greg O'Kelly SJ
Perth: Dean Moore
Sydney: Edmund Campion, Gerard Windsor

Editorial board
Peter L'Estrange SJ (chair),
Margaret Coady, Margaret Coffey,
Valda M. Ward RSM, Trevor Hales,
Marie Joyce, Kevin McDonald, Jane Kelly IBVM,
Peter Steele SJ, Bill Uren SJ

Business manager: Sylvana Scannapiego
Advertising representative: Ken Head

Patrons
Eureka Street gratefully acknowledges the support of Colin and Angela Carter; the trustees of the estate of Miss M. Condon; Denis Cullity AO; W.P. & M.W. Gurry; Geoff Hill and Janine Perrett; the Roche family.

Eureka Street magazine, ISSN 1036–1758,
Australia Post Print Post approved
pp349181/00314
is published ten times a year
by Eureka Street Magazine Pty Ltd,
300 Victoria Street, Richmond, Victoria 3121
Tel: 03 9427 7311 Fax: 03 9428 4450
e-mail: eureka@werple.net.au
Responsibility for editorial content is accepted by Michael Kelly, 300 Victoria Street, Richmond.
Printed by Doran Printing,
46 Industrial Drive, Braeside VIC 3195.

Unsolicited manuscripts, including poetry and fiction, will be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Requests for permission to reprint material from the magazine should be addressed in writing to:
The editor, *Eureka Street* magazine,
PO Box 553, Richmond VIC 3121.

COMMENT

LINCOLN WRIGHT

Model mazes

ECONOMIC MODELS ARE INTIMIDATING intellectual creations, evocative of scientific objectivity and exactitude.

Economic models in mathematical form, with a statistical overlay, are even more so. So much so that they get their own portentous Greek-sounding name: econometric models. Models that attempt to discern the logic of the business cycle or the effects of a shock to an economy, like a sudden increase in spending, seem so sophisticated that no one could really imagine political concerns entering into the assumptions. Particularly when government agencies use them to justify economic policies that hurt some and benefit others.

But recently, at a conference in Melbourne organised by the Economic Modelling Bureau of Australia, some of the nation's most prominent modellers, who sell their wares to industry groups and government, came into conflict over the hot issue of the real consumer benefits of further tariff reductions in the car industry. The background to the fracas at the modellers' conference was that the Productivity Commission had just completed a crucial inquiry into the car industry, using the econometric modelling provided by the MONASH model.

At present, tariffs on passenger motor vehicles are 22.5 per cent and the Productivity Commission was recommending that they be cut to 5 per cent by 2005. This enraged not only the car industry, but began to worry ordinary Australians about more job losses. The car industry's preferred option, which Prime Minister John Howard finally accepted last month, was to freeze tariffs at 15 per cent until 2005.

Developed by Professor Peter Dixon and Monash's Centre of Policy Studies, the MONASH model initially estimated that the cost of assistance to the car industry in 1994-95 was between $1.7 billion and $4.5 billion in Gross Domestic Product foregone (or gained, depending on whether you were estimating benefits from tariff cuts). Assuming $3 billion in GDP foregone, this represented a loss to consumers of $1500 million worth of purchasing power. Or an average of $3,700 per car. By 2000, with tariffs at 15 per cent, this was expected to fall to $2,100 per vehicle.

Unlike other Productivity Commission investigations, which often seem to tick the same boxes of more deregulation, less government spending and lower tariffs, this inquiry had an inbuilt antagonist, Ian Webber, a director of Santos, Optus Communications and Pacific Dunlop, and until recently chairman of Mayne Nickless.

Webber not only wrote a minority opinion into the Commission's draft report, but he commissioned an outside

modeller (competition!) to challenge the results provided by the MONASH model. And this is where the problems began for the Commission and Professor Dixon. Because the outside modeller, Chris Murphy of the Canberra-based firm, Econtech, came up with a different figure for the benefits of further tariff reduction.

In work for the South Australian Government, Murphy estimated that the real consumption foregone in 1994-95 because of tariffs was less than $100 million. Not $1,500 million. Less than $100 million. This was not just a matter of choosing assumptions, but choosing reasonable assumptions.

Murphy gave good reasons to doubt the Commission's figures. They had ignored, he said, the revenue-reducing effects of tariff reductions. When combined with other assumptions about wages, this exaggerated the benefits flowing from more tariff reductions.

The problem ... is that politicians are not economic modellers. If a technician says the losses from tariffs are in the billions, politicians will most likely listen. Large numbers also scare them. So there is really little room for error at the best of times.

In the final report, the Commission changed its tune, although it did not make this explicit. Real consumer benefits were now expected to be around $76 million, with a revised figure for a GDP gain of $165 million a year. And Murphy down-scaled his estimates of the consumer benefits to about $50 million a year.

The problem here is that politicians are not economic modellers. If a technician says the losses from tariffs are in the billions, politicians will most likely listen. Large numbers also scare them. So there is really little room for error at the best of times. But in the current climate, after BHP's disastrous decision to close the steelworks at Newcastle, it is lethal, professionally and politically.

One participant at the conference, a trade and industry bureaucrat down from Canberra, said MONASH was 'monstered' there. And things were apparently strained between Murphy and Dixon for a while. In other areas, notably the estimates for job losses, how to deal with APEC and the breadth of industry policy, there were other problems. Murphy estimated 12,000 jobs would be lost, MONASH 3,000. And Webber decried what he regards as the naïve requirement to conform blindly to APEC tariff reduction targets and the limited approach of the Commission to industry development.

But the debate is really about more than logic or personalities. It is about how the Howard Government's sensible decision to put industry representatives on industry inquiries—Webber on cars, Philip Brass on textiles, clothing and footwear—created some intellectual competition to people who have been running the reform agenda for 15 years.

Though, as free market economists are constantly exhorting us, the race is never won. Colin Hargreaves, the executive director of the Economic Modelling Bureau, spoke proudly in the aftermath of the Melbourne conference about how all present thought further tariff reductions would benefit the economy. And about how wrong it is that political concerns get into policy debate.

But why be proud about a consensus on tariffs? What's so scientific about a consensus? And what naïf could expect to keep politics out of economics? ■

Lincoln Wright is a finance writer with the *Canberra Times*.

COMMENT: 2

MICHAEL MCGIRR

Back pat chat

We don't mind occasionally patting ourselves on the back. We were delighted at the recent meeting of the Australasian Catholic Press Association in Tasmania that *Eureka Street* was awarded the Bishop Kennedy Award for the outstanding magazine of the year.

The award cited not only the work of the editor, Morag Fraser, but also that of members of our redoubtable production team: Jon Greenaway, Siobhan Jackson and Scott Howard.

Eureka Street carried out the award for the best front cover, (Patrick Dodson in front of the Clifton Pugh portrait of Archbishop Mannix, October 1996, photographed by Greg Scullin and designed by Siobhan Jackson) and was highly commended for layout and design. Our Sydney contributing editor, Edmund Campion, was highly commended for his column in *Madonna*.

In the awards presented by the Australasian Religious Press Association, *Eureka Street* again featured prominently.

It won prizes for the best front cover (Greg Scullin and Siobhan Jackson) and best piece of reporting in a magazine (James Griffin reporting on Papua New Guinea). It was highly commended for layout and design.

Morag Fraser won the award for the best religious item in a secular paper for her Easter 1996 feature in *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

In all, Jesuit Publications won 13 awards. As always, thanks are mostly due to our readers who keep us up to the mark. Stay with us for more quality reading! ■

Michael McGirr SJ is the consulting editor of *Eureka Street*.

LIZ CURRAN

Wrong way on rights

Every person possesses an absolute inviolable dignity. Made in the image of God, women and men have a pre-eminent place in the social order. Human dignity can be recognised and protected only in community with others. **Pope John XXXIII—Peace on Earth.**

THE VALUE PLACED BY GOVERNMENT on human rights and respect for human dignity appears to be diminishing at a rapid rate. So rapid, in fact, that many of the changes have either gone unnoticed or there has been scant opportunity for the public to analyse the rationales provided by Government to justify the changes.

Over the period of the last two governments, Australia, a signatory to a number of Conventions, has been exposed to international censure and accusations of hypocrisy for its failure to sign trade agreements and for other aspects of Government policy. The embarrassment may explain recent attempts to diminish our obligations.

In 1995 the incursions into the human rights arena occurred in the form of *the Administrative Decisions (International Instruments) Bill 1995*. This bill was introduced by the former Labor government to override the High Courts' decision in the *Teoh* case. The bill seeks to exclude bureaucrats from having the responsibility even to consider the few international human rights conventions signed and ratified by Australia when they are making their decisions or formulating policy. But the reality of modern political life is that bureaucrats have considerable power over social security benefits, the delivery of health services, Aboriginal affairs and in safe-guarding principles of natural justice. The Coalition is intending to proceed with the bill.

The '10 point plan', if enacted, will require amendment of the Racial Discrimination Act, allowing for discrimination on grounds of race—which will be out of step with the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Late last year a strong rumour was circulating that Cabinet had before it a paper which examined the possibility of de-ratifying Australia's human rights conventions, and made suggestions as to how such a measure could be made palatable to the Australian public. Despite the fact that a number of agencies sought clarification on this point, the rumour has been neither confirmed nor denied.

In December 1995, Australia submitted its report under Article 44 to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Report was cursory and two years overdue, citing the National Inquiry of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) and the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) into 'Children and the Legal System' as its major step towards compliance!

In October 1996 an Alternative Report of Australian NGOs outlined Australia's poor record in its treatment of children, particularly children who are disadvantaged. The Government's response was to commission the Joint Senate Inquiry on Treaties to review the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A concern is that the review will not recommend that Australia 'pull up its socks' in the manner in which it treats its children, but that it will instead see a watering down of the convention to make Australia's compliance easier.

On 30 April 1997, the Human Rights Committee in Geneva handed down its views under the First Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The committee criticised the Government's treatment of Cambodian detainees finding Australia had 'violated' a number of the Articles of the Convention.

On 24 May 1997 a 'Regional Dialogue on Human Rights' by the Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade was announced (cf the *Weekend Australian)*. The review is to look at the current debate on the interpretation of human rights in the region, looking also at the extent of the ratification of the United Nations human rights treaties.

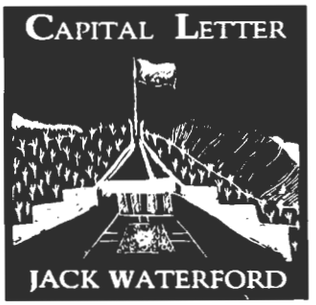
One can only hope that this review will not be used as an excuse to reduce our human rights commitments on the grounds of their being out of step with South East Asia's. Many countries in our region pay scant regard to protecting the rights and liberties of their citizens. 'Bringing our human rights obligations in line with those of the region' is a dubious rationale for Australia's reneging on its international human rights obligations.

ON 13 MAY 1997 THE BUDGET of the HREOC was slashed by 43 per cent. HREOC's statutory role is to monitor Australia's compliance with those human rights conventions annexed to the schedule of its Act. It has an important role in inquiring into alleged human rights abuses and in educating the public about discriminatory practices. It has performed ground-breaking work in areas of homelessness, mental illness, children and the stolen generation. The ALRC has also had its budget slashed by 35 per cent.

Both of these independent statutory authorities have acumulated expertise and input from a wide section of the community. But the recommendations of such bodies are now not seen as a means to improve accountability or to aid the operation of the system so that it respects human dignity, but simply as an attack on government.

Australians must measure the long-term costs of riding rough-shod over other peoples' rights. The current trend—to view human rights as a hindrance to political agendas—is at odds with good and responsible government. If it continues unchecked, we will see a society where individuals are divided, disenfranchised, exposed to unfair and unwarranted intrusions upon their dignity and unable to participate in our democracy. ■

Liz Curran is an executive officer at the Catholic Commission for Justice, Development and Peace.



Black and white (dis)engagement

JOHN HOWARD IS NOT THE ONLY PERSON who is not listening in Aboriginal affairs, even if he has shamed and enraged many Australians by his mean-minded failure to make an unequivocal apology to the Aboriginal stolen children. There is not much sign that the other side is listening either.

The Reconciliation conference was potentially a defining moment in black and white relations, but given the apparent attitude that all of the concessions and gestures must come from government, it was always unlikely that there would be a meeting of minds. Howard might still have had the grace to mouth some uniting words of regret. It is not even unfair to imagine that he, as he hectored the conference, was consciously speaking to a constituency which has been listening too much to Pauline Hanson.

The fact is that the Howard Government does not care a jot about appeasing current Aboriginal leaders, or in indulging their agendas. He will not be blackmailed by any choruses from international voices or ecclesiastics either. It is not just stubbornness, sheer bastardry, or a serious Hanson agenda to complete the dispossession of Aborigines. He is playing a different game, one which involves his desire to destroy a political establishment and a framework of thinking created by his opponents in politics. Aborigines ought now be calculating whether engaging Howard in what he would regard as set-ups is more profitable than some active engagement to get what can be got.

At the moment, for example, the litmus tests for the Government are apparently its approaches to the Wik legislation and to the stolen children. Neither were particularly strong issues only seven months ago. Until the High Court's Wik decision, few Aborigines were confident that the litigation would open any doorways at all. Personally, I am very sceptical about whether any were opened at all, even assuming that the Government would not effectively override it. Most Aborigines will not be affected in any way because they never had any opportunities for claims under Wik (or Mabo, for that matter either).

The stolen children inquiry has been around for some time, and perhaps its most important work was in its evidence-gathering phase, in its giving the victims their first platforms not only to speak of their pain and their dispossession but to lay bare a policy which was conceived to break up Aboriginality.

Those who set up the inquiry saw the importance of revelation, acknowledgement and reconciliation, but what has been on some people's minds—questions of individual compensation—has never been on the wider political agenda. Were it so, many ordinary people who were appalled at Howard's response to the inquiry, would still have many questions and end up on his side of the analysis.

The point is that the Government's approach to such issues is powerfully symbolic of its broader approach to Aboriginal affairs. Symbolism does matter. The signals which government has sent, non-stop since being elected, have been almost invariably appalling. But there is something too in Howard's words at the conference about reconciliation not working if it puts a higher priority on symbolic gestures and overblown rhetoric than the practical needs of Aboriginal Australians in areas like health, housing, education and employment.

One of the reasons why is that Aboriginal affairs have persistently foundered by there being too many eggs in one basket. That basket has often been not much more than a slogan—land rights, or self-management, or reconciliation or whatever. At best they have set up hopes which are almost bound to be dashed—by Labor politicians as much as Liberal ones. At worst they distract attention from the genuine hard work of not only building up physical and social infrastructure in Aboriginal communities, but building up a genuine political framework in Aboriginal affairs in which the social and political interests of Aboriginal Australians are brokered rather than begged, dispensed or dispensed with.

The time is right for a radical rethinking of a lot of policies in Aboriginal affairs, and it might lead to some accommodations with an indifferent Howard. No one knows the need for such a rethinking better than those who suffer from what is happening and what has been happening over the past 15 years. Inside Aboriginal Australia there is plenty of criticism of the structure of organisations, of the way services are being delivered, and plenty of ideas about how things might change for the better. While there might be plenty of criticism of government, there is ample awareness that the basis for real change, and for any real liberation from mendicancy, lies with Aboriginal communities and organisations themselves. Some of the analysis and some of the ideas would strike deep chords within the present government, if only the two sides could speak honestly to each other.

IT IS QUITE EASY TO UNDERSTAND the suspicions of the Aboriginal side. The Government has pandered to prejudice and misinformation in the community. The struggle is seen as saving what one has rather than achieving more. The dialogue between the leaderships is more focused on restatements of attitudes and resentments, and, often on vilifying each other.

But there is not going to be any breathing space. The Government is not going to bow under the weight of the sermons or the editorials, and cravenly admit it was completely wrong and hand everything back. Aborigines will not discover that the Howard Government was just an unpleasant interlude before Labor was restored and heaven returned to earth again so that we could all have more of the same which has brought us to this pretty pass. The Senate, or other devices, can make no effective difference either. It would be nice if the symbols were right and if more than lip service were paid both to reconciliaton and a sense of partnership, but it takes two sides to do that.

When I think of the stolen generations, I think not only of the pain of those separated from their kin, but of the lives which have been wasted as Aboriginal affairs has failed to progress. After all of the hopes of three decades ago, there has been a new generation, white as well as black, who have encountered mostly frustration and despair—a time that was taken from them. If everyone does not get a bit practical there will be yet another one. ■

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

Time to act

From Dr Thomas Mautner
Department of Philosophy, ANU
The National Library of Australia is accountable, Mr. Horton writes (*Eureka Street*, May 1997). The problem is that it has not been held to account.

By now, most members of the Council of the NLA must feel embarrassed, as they discover that they have, no doubt unwittingly, presided over a large-scale intellectual and financial derailment.

What would be the position of the directors of a public company in a similar situation?

Many calls have by now been made for a public inquiry, designed to get the NLA back on track—that is, again making collection-building a central activity. To hold a public inquiry does indeed seem a good idea.

Thomas Mautner
Canberra, ACT

Mea culpable

From I. Goor
Materialism, overly much concern about economic growth, envy of those who are cleverer, happier, have a bigger house or maybe get a bit more than I think they should, these are all human characteristics.

Not attractive, nonetheless human.

I even have sympathy for Mr Howard, who after all is grasping at political straws, but I really feel something putrefyingly sick in the human psyche when I think that some people will actually believe his reasoning when he says he can not apologise because of legal implications.

I no longer wrack my brains as to why he did not see fit to curb Pauline Hanson by word, at the very beginning.

Politics is all there is to the man. I do hope though he one day has the chance to realise there is more to humanity.

I.Goor
Tamworth, NSW

Not so

From Brent Howard
In his article 'Life and death matters' (*Eureka Street*, May 1997) W. J. Uren seriously misrepresents the presentation of Helga Kuhse, Peter Singer and Peter Baume in the February 17, 1997 edition of *The Medical Journal of Australia*.

Eureka Street welcomes letters from its readers. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters may be edited. Letters must be signed, and should include a contact phone number and the writer's name and address. If submitting by e-mail, a contact phone number is essential. Address: eureka@werple.net.au

Fr Uren claims that Kuhse and colleagues assert that legalising active voluntary euthanasia (AVE) 'will ensure' that competent patients are consulted before decisions for euthanasia (of any form) are taken. However Kuhse et al. make no such assertion.

Uren writes that Kuhse et al. maintain that with AVE legal '[n]on-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia will ... either be eliminated or become voluntary'. However this contradicts his contention that Kuhse et al. state that AVE legalisation will *'reduce* the incidence of non-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia' [emphasis added]. 'Reduce the incidence of' is quite different from 'eliminate' but Uren uses the terms interchangeably.

Repeatedly Fr Uren states that Kuhse and her co-workers claim that behaviour *would have* been different had AVE been legal, or *will* be different if AVE is legalised, but, based on the MJA article, these statements by Uren are simply wrong. Here's what Kuhse and co. actually say:

'Our study raises the question of why some Australian doctors choose intentionally to end the lives of some of their patients without the patients' consent, especially in situations where the patient is competent and could be consulted. While this issue remains the subject of further empirical research, it may be that, because existing laws prohibit the intentional termination of life, doctors are reluctant to discuss medical end-of-life decisions with their patients lest these decisions be construed as collaboration in euthanasia or in the intentional termination of life.'

Uren has blithely ignored the remark about further research and has substituted 'is definitely', in each case for 'may be that'. Surely it is not too much to expect that your writers be capable of distinguishing between 'will' and 'may', and 'may be' and 'is'?

Fr Uren writes that, '[T]he survey, at least as published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, does not support the authors' stated conclusion that if euthanasia were legalised in its active voluntary form, the incidence of non-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia would be reduced,' but this is not the authors' stated conclusion. The second sentence (after the first comma) in the passage by Kuhse et al. quoted above is *not* presented by the authors as a conclusion drawn from their research; rather, it is offered as a plausible answer to an important question the data provokes (a question posed in the first sentence and not answered by the data itself). Interestingly, Uren goes a long way towards agreeing with Kuhse and her colleagues when he writes:

'Perhaps, the reason why the incidence of non-voluntary euthanasia and involuntary euthanasia in the Netherlands is significantly less than it is in Australia is because they do have some form of legal condonation while we have none.'

It is theoretically possible that the lower rate of voluntary euthanasia in Australia than in the Netherlands, and the higher rate of non-voluntary euthanasia in Australia than in the

This month,
the writer of each letter we
publish will receive a six-pack of
Eureka Street postcards.
Keep in contact!

Netherlands, are both entirely unrelated to the legal status of AVE in the respective nations but it is extremely unlikely. Therefore, those who are interested in promoting patient autonomy (and Uren refers without demur to the notion of such autonomy) have good reason to support the legalisation of voluntary active euthanasia in Australia.

Fr Uren should note that the Kuhse survey was accompanied by two AMA-initiated questions. In the Senate Committee report the AMA questions and results are given as follows:

Did your perception of the law, as it applies [in] your State and Territory, inhibit or interfere with your preferred management of the patient and end of life decision?

Yes: 92 [8 per cent of respondents]; No: 1008; No answer: 12.

Would enactment of the laws providing defined circumstances in which a drug may be prescribed and/or administered to patients with terminal illness, with the explicit purpose of hastening the end of life, have enabled your patient to receive better and more appropriate care?

Yes: 96 [17 per cent of respondents]; No: 467; No answer: 549.

We have here powerful evidence that the law affects behaviour and that the current ban on AVE in Australia is to the detriment of many grossly distressed people.

Brent Howard
Rydalmere, NSW

W.J. Uren replies:
I am delighted, if somewhat surprised, that Mr Howard believes that Helga Kuhse, Peter Singer and Peter Baume do *not* wish to draw the conclusion, but only plausibly to suggest (for reasons apparently altogether independent of the survey), that the legislation of active voluntary euthanasia will lead to the reduction or even elimination of instances of non-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia.

As I claimed in my original article, the survey data does not support this suggestion/conclusion. So I am totally in agreement with Mr Howard. We differ only over the legitimacy of the inferences which we are willing to impute to the authors of the survey.

For myself I had thought that they were arguing from their survey, obliquely to be sure, that the legislation of active voluntary euthanasia would promote patient autonomy by encouraging doctors to be overt in canvassing euthanasia with their patients. This is an argument that needs to be made, as the present practice of active voluntary euthanasia outside the law is accompanied by significantly more instances of nonvoluntary and involuntary euthanasia both in Holland and in Australia. So, paradoxically, overall patient autonomy is threatened rather than promoted by the present practice.

I had thought that Professors Baume and Singer and Dr Kuhse were attempting to make this argument. But I am happy if, as Mr Howard avers, they are not. Like the doctors who gave no reasons for not consulting with their patients before taking end of life decisions, they must be more coy than I had previously given them credit for. And the argument, then, still needs to be made by *independent*, not just 'further', empirical research. From the present survey I argued that it is not even 'plausible'—it is merely one of a whole gamut of possibilities. Hence my 'perhaps'.

Finally, I must take issue with Mr Howard's statistical analysis of the final AMA question in the survey. But, firstly, why were the results of the two AMA questions not published with the original MJA article? Because the first question showed (Question 24: Did your perception...?) that the overwhelming majority of doctors believe that the present laws precluding euthanasia do *not* interfere with or inhibit their preferred management of the patient at end of life? This response coheres with other recent surveys of doctors on this matter.

Then, specifically with respect to the second question, doctors who answered 'No' to question 24 were instructed in the survey *not to answer this second question* (Question 25:

Would the enactment of laws...?). There should have been only 92 replies to this further question. There are no valid statistical conclusions ('17 per cent of respondents'!) that can be drawn from the 471 doctors who ignored this instruction or the 641 who followed it.

W J Uren SJ
Parkville, VIC

When yes/no doesn't go

From Margaret O'Connor

I write in response to W J Uren's article 'Life and Death Matters'. His clarity about the factors that complicated the Euthanasia debate and subsequent deflection to issues of politics between States and Territories seemed difficult to isolate at the time. So it is helpful to see these separate and independently important issues listed.

What is of more interest is the results of the survey on 'End-of-Life decisions in Australian Medical Practice' and the unanswered questions he raises at the end of the article.

The 'Yes-No' method of surveying is a perfectly acceptable method of measuring community opinion. However, in difficult ethical debates, it must be recognised that individuals may not have a view that is totally 'yes' or totally 'no' to an issue. Other factors may impinge on a respondent's answer, so that in some situations they may answer 'yes' and in other situations 'no'. Therefore the accuracy of the results of the surveys only structured to give a response that is 'yes' or 'no', is questionable.

My experience with yes/no type questionnaires was tested when I was involved in replicating the nurses' attitudes to euthanasia survey undertaken by Kuhse and Singer in 1991 (Aranda & O'Connor, *Australian Nurses Journal* Vol 3 No 2 August 1995). The survey originally used by Kuhse and Singer was given to nurses unaltered except that at the end of each section, we requested stories of nurses' experiences with requests for euthanasia. The group of nurses chosen were both Oncology Nurses and Palliative Care Nurses, unlike the nurses from the original Kuhse and Singer study, who were chosen at random.

Not a lot of difference was revealed in the quantitative answers, but in the story-telling, nurses qualified their answers in many ways. Of paramount importance to the nurses was the opportunity to expound on their experiences in terms of the context in which a request for assistance with dying had been made things like the disease process, how the terminally ill person's symptoms had been managed, the sort of supports they had, and their family situation. These were issues that were unable to be captured by simple 'yes' or 'no' answers.

It was also clear to us that even if a nurse was morally opposed to euthanasia, it did not preclude him/her from relating to a request for euthanasia in some circumstances. It also did not mean that the nurse could not talk through the request with the person, seeking to understand why the request had been made and if there was any assistance that could be given. This recognises that a request for assistance in dying is a *process*, not a single request that is then accede to. The nurses in our survey (who were chosen because they commonly work with those people who have a terminal illness) also suggested from their experience that requests for euthanasia were neither common nor enduring.

I therefore suggest that there is much work to be undertaken in the community on this issue. As Fr Uren has demonstrated, ascertaining superficial answers and drawing questionable conclusions seems an unhelpful way to move debate forward on such a complex and emotional issue.

Margaret O'Connor
Hawthorn, VIC

Remember them

From Ruth Crow

On May 28 at the beginning of the *People Together Forum on Recreating Community* we had a minute's silence to think about reconciliation. I hope this way of starting meetings will be widely practised.

Ruth Crow
Nth Melbourne, VIC

Left overs

From Dr Philip Mendes

It is always rather amusing reading a committed socialist revolutionary such as David Glanz trying to

deconstruct the discourse of the Parliamentary ALP Left (*Eureka Street*, June 1997).

Having said that, in spite of his political preconceptions, David does a fairly good job in identifying the key ideological challenges and tasks facing the Labor Left.

As with most of the international social democratic Left, the ALP has experienced an ideological hiatus over the last 20 years due to the collapse of Keynesianism, and the triumph of a revived economic liberalism. Nevertheless, politics moves in cycles, and economic rationalism is increasingly on the nose as its prescriptions lead to ever growing poverty and injustice. To date, however, the mainstream Left has failed to develop a viable political alternative.

One of the prime reasons for this ideological vacuum is that the centralised welfare state recommended by the Left has arguably failed to help the people at the bottom of the ladder. Whilst social security benefits have protected beneficiaries from destitution, the method of their provision by insensitive bureaucrats has often been repressive and dehumanising. Moreover, the heavily targeted benefit provision favoured by the Hawke/Keating Governments has only exacerbated the distance between the 'working battlers', and the 'non-working scroungers'.

It is probably unrealistic to expect the contemporary ALP Left to renew its earlier commitment to socialist rhetoric, or to man the barricades in defence of outdated concepts. However, there is an alternative to coöption. That is to advocate policies inside and outside of Parliament which contest the rampant economic rationalism that is destroying people's hopes and dreams, and fuelling support for populist extremists like Pauline Hanson.

At the very least, the ALP Left should be emphasising that the free market agenda will never be compatible with fair and egalitarian outcomes; advocating serious tax reform leading to an increased revenue base in both the direct and indirect spheres that will be sufficient to fund essential government services, and to redistribute income to the disadvantaged; arguing for a serious public sector job creation program to create employment for all those who want to work; and developing a welfare system that promotes social solidarity and the dignity of the poor and disadvantaged, rather than just the alleviation of poverty.

None of this involves a revolutionary challenge to capitalism, but it would mean the ALP Left joining with unions and community groups and think tanks such as the Evatt Foundation in presenting a serious ideological alternative to the current dominance of the Howard/Institute of Public Affairs agenda. And despite what many think, it may well be popular

Philip Mendes
North Caulfield, VIC

Flying Crown

From Graham Little

My disappointment in the Casino is that it hasn't gone far enough. An insurance company running the airport. How dull! I was hoping for a consortium of Crown Casino, Qantas and Cathay Pacific—the logos on the planes could be suitably adjusted. Get a bit of entertainment back into flying.

It just needs a little imagination and hard work. At the back of the plane, only small bets of course—like on whether the flight will arrive late or early, whether your luggage will be in Melbourne or any of a list of capital cities in the region, that sort of thing. With the odds and the winners flashed on a screen in front of you.

(The children will sit facing backwards. It's safer anyway and you wouldn't want them seeing too much of the tray-table dancers.)

Further up the plane, probably Business Class, the bets will be bigger of course—like what's the chance of an engine blowing out? On scoring an emergency landing? On a mid-air collision (a) going into New Delhi (b) on X Airline or (c) a DC10? Fun things like that.

And the front of the plane? Ah! The high flyers!

Big, big bets, of course. But let me tell you the real excitement—the Crown *pièce de résistance*—it's winning a place on the Crown Executive Jet. Where's the excitement in that?, you say, well-used to executive Jets.

Well the answer is this isn't any ordinary Executive Jet, it's Crown's high-rollers jet which—like Victoria itself—is on the move and open for business 24 hours a day, seven days a week, three-hundred and sixty-five days every year, including Easter, Passover and Grand Final day.

And never lands to re-fuel.

Never lands? You have to realise these are the highest of your high rollers, the transcendentally rich high rollers, and they've seen everything. They are up here in the gold Executive Jet because our own Crown Casino can give them a game no other casino has dared to give,

It's known in the trade simply as *The Major Event.*

And it's wonderfully simple, as great ideas usually are. You've played musical chairs?

Well, think of The Major Event as a game of one parachute short.

You see, the State Government has allocated Crown space out in the bay to dump an Executive Jet every so often. All in the line of business. Not every night, that would cheapen it, take away the thrill. But often enough. And of course they sell tickets to it, thousands of people go out in boats to see the plane crash.

So you take off, eat a great dinner, terrific wines and all that, and then they start The Major Event—you start playing for a parachute. Choose how you want to play—the House, needless to say, has its parachute on already—and just Go for it!, as they say in the ad.

Have the time of your life, hang on the luck of the cards, and your skill, of course, till the last chute's yours, you put it on—don't look back at the poor guy whose luck just ran out—and sail down watching the plane crash ahead of you.

Guys say when you've done it once, there's nothing else.

See what I mean? The Premier's right, as usual. All we need is more of a sense of fun.

Graham Little
North Carlton, Vic

THE MONTH'S TRAFFIC

Due credit

THAT WHIRRING SOUND you can hear is not the air conditioning on the blink but Ben Chifley revolving in his grave as bank profits soar. Westpac made $1.1 billion after tax in 1996, National Australia $2.1 billion, ANZ $1.1 billion—veritable mountains of money. Yet, while there are plenty of customers ready to curse their enforced contribution to the bottom line, the very existence of these corporations seems beyond question.

Not so 50 years ago. On Saturday, August 16, 1947, Labor Prime Minister Chifley threw Australia into turmoil with a 46-word press statement that declared his government's intention to nationalise the banks.

The passage of the Banking Act was a foregone conclusion. Labor not only had a clear majority in the lower house, but crushing control of the Senate by a margin of 33 to 3. For Labor stalwarts this was a momentous occasion, the realisation of a policy plank that had been part of the platform in one wording or another since 1916.

For Chifley's generation, the impact of the 'great bank crash' of 1893 was within living memory. The 1930s Depression reinforced their determination to control a banking system that seemed to be responsible for mass misery.

But Chifley's timing, and tactics, turned out to be way off course. Labour historian John Arrowsmith argues that by 1947 a number of factors were running against Labor. In the 1930s genuine and widespread poverty fuelled popular resentment against the banks. In 1947 the average worker's main concern was not earning a wage but spending it.

'A million people were coming out of the armed forces. There was an enormous pent-up demand for all sorts of consumer goods,' says Arrowsmith. 'Savings were at twice their 1939 level.'

Industry was still shifting from wartime priorities. There was an 18-month waiting list for a Holden. News that a shop had received something as modest as a consignment of nails was enough to set the bush telegraph buzzing.

Labor, which stuck to unpopular measures like petrol rationing, was beginning to falter. While workers were gaining pay rises and winning the right to penalty rates through unprecedented strike action, they found Labor opposing them every step of the way. So when the banks and the conservative parties challenged the Act, they met remarkably little resistance.

Enormous resources were put into the anti-nationalisation campaign. Bank advertising in the press tripled in September 1947. Literally millions of leaflets and pamphlets were in circulation within months. By November, around 1000 public meetings had been held, some attracting thousands and many attracting 500 or more.

The banks had an important advantage—the virtually unanimous support of their employees, who formed action committees and became the public face of the anti-Labor campaign. Some 655,000 protest signatures were collected across Victoria and NSW.

By contrast the response from the ALP and the unions was desultory and timid. Grand plans petered out into a few public meetings and leaflets. It was often only the Communist Party and unions influenced by it that put real effort into backing the Act—which in turn fuelled the new Cold War propaganda machine of the Right.

Arrowsmith, then a CPA organiser, remembers going around western Victoria to rally the troops. 'I was staying in a cheap hotel in Stawell and word that I was there went around very quickly. People were looking and whispering. They were difficult times.'

The banks' campaign succeeded. The High Court ruled the Act unconstitutional in 1948 and the Privy Council concurred in 1949. By this time Labor was awash with problems and legal defeat was just another nail in the coffin.

Fifty years on, the players in this drama have changed in ways both momentous and subtle. Labor, for one, is quite a different creature. The shift can most clearly be measured in Paul Keating's decision to sell the Commonwealth Bank rather than buy the others. The belief that Labor could use state ownership to control the economy in ways that might moderate the worst of the boom-bust cycle and provide benefits for the ALP's supporters has been marginalised. Keynesianism is dead, long live the market.

But the shift is also reflected in the way that Labor has learned to massage the media and the public. In 1947, Chifley let a month go by before he commented on his 46-word statement and another month elapse before he put forward a defence of his proposition. As an ALP organising secretary put it, announcing that a short-lived pro-Act campaign was over, 'There is no need to flog it. The Government is merely introducing a proposal that has been a basic plank of the Labour Party's platform for 30 years.' The idea that a parliamentary majority is enough in itself sounds as quaint today as the creaking of a cart wheel.

Bank workers, too, have changed. 'I can't remember one bank officer saying they were in favour of the Act,' says Arrowsmith. 'Being a bank worker was a champion job. Now they're tuppence a pound.'

The erosion of job security has seen a rise in clerical militancy that few could have imagined in 1947. Like other workers, bank staff attend mass meetings of thousands and walk off the job. Their employers have also evolved into a different breed. In Chifley's time the banks were largely local, if not parochial. Today, the National Australia Bank holds 46 per cent of its assets overseas and the ANZ operates in 42 other countries.

Other things remain the same. Banks devote considerable time and resources to bolstering public justification for their activities, priorities and, of course, their dividends. Labor, for its part, remains just as wedded to the constitutional and gradual path of change as it was under Chifley.

Yet the question remains: would state ownership have been any worse than a private system of operation that gives us a glorious choice between four sets of bank charges, four sets of branch closures, and four sets of 'downsizing'?

—David Glanz

Our move

I KNOW HOW GARY KASPAROV feels. After the chess grandmaster was bested in the sixth game of a match against the IBM super computer, known by the sinister moniker 'Deep Blue', he chucked a wobbly and told the world, 'I'm human, when I see something beyond my understanding, I'm afraid'. I dare say that most of us mere humans on this planet would understand his reaction.

Gaz old son, welcome to the last decade of the millennium. If you think you've had your intelligence insulted and faculties superseded, you should take a tour through my house of appliance horrors. These things are supposed to assist us in our endeavours and make life a little more comfortable. Not true. I find myself constantly outsmarted by an angry mob of silicon-inspired evil geniuses.

My chief nemesis is the video recorder. An innocuous-looking box that provides hours of viewing entertainment? Wrong. It is a seductive and dangerous gadget—something like those sirens who used to draw hapless sailors onto rocks.

Until recently I had an ageing machine that delighted in torture. Just as the tape approached a crucial moment, it would have conniptions and stop. After seizing up it would then bunny-hop its way through the video, beeping with glee each time it shuddered to a halt. My final retribution, after many hits and slaps (violence is the honest response of the profoundly ignorant), was to drop-kick it into a cupboard.

The arrival of a new flatmate brought salvation in the shape of a sleek new video recorder with everything on it except a gear stick. And fair enough, it plays tapes beautifully. But just try to program the bastard to record. It takes about 15 minutes and all the *nous* of a World War II code-breaker to complete the task. If it actually records the show I want depends on what kind of mood it is in. For my tastes, Lithuanian folk-dancing is not the perfect substitute for the AFL match of the day. The previous contraption was cranky and unreliable; this one is smug and contemptuous. I'm not sure which is worse.

Now let's go into the kitchen, shall we? There we'll find the microwave oven, that handy little helper. I used it the other day to defrost a couple of steaks. I punched the correct weight into the control pad, which it then translated into the time required. When I returned, summoned by the machine, the meat was half-cooked and greyer than a July day in Melbourne. Passing across the read-out display was the message 'Enjoy your meal'. Smart arse.

Finally let me introduce you to the alarm clock. My fickle version of this convenient little device will always wake me up with a vengeance the mornings I've got nothing on, but have an early start or a flight to catch and there's no chance she'll be working. No rhyme or reason about it—it's just a plain old conspiracy.

Now you may consider these the rantings of a paranoid luddite, and you would be absolutely right, but if the world's greatest chess player is knocked over by a Nintendo with souped-up spark plugs paranoia is not so irrational

The IBM team that created Deep Blue salved humanity's burnt pride by declaring Deep Blue to be excellent at solving chess problems but less intelligent than the most stupid human being. Somehow I can't imagine those words improving Gary Kasparov's humour. He reckoned it displayed intelligent thought and at one point even cheated.

But more reassuring was a discussion published in the May edition of *Harper's* magazine. A gathering of scientists, philosophers and writers ruminated on what it would mean if Kasparov did happen to lose to a super-computer. Their conclusion was that such a victory would prove nothing that computers haven't already: that is, that they are very effective tools for processing information and making calculations. They still lack the power of interpretative thought and cognitive leap. As they pointed out, it was not so much man versus machine but man versus a team of computer scientists who programmed Deep Blue.

Yet at one point in the discussion it was not ruled out that software with the ability to write a novel of the quality of *Wuthering Heights* could not be engineered at some

Talking Points

The Catholic Commission for Justice Development and Peace is hosting the 1997 Annual *Rerum Novarum* lecture on Wednesday 30 July at 8 pm. The theme is 'Reconciliation—Making it Real' and the speaker will be **Noel Pearson**, former Executive Director of the Cape York Land Council, lawyer and legal advisor to ATSIC.

For further information on the venue phone the Commission on (03) 9639 4399

* * *

The people of Hebo village in Eritrea, 75 kilometres south-east of the capital Asmara, are organising the construction of a dam to combat the long periods of drought. Since 1994 *The Hebo Dam Project in Eritrea Committee* in Melbourne has been raising money for the construction and aims to get to its target of $1 million—the total cost of building the dam.

The Committee is launching a special effort to reach the $1 million figure. If you would like to assist in this endeavour, please mail your donation to:

The Hebo Dam Project in Eritrea
PO Box 498
North Melbourne 3051

* * *

The South Australian Council of Christians and Jews has objected to recent use of the phrase 'an eye for eye' by the media. The Council disagrees with this literal interpretation of Christian and Jewish teaching, particularly if it is being used to justify the execution of the women accused of murdering Australian nurse Yvonne Guilford in Saudi Arabia,

The council stated that 'The "eye for an eye" passages were understood from Biblical times to apply to *the levels and limits of compensation* that applied in cases of physical injury: the economic value of an eye for an eye, et cetera.'

Such harsh justice is not as typical of the Old Testament and Judaism as the media suggests, according to the Council.

Nor is it as typical of Islam as popular opinion would have it.

time in the future. Miles Franklin judges look out.

Whether having a computer defeat man at his most sophisticated board game diminishes us or not, the symbolism does not bode well for flesh and blood. With this identity crisis we are going through as we approach 2000, we are already asking 'Who are we?' and 'Where do we fit in?'. To add 'Do we matter?' is to ask too much.

But the ultimate consolation for me is that, no matter how clever computers get, how often electronic gadgets humiliate me, or how frequently my movements and actions are governed by the whims of a machine, I can still pull out the plug. When my computer crashes for the fourth time in one day I can take it up on the roof and throw it at the neighbour's dog. When that prerecorded voice asks me for my visa card number over the phone I can scream 'pineapple doughnuts' and hang up.

If and when computers take a stranglehold on rational thought, then it's time to get irrational.

—Jon Greenaway

IN A WORD

Disinterested ***ppl. a.*** **1612 (f. DISINTEREST *v.* + -ed1, or f. DIS- 10+ INTERESTED.) 1. Without interest or concern. ? *Obs.* 2. Not influenced by interest; now always, Unbiased by personal interest 1659. 1. A careless d. spirit is not part of his character 'JUNIUS' 2. His d. kindness to us LIVINGSTONE HENCE Dis·interested-ly *adv.*, ness.—*The Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (1973)**

ONE BOXING DAY YEARS AGO, family pressure forced me to the cricket. It is a memory over which I prefer to draw a veil, remembering much revilement and contumely from spouse, offspring and siblings—I offended their notions of the right and proper by taking a good whodunnit to read during that endless day. I was both disinterested (I couldn't have given a toss who won the toss) and uninterested (the game bored me to sobs). The distinction between the two words foxes some people.

The prefix is the key to the puzzle. According to *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, 'dis' came to us from Greek and Latin, and had an original meaning of 'two' or 'different directions'. However, the special sense of 'disinterest' derives from the privative function of the prefix, a forceful kind of negation. In this sense 'dis' has a narrower application than 'un' which is a wide-ranging Anglo-Saxon prefix (remember Ethelred the Unready? Actually, *unrede* was the real insult to Ethelred: it meant he was pig-headed and incapable of listening, rather than unprepared. But I digress ...)

The distinction between 'disinterest' and 'uninterest' has been blurred so often in the media that you no longer see enraged correspondence about it in the papers from English teachers, philosophers and other lovers of good meaning. Perhaps the papers don't bother to print them any more. Or, more worryingly, perhaps the participants have become uninterested and now view the conflict with disinterest.

There's a paradox here if we're to believe G. M. Trevelyan, who said in his introduction to *English Social History* (1942) that 'Disinterested intellectual curiosity is the life-blood of real civilisation' (*The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*). But we cannot afford to become disinterested about the fate of the real meaning of 'disinterest': the word cannot absorb 'apathy' and retain its proper meaning. Matthew Arnold's view of 'disinterest' was more on the positive moral side: 'I am bound by my own definition of criticism: *a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world*', *Essays in Criticism* (1865) (ODQ).

Questions of interest and disinterest still preoccupy public dialogue. The recent spectacle of some members of Federal Parliament campaigning fiercely to extinguish native title on pastoral leases was rendered even less edifying by Senator Cheryl Kernot's revelation that many of these campaigners were pastoral leaseholders themselves and thus had financial interests in the outcome, that were not declared on the Register of Interests because they were of course only leasing these properties.

All very interesting, really. There is a Chinese curse, it is said, that runs 'May you live in interesting times'. Oh, to live in uninteresting times, governed by properly disinterested parties.

—Juliette Hughes

Hark hark the ark

DISPUTES ABOUT NOAH'S ARK and the Fair Trading Acts would not worry religion people like me if other people did not drag the Bible or religion into it all. But they do!

After Plimer v. Roberts, one commentator asked if the Bible's story of creation was true. With several radically different portrayals of creation in the Bible, it is nonsense to ask if the story of creation in the Bible is true—there is not just one. It's worth asking what it means that there are radically different portrayals of creation in the Bible, but that is a whole other issue. The trial in Sydney was described as 'the great creation debate'. Nonsense again. It was not about creation, but about fair trade and the search for Noah's ark.

The Flood traditions in Genesis 6-9 should be extremely important for those who believe in a Judeo-Christian God. Can fragile, messy, unholy humans be in relationship with an all-holy God? The Flood traditions say: Yes, they can! Gen 8:21 has God say: 'I will never again curse the ground because of humankind'. Were Noah's descendants to improve after the Flood? God knew better: 'for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth' (8:21 cf. 6:5). The all-holy God has come to terms with human unholiness.

Gen 9:8-17 has God establish a covenant with humankind never to do it again: 'never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood' (9:11). Once again, God is portrayed as under no illusions. The human race after Noah will be a murderous lot (9:2-6). But there are no conditions on God's covenant with them.

This is theology at its richest: the nature of the relationship between human beings and God. Two witnesses testify to this faith (Gen 8:21-22; 9:1-17). The text contains two traditions: a flood lasting more than a year or less than a year; counted in 150-day blocks or 40-day blocks; with one pair of all animals and no sacrifice or seven pairs of clean animals and one pair of unclean animals and a sacrifice; with the heavens above and the depths below opening or a great rain falling. Two different traditions. One message of faith: God is committed to us.

I regret that a legal trial about fair trade and snake oil should provide an occasion

for some media to beat up on the Bible—or on religion for that matter. In today's world, religion is too important to be confused with snake oil.

Definitions of religion abound. Finding meaning in life is fundamental. In the West, religion asks is there a God, does God judge or love, and are we humans more than our bodies? Christianity believes God's love led God to become one of us (incarnation) believes that in Christ God lived our human life to the full (death) and was raised to new life (resurrection), and believes that God is present to us now in sacrament (Eucharist) and word (Bible). Whether we affirm, deny, or ignore—whatever—these issues are too important for distractions.

Many want faith shored up by fact. The want may not be met. Mary Magdalene draws the right conclusion from the empty tomb: 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him.' If an ark was found on Ararat, would it be Noah's? What if a sign by the gangway read:

Ben's Boats
better food than Noah
no animals

—Antony Campbell SJ

Strange liaisons

ONE FINDS ONESELF WITH odd bedfellows these days. I was on the Yarra bank the other Sunday afternoon, over the river from the gigantic temple to Mammon which will be the salvation of Victoria, with a crowd of a couple of thousand or so, composed of left-leaning arty types and academics, lots of almost too-typical suburban families (so typical as to be, these days, exceptional)—some even with dogs, clergy-persons of various religions, Christian and otherwise, a number of punks (who left—possibly coincidentally—while the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne was leading the prayers). I ran into many old friends, and it was good to catch up with them: at least two of them are actively working for the downfall of The Patriarchy, and another is working voluntarily for an anti-abortion group. They were all there to give a thumbs-down to Victoria's government-sponsored Casino.

On the stage were pastors, a Lord Mayor, representatives of ethnic minorities, a comedian, musicians (I was chuffed to hear songs by members of the only two extant Melbourne bands represented in my personal CD collection). There was an actress, Rachel Griffiths, who had the previous week strolled rather bravely into the official opening of the casino, bare-breasted, painted white, and carrying a baby. Her contribution to the 'Not the Casino Party' was to deliver a splendid piece of oratory, equal to any I've heard, about the 'values' of present-day Victoria. She was introduced to the crowd by the omnipresent Tim Costello, who publicly reässured her that the church people present would not have been offended by her half-naked protest, and reminded all of us that various Old Testament prophets had done similar things.

I wonder how Tim looks to people younger than me. My generation, and perhaps especially those of us who actually knew him at university, are aware of him as someone who has undergone some sort of sea-change, from a socially conservative Baptist, whose politics (such as they may have been) could have been presumed as not differing much from those of his younger brother. Now he seems to be a sort of left-wing activist, and Jeff has more than once referred to him as the leader of Victoria's *de facto* Opposition.

But I wonder if to those young people who see Jeff as a tough, dynamic sort of a dude, who actually believe the number plates that proclaim that Victoria is 'On the Move', Tim looks regressive and puritanical, an old-fashioned religious wowser? Perhaps so; it doesn't take much to be out of step in Victoria.

This political confusion is not altogether new. It has always seemed a bit odd—to those familiar with either British politics or the English language—that Australia's conservative party should be called the Liberal Party. But there are historical reasons for this. I heard 'last week the Liberal Party *grande dame*, Dame Beryl Beaurepaire, being interviewed by Phillip Adams, saying that she is a liberal, not a conservative—a distinction which Adams felt ought to be commended to the present Liberal Party leadership. She and Adams were discussing the federal Liberal Party. Here in Victoria, things are a little different. I, for instance, regard myself as (at least in some ways) a conservative person, and yet am galvanised to protest, by letter, in print and in person many decisions of the Kennett government. Lefties seem to think that Kennett is an arch-tory, when he's actually some completely new sort of capitalist anarchist. Or is it simply that I'm not as conservative as I'd like to think?'

A telephone correspondent to the Melbourne *Age* said (on the basis of a front-page photo in the paper) that the people worried about changes proposed by the Kennett government to the Office of the Auditor-General looked to him like religious wowsers, intellectual dinosaurs and left-wing academics.

Now, phone-in 50-word letters are not of much use other than to exchange insults or witticisms, but they at least register opinions. And in the present ideological environment, they seem of more interest than more sophisticated types of public discourse, such as letters and analysis, or the meeting (which I attended) to learn about and protest the changes to the Auditor-General's office. Because in the end, what matters, as Jeff knows and this phoner-in—a regular epistolary apologist for the Liberal Party—pointed out, is that although two thousand committed, informed, and concerned people might protest about these things, there are four million people who did not; and while they

cannot all by any means be assumed not to care less about this and other issues, the numbers who do care are fewer than those who know nothing and care less.

I might object that I'm hardly a wowser (I'd come straight to the meeting from a winebar), that as a post-graduate student in a 'cutting-edge' university I could hardly survive (although am I surviving?) if my intellectual interests were too dinosaurish, and that as for being left-wing ... well, I've had articles published in *Quadrant*.

This raises another symptom of the phenomenon which I wish to identify. Having been warned some years back by an experienced academic not to publish in *Quadrant* 'until you get tenure' (ho, ho! as if anyone will ever again get tenure), I was surprised when the most explicitly committed left-winger in my English Department was published in this supposedly right-wing organ. The sands of history and ideology are shifting again.

The *Quadrant* editor caused a bit of a flurry at the time of Victoria's last state election, when he announced that he intended not to vote for Victoria's Liberal government. If there was a heresy trial conducted by CRA or the CIA (or whoever it was who used to be said to finance *Quadrant*), Robert Manne has nevertheless gone on to become the magazine's most successful editor. Is it because there are more conservatives in Australia today, or because certain aspects of the conservative (and equally the non-conservative) agenda may be seen as sheer common sense, in a climate where no values other than crassly economic are respected?

The times have forced notional ideological enemies to acknowledge that they have far more in common with each other than they do with the selfish, the ignorant or the postmodernistically uncommitted. Anyone who believes in anything, anything bigger than themselves, or beyond the most immediate of pleasures and the fastest-of-all-possible bucks, anyone—in short—who has any sort of a notion of the public good, is someone with whom I can talk, and whom I must respect.

These include left-leaning liberal Catholics and socio-political conservatives, who believe in the family and national identity, but not perhaps the Liberal Party or economic rationalism. As John Ralston Saul observes, in a corporist state, 'Active consciousness is seen as a form of rebellion'.

—Paul Tankard

Heavy matters

'Give me a look, meanie.' Binoculars were a good thing to bring to the sumo tournament if you were up near D section. Looking through them I saw five or six seats empty in B section and wondered whether they were ever going to be filled.

No-one showed but we weren't cheeky enough to usurp them. Instead we took turns at the binoculars, and it was actually instructive to vary the long view with the closeup. The crowd was joyous, fascinated and very partisan. The favourite, no contest, was Konishiki, the gargantuan 275 kilo (43 stone in my language) *rikishi* (sumo competitor) who generated a roar of applause every time he marched onto the *dohyo* (the clay ring 4.4 metres wide where the bouts are fought).

Someone volunteered the information that the larger *sumitori* require assistance in the lavatory—they find it hard to reach everywhere on those huge bodies. But Louis XIV never wiped his own bottom either: it was a coveted honour for some nobleman to 'hold the cotton' at his morning *levée*.

There was a faint tinge of derision at first in some of the cheers, because it is very challenging to see so much cellulite—great jelly swags of it rippling as he moved. It's a funny thing, but Konishiki, like several other successful *rikishi* , is Hawaiian, and unlike the Japanese *rikishi* they tend to run to cellulite. The two champions, or *yokozuna*, demonstrate this: Akebono, *né* Chad Rowan in Hawaii, is six foot eight and full of dimples and ridges. The other *yokozuna*, Takanohana, is smooth and curved, rather like a titanic toddler.

But when Konishiki won his first encounter, there were no more jeers. He was not unhealthy: his bulk reminded me of an elephant seal—the heft and slap of the meeting chests was like some enormous buffalo charge heard all around the auditorium. Later, he was dispatched by the smallest *rikishi*, Mainoumi, who at a mere 99 kilos had to do some fiendishly tricky stuff to dislodge the giant. Tactics are all important, because there are no weight divisions—they're obviously unnecessary. Konishiki landed with a whump outside the *dohyo* , and there was a second's hush. Mainoumi went to him solicitously, but the great bull raised himself unaided as always, and stalked out regally to roars of approbation.

And that's another thing I liked about sumo—the crowd were warm and happy; there was a lot of class and magnanimity in the fighting, though it was not gentle, and not choreographed, like World Championship Playacting. (Remember Killer Kowalski, his dreaded Claw Hold, and the relentless superlatives of Jack Little?)

It's probably something to do with the fact that sumo has a 2000-year history and is deeply bound up in Japanese religious harvest rituals. A sumo fighter is more than a sportsman in Japan: he is revered. The *dohyo*, built with great care from clay and straw bales, is blessed by Shinto priests before it is used. To walk over it with your shoes on is supposed to be a frightful solecism, awfully unlucky—something Jeff Kennett and Andrew Refshauge maybe should worry about, since they wore their shoes to present prizes to the winner at the end of the *basho* in their respective cities. There was a red carpet on the *dohyo*, but I don't know if that counted.

The politicians' involvement was overt: messages from John Howard, Bob Carr and Jeff Kennett prominent in the program. The advent of Mr Kennett drew some banter from the crowd ('Fix up Workcover, ya prick!' 'What about Intergraph?') but they were in too sunny a mood to mind, even though they'd booed the hapless *yobidashi* (sort of roadies for the sumo, chanters, sweepers, water bearers) when they carried round silken banners emblazoned with the heraldry of Toyota, Pentax, NEC and other sponsors. The timing of this sudden intrusion of the merchants was pretty sour—it was a semi-final and the build-up had been perfect. We'd all settled into the opening rituals, where the two contestants throw salt on the *dohyo*, do the amazing double stamp, and squat to face off one another and build up enough intuitive harmony *and* aggression to charge each other explosively and simultaneously. So there was a bit of an anti-climax at that point.

But Takanohana's win over Akebono in the final brought back the excitement. Next time I'll be splashing out on front seats.

—Juliette Hughes

This months contributors: **David Glanz** is a freelance writer. **Jon Greenaway** is the assistant editor. **Antony Campbell** sj is professor of Old Testament at Jesuit Theological College, Melbourne. **Paul Tankard** is an academic and freelance reviewer. **Juliette Hughes** is a coloratura soprano.

Uncovering science

ARCHIMEDES HAS ALWAYS BEEN AMUSED by the inclusion of 'The Pianist' as one of the beasts in Camille Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals*. Saint-Saëns, it seems, was only too well aware of how the obsession to become a first class pianist could set one apart from the rest of humanity. Scientists feel and are viewed in much the same way.

One of the roles of the science communicator is to try to bridge that gap between scientist and society. It tends to be three-steps-forward-and-two-steps-back, but lately, Archimedes has begun to wonder whether any progress is being made at all. There appears to be a failure to connect.

Take, for instance, last month's revelation in *The Age* that during the '40s, '50s and '60s medical researchers used children from schools and orphanages to test vaccines for bacterial and viral diseases, including whooping cough, the herpes simplex virus and influenza. The whole media presentation was one of a dark secret revealed, of defenceless children exploited by medical researchers and state health authorities. The story was all the more unfortunate for its potential to destroy the good will developed during Medical Research Week, which had just been celebrated.

When the story emerged, medical researchers behaved as if they had been ambushed. Infectious diseases were a post-war world scourge, particularly in orphanages and schools, and people were desperate to find a solution to them. As for the studies being conducted in secret, nothing could be further from the truth, said the researchers. It was all published extensively in the scientific literature.

However righteous the indignation of the medical research community, some mud has stuck, primarily because the public still regards what goes on in hospitals and laboratories as 'secret business'. At a time when the nation is coming to grips with a stolen generation of Aboriginal children, and with increasing tales of physical and sexual abuse of children in both State and church-based homes, maybe a story alleging medical abuse was inevitable. And the medical research community could have put more thought into how to defend itself in a more human way. Stories of conditions at the time, the sufferings avoided by efficient scientific research and how people felt would have been far more persuasive than stiff, distant and formal outrage.

Even the protestation of openness fails to appreciate that for most people, publishing something in a scientific journal is akin to locking it away in a bank vault. But that is no excuse, however, for the ignorance of scientific literature displayed in the Federal bureaucracy.

The Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs hands out some $30 million in Research Quantum funds to institutions on the basis of the quality of research publications. According to a story by *Age* medical research reporter, Tania Ewing—released on the very same day as that of the orphans—the department has seen fit to exclude from consideration the publishing vehicle which many scientists regard as the pinnacle of success: letters to the UK weekly, *Nature*.

Appearing in *Nature* is a good first step towards higher things. It was in *Nature* that James Watson and Francis Crick first revealed the structure of DNA, and that Australia's recent Nobel laureate, Peter Doherty, published some of his significant findings.

Being idiosyncratically British, the shorter articles in *Nature* are not called papers, even though they are rigorously reviewed by peers. They are known as 'letters'. Letters to *Nature* are an institution. In most parts of the developed world, the publication of a letter to *Nature* would guarantee considerable funding. Not so in Commonwealth education circles. The bureaucrats there apparently do not regard such letters as worthwhile. After all, they are only letters, not real papers. One wonders if they ever listen to the scientists whose work they appraise.

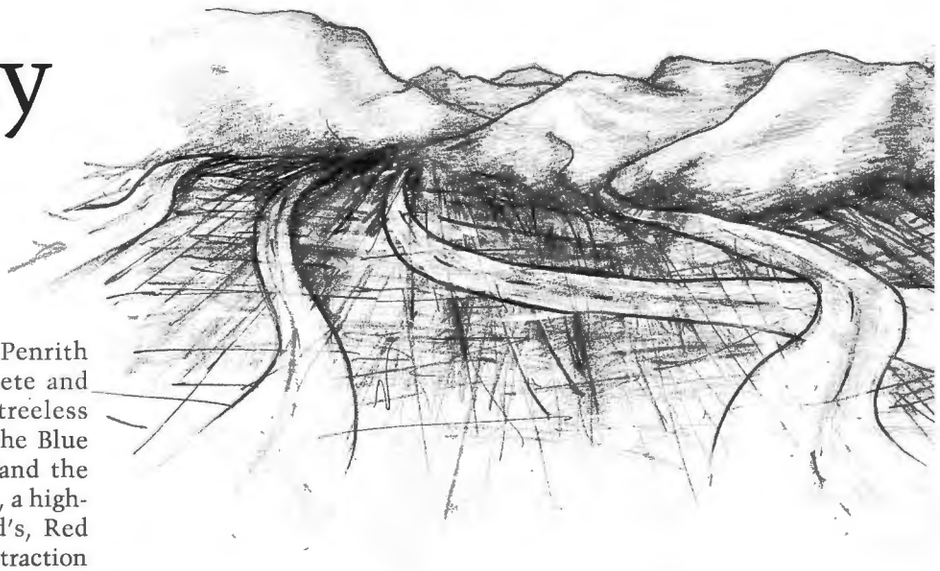
A recent survey conducted for the CSIRO by AGB McNair demonstrated that people are more interested in science and technology and medicine, than in politics, crime, and even sport (though against sport the figures showed an overwhelmingly favourable response for science from women, not men!). If scientists want to take advantage of this interest they have to be prepared to be less defensive and open up. And they also have to prepared to be scrutinised and occasionally misjudged by the media. So says Alison Leigh, a producer with ABC-TV's Science Unit and president of Australian Science Communicators. Equally scientists must learn not to take themselves so seriously.

One creative attempt to break down the barrier between science and society can be seen on the Net at <http://soap.csiro.au>. Yes, it's Australia's first science soap opera, *CO_2LAB*. The story line is about the interactions between the people working in a research laboratory studying climate change. But as creator Simon Torok of CSIRO Land and Water says: 'The soapie is really a Trojan horse to attract people not usually interested in science to find out about current scientific issues'. Every time a scientific fact or concept appears, the reader can take a 'reality check' and travel to a site or sites to read about the actual science involved—slipping in the science with the soft soap.■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

MARGARET SIMONS

What Sydney harbours



ON THE WESTERN-MOST EDGE of Sydney is the Penrith Panthers' Resort Hotel—one wing of an ugly concrete and pebble-dash building standing in a flat, virtually treeless paddock. From here you can see the escarpment of the Blue Mountains to the west, marking the end of urban and the beginning of rural. Immediately to the east is a carpark, a highway, and a ring of fast-food restaurants—McDonald's, Red Rooster and the Lone Star Steakhouse, where the great attraction is that the waiters give you a tub of unshelled peanuts and encourage you to throw the shells on the floor.

In the hotel foyer videos for hire—mostly soft porn and trucking movies—are locked in a steel cage. There are heavy chains on the room doors, fluff in the air-conditioning ducts and odd-looking stains on the carpets. Nevertheless, Penrith Panthers, run by the Penrith Rugby League club, is what passes for a luxury hotel out here, and a social centre.

The other wing of the building consists largely of a hall full of poker machines. It is peopled by the many pensioners of Penrith, who each morning catch the courtesy bus from the shopping mall out to this blockhouse-in-a-paddock.

Staying at Panthers last year, I sat in the breakfast room and watched a group of Japanese tourists, dumped there by bus late the night before, descend the stairs into the paddock, look around, hesitate, then climb the stairs again. This, you could see them thinking, didn't look like Sydney. Where was the Opera House, the famous bridge? Some travel agent in Japan has a lot to answer for.

It is a long time since New South Wales had a government that had any reason to feel secure, let alone govern bravely.

But if the population figures are your guide, these tourists were closer to the real Sydney than they might have thought. More than one-third of Australians live in New South Wales, and of them, about two-thirds live in Sydney. Of these, the majority make their lives in the western suburbs.

No other Australian city has anything quite like the western suburbs of Sydney. They go on for mile after mile, crisscrossed with railway lines and belching buses, pocked with centres known for this and that—the drug trade, the Asian population, Brave New World shopping malls and children's Adventurelands. Otherwise they are flat, sameish and spreading fast, ascending the slopes of the Blue Mountains and moving the demographic centre of the city continually to the west.

The true centre of Sydney is now west of Parramatta, many miles and a long drive away from the harbour, the coast, and all the Sydney trademarks.

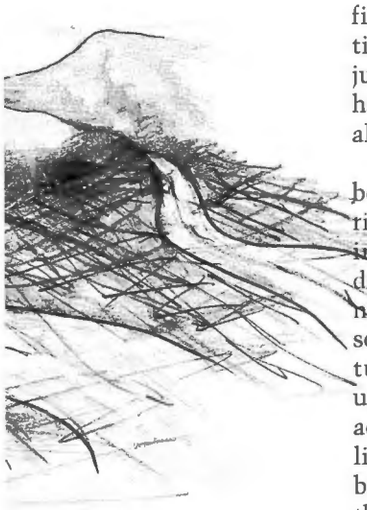
It is in country like this that one can understand why most Australians are so alienated from the political élite and the so-called 'chattering classes'. Most of the people you know in Sydney probably never come out here, yet it was here that the Carr Government won power, and it was here as much as anywhere that the Keating Government lost the support of the people politicians and journalists rather patronisingly refer to as 'battlers'.

The headline stories in New South Wales over the last year have been corruption, and the Olympics. Both have an element of glamour, though one is a cause of shame and the other of pride.

Justice James Woods recently handed down the first final report of his Royal Commission into police corruption. Another report, on pædophilia, will follow soon. Woods recommended radical reform to the police force. Already, the force has a new 'clean skin' commissioner, who has forced restructuring, but has also displayed some worrying tendencies. The Government closed down Special Branch after evidence before the Commission exposed its dubious political agenda. Chief Commissioner Ryan almost immediately moved to reëstablish it under a different name. Unusually in the history of police-government relations in Australia, the Government won, and Ryan was forced to back down.

Meanwhile those with an intimate knowledge of the ongoing fight against corruption, like Garry Sturgess, architect, under the Greiner Government, of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, say that Woods has not gone far enough, that the 'hard men' behind corruption remain in the force.

Probably nobody really believes that this latest episode in the ongoing saga of NSW corruption will be the last, but as former head of the National Crime Authority, Justice Don Stewart, said in an interview recently: 'It may seem like only shoving your finger in the dyke, but you have to shove your



finger in, and keep shoving it in every time you see a hole, or the whole thing just comes tumbling down ... You just have to keep plugging away, and that work always remains to be done.'

Corruption in New South Wales has been a given for a long time. We hope periodical Royal Commissions will keep it in check, but nobody expects it to disappear. As far as change is concerned, neither Royal Commissions nor Olympics seem to hold as much sway over the future of the state as the perpetual unglamorous struggle with inequality, disadvantage and disillusionment with public life, as represented by the political tar babies of the western suburbs. Touch them, and you can't shake free.

It is a long time since New South Wales had a government that had any reason to feel secure, let alone govern bravely. Greiner was brought down when he lost the support of the independents. The Fahey Government was dependent on their vote to get key legislation through—and was seen by its critics as a do-nothing government as a result. Carr began power with just a one-seat majority, and while by-elections have improved his position, he knows that the electorate can be fickle, and a great deal of his energy must be directed to trying to get elected next time around.

About halfway through its term, his Government has charted an erratic though consistently pragmatic course. The west—well out of sight from Macquarie Street, but never able to be forgotten—has been both the government's spur, and its greatest check, both its natural electorate, and its most fickle, both its weakness and its strength.

In its struggle with the west the Carr Government is confronted with the Australian Labor Party's identity crisis. How does one address disadvantage and inequality at a time when state government is caught in a vice of declining grants from the Commonwealth, and overwhelming pressure for balanced budgets and small government?

A POLL CONDUCTED BY *The Sydney Morning Herald* last March, on the second anniversary of Carr's gaining government, showed that if an election had been held, the coalition would have won in a landslide. The anti-Labor swing was uniform across the state, but depressingly for Labor, it showed that 57 per cent of respondents, including more than one-third of Labor voters, thought that Jeff Kennett was doing a better job as Premier of Victoria than Mr Carr was in NSW.

All this at a time when it is more and more difficult for state governments to do anything more than manage. But Carr has a greater need than most other premiers to buy votes.

Crucial to Carr's election was his promise to remove the tolls on the two western motorways that make commuting from the outer west in under two hours possible: the M4 and the M5. Only weeks after taking power, Carr broke his promise, saying that legal impediments in the agreements with the private owners of the motorways made it impossible to remove the tolls. The outcry was instant and bitter.

Carr backed down. Now there is a cumbersome cashback scheme under which commuters pay the tolls to the private operators of the motorways, then lodge quarterly toll accounts and are refunded by the government. The cashback scheme will cost the government somewhere between $58 and $74 million a year. According to a recent Auditor-General's report it has simultaneously tripled the value of the companies that own the tollways, because the disincentive against using their roads has been removed at no cost to them.

Effectively, the Auditor-General said, the cashback scheme had put $250 million of taxpayer's money into the pockets of private companies. It was an example of policy making on the run, and hardly good transport management. Commuters in other parts of Sydney still pay full tolls with no refunds available. But Carr hardly had a choice. Breaking his promise on the western tollways would have probably guaranteed that his government would last only one term, no matter what else he did.

Hospital restructuring has been another humiliation for the government. Inspired by Laurie Brereton's record under the Wran Government, when big resources were prised loose from inner-city hospitals and reallocated to the population centres,

The headline stories in New South Wales over the last year have been corruption, and the Olympics. Both have an element of glamour, though one is a cause of shame and the other of pride.

Health Minister Andrew Refshauge announced in the middle of last year a plan to do a radical reshuffle of hospital beds and scrap up to 1800 jobs, half of them in nursing. The plan also involved moving the big eastern suburbs St Vincent's public hospital to merge with St George in the south, freeing up funds for spending in the west.

Refshauge seems to have forgotten that, unlike Wran's, the Carr Government is not sitting on a big majority. St Vincent's is something of a sacred cow in the NSW health system, and St George is in a marginal seat.

Refshauge consulted Carr on the move, but hardly anybody else, so the shake-up came as a complete surprise to health workers, including the nurses' union that had been one of the Government's most consistent supporters. Ten days after the shake-up was announced, the Government completely backed down, leaving Carr saddled with a commitment to find money for more hospital beds in the west without merging St Vincent's and St George.

Head of Politics at the University of Sydney, Dr James Gillespie, comments 'They fell flat on their faces, and it still isn't clear to me why. They seem to have tackled one of the most difficult issues—an issue they knew was going to be difficult because they helped make it difficult for the previous government—in the most maladroit way.'

One year later, after a budget that has involved tax increases for business and a paltry but popularist handout of $50 a year to the parents of school-age children, it still isn't entirely clear

where the money for hospitals is meant to be coming from.

The Government has announced plans to increase the tax-take from gaming in licensed clubs—for decades some of NSW's most powerful institutions. The result is a giant political battle with RSL, working men's clubs and sporting clubs, including the mighty Penrith Panthers, and a host of others. Many of the largest are based in the western suburbs.

The Government protests that the budgeted $74 million in increased revenue (incidentally, about the same as the amount budgeted for the tollway cashback scheme) is needed for hospitals and schools. The clubs have proposed a compromise. They say the Government should drop the tax increase, but instead allow them to increase their gambling activities considerably, with casino-style computer gambling, jackpot prizes and vast new gambling halls. This, they say, would raise more than the $74 million. The Government is considering the plan. If it accepts, it will be left trying to explain to the electorate why such a big increase in gambling activity is necessary, given the social problems it already causes.

Whatever happens, it is clear that New South Wales will follow in Victoria's footsteps, looking to gambling as an important source of government revenue for basic services.

Carr has said that it is his ambition to be remembered as the education Premier, but like almost everything else in New South Wales, this is an issue impossible to tackle without confronting the west. Earlier this year, a report on the Higher School Certificate showed that students in south-western Sydney were twice as likely to take courses regarded as 'easy', such as contemporary English—as students from the more affluent northern suburbs.

This meant, as schools adapted to meet demand, that capable students in the west were often denied the choice of the more challenging subjects, and as a result were marked down when it came to assessing Tertiary Entrance Ranking (TER) scores. The system was entrenching disadvantage, making it far less likely that a western suburbs student would go on to tertiary education.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOW ORDERED a complete review of the HSC syllabus with a new emphasis on traditional grammar and literacy. As well, over the opposition of unions, compulsory literacy and numeracy tests have been introduced in all high schools. The unions were, however, successful in preventing the test results' use in annual report cards on schools' performance intended to give parents more information.

'To attack literacy is the grossest attack on the needs of disadvantaged children,' education Minster Aquilina protested, but the unions had their day. An apparently uncaring media bolstered their argument. Late last year, after TER scores were released, the *Daily Telegraph* featured on its front page the western suburbs school with the lowest overall scores.

The headline branded the students as 'failures'. As one student interviewed the next day said, the headline would hardly make it any easier for him to get a job. The teachers' union was able to argue convincingly that information on the performance of schools was not safe in the hands of either the government or the media, if the rights of children were to be protected.

Carr also says he wants to be remembered as the Green Premier. Conservationists are only half inclined to grant him the title. Peter Wright, national bio-diversity campaigner for the Australian Conservation Foundation, credits Carr with going to the electorate with one of the most detailed and progressive programs ever presented at a state level, with impressive programs for forestry, coastal management and urban transport. But only some of the promise has been fulfilled.

Legislation controlling land clearing in New South Wales has been introduced, causing fury in the bush. Like other Carr Government reforms, the controls were introduced with no consultation, although in this case there was a good reason. Experience in South Australia demonstrates that too much warning of restrictions can lead to a last-minute frenzy of bulldozing.

However, even the ACF acknowledges that information and support services for farmers affected by the legislation were lacking.

Meanwhile, the Government has succeeded in brokering agreements on forestry, and is meant to be releasing its coastal policy any day now. In fact, it has been expected any day now for almost a year. Meanwhile, Wright claims, the principles behind the policy are being contravened in some crucial coastal conservation areas.

But the biggest disappointment to the conservation movement has been Carr's approach to urban transport. He has dropped his pre-election statement promising upgrading public transport, and instead has given major emphasis to roads and freeways, including a new Eastern distributor to be completed in time for the Olympics. 'He's committing Sydney to dependence on the car well into the next century,' Wright says.

There is a myth in Labor Party circles that NSW elections are won or lost in the bush. Labor has infuriated farmers, but since most of them vote for the Coalition, that is unlikely to lose it votes. Far more crucial is a new battle recently entered by the Carr Government—the privatisation of the electricity industry. It is a sell-off which, the Treasurer has been quoted as estimating, will allow the retirement of all state debt, and leave a few billion over for the crucial spending on those western suburbs hospitals and schools. But the risk is that Labor will lose the votes of the thousands of electricity industry workers in marginal seats like Bathurst and those around Newcastle, already reeling from the planned closure of the BHP steelworks.

Labor MP for Bathurst, Mick Clough, has been in poor health ever since the last election, and is widely believed to be hanging on only to avoid a by-election. Now he is furious with the party. At a recent conference, he accused it of abandoning its ideals over the power industry issue, saying his loyalty to his constituents who work in the industry was now greater than his loyalty to a party that has changed so much he can scarcely recognise it. Clough says he will cross the floor if necessary to vote against privatisation.

Dr Gillespie believes the privatisation has become almost inevitable following Victoria's sell-off over the last few years. The integrated East Coast electricity network means NSW providers now face direct competition from the privatised utilities in Victoria. Nevertheless, Gillespie believes the Carr Government has tried its best to avoid the inevitable. The need

for revenue with which to buy votes, and the knowledge that a Coalition Government would privatise in any case, has forced it to act.

Gillespie says: 'if they get that amount of money from the sell-off into the coffers, they will be more comfortable at the next election, with a raft of costed promises that the coalition won't be able to fault. But the process of getting there with only two years to go is going to be difficult, particularly given the scale of negotiations with the unions ... I think they have done their best to avoid this, or they would have done it earlier.'

The Olympics are the other 'glamour' New South Wales story, with the Carr Government welcoming the distraction they provide from more intractable political problems, while realising that it will carry all of the problems and controversy surrounding the organisation of a major international event, and quite likely not be around to capitalise on the glitz in 2000. The Australian Business Chamber recently accused the Carr Government of lacking any industry policy to increase jobs in the next century. Managing Director Philip Holt said: 'The Government seems to be hanging its employment hat heavily on the Olympics, but is not looking at what happens after that.'

But even here, the real Sydney keeps making itself felt over the picture postcard views, The main Olympic stadium will be at Homebush, a western suburb, and on a site with major toxic waste problems.

At present, the main route to Homebush is the notorious Parramatta Road, where even on Sunday traffic moves slowly, and in a rush hour at little above walking pace. A recent traffic survey found that it now takes as long to get from central Sydney to Parramatta by car in a rush hour as it used to in the days of the horse and cart.

There is talk of dedicated train services, dedicated traffic lanes and special ferry services, but any taxi driver in Sydney will tell you that transport may be a problem in 2000, in which case Sydney's biggest promotional opportunity since it was established may become at least partly another western suburbs lament. ■

Margaret Simons is a freelance writer.

SUMMA theologiae

John Honner culls the theological crop

THE CONTENTS OF *THE AUSTRALASIAN CATHOLIC RECORD*, a venerable quarterly found in most presbyteries and libraries, range from advertisements for money-counting machines to articles like John Hill's well-considered and pressing piece on 'The Decline of Priestly Vocations and its Impact on the Local Church' in the April 1997 number. Against those who claim that the greater involvement of the laity in parishes will accelerate the decline in priestly vocations, Hill argues that, paradoxically, a careful sharing with the laity will in the end contribute to a flourishing of new vocations. His logic is impeccable and his evidence formidable. A former president of the Catholic Institute of Sydney and now parish priest of Pymble in Sydney, Hill's writing combines a provocative edginess with telling scholarship which leaves this reader, at least, smiling with satisfaction.

Another long-established journal in Australia, the Anglican sponsored *St Mark's Review* from Canberra, is enjoying new life under the editorship of Graeme Garrett. The Autumn 1997 number includes an essay on reconciliation by Thorwald Lorenzen, once professor of theology and ethics at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Switzerland, now at the Canberra Baptist Church. 'God's answer to human conflict is the event and the ministry of reconciliation', Lorenzen argues in an elegant essay, thus suggesting that 'The Prime Minister can do no better...than to place reconciliation with the indigenous population on the top of his political agenda.' If only.

And now for the facts. The *Review of Religious Research* of March 1997 offers a quantitative sociological study entitled 'Through the Eye of a Needle: Social Ministry in Affluent Churches'. Previous surveys of affluent churches in the USA had shown that such communities were rarely involved in social ministry. A recent study of 31 such churches, including five Roman Catholic parishes, however, shows that affluent parishes are most involved in social ministry (a) when they follow a more liberal theology, (b) when they involve women in leadership roles, (c) when the lay leaders embrace social justice issues, and (d) when pastors have liberal views and attempt to link faith and social ministry. Now why do these conclusions surprise us?

Edward Idrus Cardinal Cassidy, known to many of his fellow Australians more informally, is the president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The first number of *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* for 1997 contains his long and considered address at Princeton on 'Ecumenical Challenges for the Future'. While the ecumenical wheel turns incredibly slowly at official levels, the 1995 Papal Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* and more recent documents still give hope that 'we are on the verge of a significant breakthrough' and that separated communions can 'live for each other in order to be witnesses of Christ'. Certainly, Lutheran and Roman Catholic dialogue has arrived at consensus on the essential content of the understanding of justification by faith, the very issue which divided these churches at the time of the Reformation. It was also nice to note Cassidy's affectionate footnote to the labours of his childhood friend, the late Fr Ted Stormon SJ, and Ted's great work documenting recent dialogue between the Eastern and Western Churches.

Bravery award of the month goes, serendipitously, to *The Month*, that journal of English Catholicism founded in 1864, which devotes its May 1997 number to the role of women in the Roman Catholic Church: a topic which, as the editor observes, will not go away. Distinguished service awards go to Brendan Byrne SJ, of Jesuit Theological College in Melbourne, and David Coffey, recently returned to the Catholic Institute of Sydney, for the appearance of their articles in the June 1997 issue of the redoubtable Rolls Royce of journals, the American *Theological Studies*. Byrne explores how that earliest of theologians, St Paul, imagined Christ to exist prior to the Incarnation. Coffey, on the other hand, offers a contribution to our debates about the nature of priesthood. It is a credit to Australian theological scholarship that local writers so regularly are welcomed in the best-credentialed international journals. ■

John Honner SJ teaches at the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne and edits the FJ Holden of theological journals, *Pacifica*.

PAUL RULE

Hong Kong: whose colony?

I MUST CONFESS I HAVE A SPECIAL soft spot for Hong Kong. It was the first Chinese city that I visited as a budding sinologist and I can still remember the shock of coming down into Kai Tak airport beneath the washing on the balconies of the high-rise housing and that unmistakable smell of the 'Fragrant Harbour', a mixture of tropical vegetation, charcoal fires and hot oil cooking, sea and bad sewerage, that greets one when the tropical air is let into the air-conditioned cool of the aircraft.

I also recall Hong Kong as a haven of capitalist normality after crossing the border from Cultural Revolution China, and the eminent Australian academic in our tour group who at the old Hong Kong-Kowloon Railway Station one moment thanked God for return to civilisation, only the next to realise his pocket had been skilfully picked.

Some memorable meals, the bookstores that sold mainland Chinese publications unobtainable within the borders of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the haven of the offshore islands, the incredible views of ocean and rocky peaks from a Chinese landscape painting, the old Star Ferry bouncing its way through the wakes of junks and freighters, the night races at the bottom of the world in Happy Valley, the best underground railway system anywhere: such is the stuff of memories.

From recent visits to Hong Kong, though, the dominant memories are of long anguished conversations with friends and acquaintances about the future after 1 July 1997. That day is now upon us and the future remains no clearer. Significantly, I have become more fearful of that future and more sceptical of the intentions of the People's Republic of China towards its new colony while those who have chosen to remain seem more assured. Perhaps it is whistling in the wind. Once the difficult choice is made by those for whom there is choice—a minority of the people of Hong Kong—it may be that they need to reassure themselves that the decision was the right one. The recent polls that show 75 per cent of the people of Hong Kong confident of the future do not enable us to decipher what future is envisaged but it could only be an economic one. The immediate human rights outlook is bleak.

I call the new Hong Kong a colony because the act of take-over can only seem an act of colonisation despite the obvious historical and cultural affinities with the greater China. Today's Hong Kong, apart from the soil and rocks that make it up, is entirely a colonial creation. Even the shape of Hong Kong is changing as the waterfront extends further into the channel separating the island from mainland Kowloon. Hong Kong is being reclaimed from the sea at the same time as it is being reclaimed from Britain. And the new airport near to opening has been blasted and levelled out of the landscape in one of the largest construction jobs in history.

The people of Hong Kong are almost all either those native to the place who have known no other regime than that of the British or those who chose Hong Kong to escape the very government that is about to swallow them.

What would they choose if they had free choice? Self-government and autonomy presumably. But, unlike the Taiwanese, they all recognise this as being entirely out of the question. And despite the jibes by Hong Kong politicians at the British 'sell-out', and the obvious force of many of their criticisms—Britain's lack of preparation for transition in the '60s and '70s, its belated enthusiasm for democracy, and its elastic interpretation of the formal agreements with the PRC—it is hard to see any option for Hong Kong but reïncorporation into China.

It might also be argued that the once-mighty gap between the society and economy of Hong Kong and nearby Guangzhou has all but disappeared. Shenzhen, just across the border, is a mini Hong Kong. Much of the property and business of Hong Kong is now in the hands of PRC companies and individuals. China has infiltrated every aspect of Hong Kong life and the incoming administration has been quite intrusive and open in its manipulations.

What is most likely to change is the rule of law and respect for individual rights. In the long-term China, including Hong Kong, may well move more towards international human rights standards. Certainly many young Chinese both sides of the border, desire and confidently expect this. But the short-term prospects are not encouraging. The recent trial and 11-year prison sentence for democratic activist Wang Dan augurs badly. His crime was 'subversion' for making 'false' claims published in Taiwan and Hong Kong, for example, that 'freedom of speech under the constitution has become an empty phrase'. The irony seems to have escaped his judges.

'Subversion' is prominent in the crimes against the state listed in the new Hong Kong constitution and legislation has been foreshadowed restricting political activities even more than in the older British regulations swept aside by ex-Governor Chris Patten. If the Wang Dan case shows how 'subversion' is to be interpreted, things look bad for Hong Kong activists. As Patten himself commented, in one of those remarks that have so infuri-

I also recall Hong Kong as a haven of capitalist normality after crossing the border from Cultural Revolution China, and the eminent Australian academic in our tour group who at the old Hong Kong-Kowloon Railway Station one moment thanked God for return to civilisation, only the next to realise his pocket had been skilfully picked.

ated both his Chinese and British critics, there must be 'very considerable concern ... about a sentence imposed on a young man for activities which in most places, including Hong Kong, would be entirely legal' (*Guardian Weekly*, 10 November 1996).

The role of Patten will, I suspect, be debated by historians for a long time. This Thatcher man, notoriously on the right in a right-wing Tory Government, must have seemed on his appointment a 'safe' no-waves transitional governor who would see the Union Jack safely stowed away, and keep the natives quiet while the new masters took over. Yet he discovered a zeal for human rights and reform that will certainly make the future actions of the administration of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region more difficult. As the history of revolutions demonstrates, newly won rights are often the most bitterly defended.

In a remarkable interview with *The Tablet* last October Patten claimed to be driven by moral imperatives: 'I'll sleep with Hong Kong for the rest of my life. I've never been in a job where moral issues, where the question of right and wrong, so often infused political judgments and arguments'. Perhaps this Catholic moralism is the reason his actions seem so unpredictable to his opponents.

THE FATE OF THE CHURCHES after 1 July will be a useful weathervane. Will the policy of 'one country, two systems' extend to freedom of religion? Will religious schools function without interference? How long will the Hong Kong Baptist University be 'the only Christian university in China' as its President recently described it?

The Catholic Church has been conciliatory, too much so according to some Catholic activists such as Martin Lee, chairman of the Democratic Party. Cardinal Wu appointed representatives to the Preparatory Committee which 'elected' the new body to replace the more democratic Legislative Council, and has been cautious in his statements. The Hong Kong Catholic Justice and Peace Commission fears that draft legislation foreshadowed by Tung Chee-hwa, the Chief-Executive Designate, will prohibit its activities as 'political' and having connections with 'foreign organisations', a label the Chinese have consistently applied to the Vatican. Hence the quarter of a million Hong Kong Chinese Catholics, as well as the 150,000 Filipinas who provide much of the domestic labour of Hong Kong may well lose their protector.

Tung promises the promotion of Confucian values which seems to be code for a Singapore-style controlled press and controlled judiciary, but it is doubtful if even the Singapore model of economic progress and benign authoritarianism will prevail. The vehemence and persistence of the Chinese attacks on Governor Patten over the last three years have removed the mask of legality and urbanity.

As in so many issues today the outcome in Hong Kong will finally be determined by two things: internal developments in China and US foreign policy. As yet the post-Deng Xiaoping era in China has been uneventful, but this may be because the heirs are still squabbling over the furniture. A younger generation of technocrats waits for power and, on the whole, they seem more prepared to favour the Fifth Modernisation—democracy—than the old men who brought us Tiananmen. Hong Kong may yet provide a model rather than a warning. And the Taiwan problem still remains.

President Bill Clinton has, since beginning his second term, warned China several times of the economic as well as political folly of crushing civil liberties in Hong Kong. The US-Hong Kong Policy Act, passed four years ago, binds the Secretary of State to report in March each year until 2000 on 'the development of democracy in Hong Kong' and to take appropriate action.

One might well doubt the means as well as the will on the part of the US government to back those threats with effective sanctions. It is ironic that the people of Hong Kong must depend on another outside power to guarantee their human rights as they shed their old masters. ■

Paul Rule is a specialist on Chinese history and religion who teaches at La Trobe University. He is a member of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council.

ALASTAIR DAVIDSON

The view of the pariah

Australia is now experiencing the political unrest generated by immigration politics. France has related and more complex problems, and the extremist politics that go with them.
***Saïd Bouamama** works with the* sans papiers, *the people who are resident in France but who lack the documentation that allows them to make a living.*
He is in Australia to do research at UNIRISD/Swinburne University of Technology and at Swinburne's Globalisation and Citizenship *conference, he spoke to* ***Alastair Davidson**.*

'TO EXPLAIN THE SITUATION of the *sans papiers* in France, let me start with something personal.

It is the story of an Algerian friend, who was known for his democratic ideas, above all for his mobilisation of people within Algerian society in favour of the right to freedom of expression. Because of that he was threatened with death by fundamentalist groups.

Despite that, he remained for several years in Algeria. Then his life became unbearable when they threatened his children. It was hell, he could no longer spend the night at home. So he came to France asking for political asylum. He had brought with him, as was required by the procedures for political asylum, proof that there were threats to his life, and freedom. But the French state refused to give him political asylum under the Geneva Convention. In fact, that Convention—which is interpreted in a restrictive manner by the French state—only grants political asylum if you prove that you have been politically persecuted by the state.

He could not prove that he had been persecuted by the state, only by a social group—the fundamentalists. So, he was given a provisional authorisation of residence, which was not political asylum, for two months 29 days (I will explain why in a minute) which forbade him to work or obtain social services, of any sort.

My friend very quickly found himself, neither able to earn his living, or to take care of himself, and was in dire economic straits. He decided to go back to Algeria. after the 2 months 29 days.

Three weeks after he got back, he was killed by the same groups who had threatened him before. For him, not being granted political asylum was the equivalent of a death sentence.

What we must realise is that, unfortunately, his situation is not unique. If we take Algeria alone: there are dozens of journalists, intellectuals, doctors and trade union officials who are obliged to leave Algeria to-day because they are known for their democratic convictions. Naturally they turn to France for political asylum. They then find themselves in a situation similar to that of my friend. They are not compelled to leave but they are unable to meet their needs and so are turned into down-and-outs (*situation de clochardisation*).

There have been three cases in the last two years of people who, after being refused political asylum, were assassinated, despite having proved that their lives were threatened. In France the minimum threshold—here we can see legal hypocrisy—for social services, to be allowed to work, get a place to live, is to have a minimum three-month residency card.

The French political authorities today do not grant these cards. Instead they issue the APS (*Authorisation provisoire de séjour*) for 2 months, 29 days. So with one day more, these people could look for work, a place to live. What is the more scandalous is that these people would have no difficulty in finding work, as they are highly qualified and have left their country only because they have been forced to go. So they are clearly not economic refugees in the classical sense of the term.

This is only one indication of the way things are in France. If we look beyond the Algerians, we find in the *sans papiers* who have been fighting in France for over a year, many more examples of political refugees.

In Lille there is a woman in the *sans papiers* struggle who had to go on a hunger strike for two months even though her poor health was dramatic when she started. This woman is a Somalian who had been persecuted by her state just because she supported the independence fighters in Eritrea.

We have other situations of that sort, for example, from Senegal. In Senegal, there was a liberation struggle, in Casamance which was repressed harshly. The Casamantais who had to leave the country are now in Lille because their lives were threatened. These people had to go on hunger strike for 60 days to obtain a residency provisional permit (APS). So today, in France at least, and in other developed countries, you have today to put plenty of inverted commas around 'political asylum' because so many people see themselves refused 'political asylum'.

Generally, these political refugees are

only the visible tip of an iceberg of a situation of rightslessness—the way of life of many '*sans papiers*' in France.

The '*sans papiers*' fall into several categories. There are political refugees among them, but there are also those people who for many years have lived legally in France but have lost their papers. As a result of laws like the *Loi Pasqua*, they have been caught when they already were in there legally.

Let me give you a few examples. Take what we call double jeopardy. It works like this: a person who has committed an offence with a prison sentence of more than six months is subject to expulsion. This applies even when they are cumulative, small offences which young people commit, like pinching a motor scooter. In France, that can mean four months to two years in prison. So if you steal a motor scooter it is enough to get you into prison for more than the crucial six months.

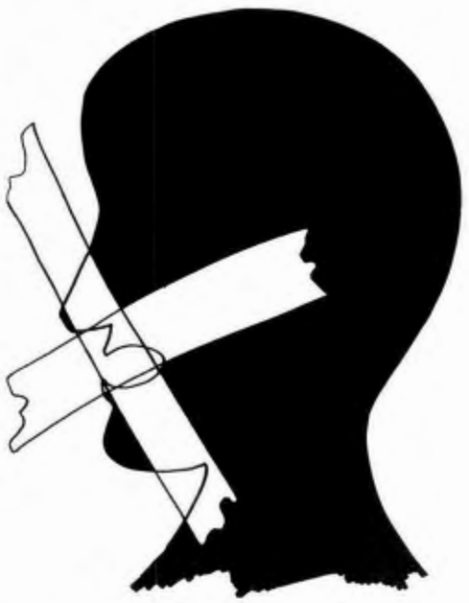
And what is the situation for people who are subject to 'double jeopardy'?

It is what young people experience who, having known only France since birth, complete, their sentence and on coming out are expelled from France and sent to a country which they do not know.

I often give as an example what happens at the Central Post Office in Algiers where there are queues in front of the telephone boxes, because the phone is, for these young people, now resident in Algeria, their sole means of contact with their families in France.

ANOTHER SITUATION WHICH we find among the *sans papiers* is the breaking up of families. France has signed the European Convention for the protection of the family, in which it is stated that no state may separate a family, the right to live with one's family being an inalienable right.

What in fact happens? In France to-day you have the situation where there are immigrants who are neither expellable, nor can they be made legal residents. This is so in the case of parents of French children, of foreigners who have had a French child, and of partners, that is, of foreigners who have married French men or women. In both these situations, French law does not allow their expulsion, but on the other hand it does not allow them to obtain a residency permit. So there are many people who cannot be expelled but who cannot work and who cannot provide for their needs. Nor can they obtain any of the social services which exist for citizens of France, so they are becoming more and more marginalised and in greater and greater economic difficulty. To survive they have to work in the 'black' labour market.



There are dozens of people in France today who are pushed by the law into the illegal labour market, who are not in the legal sector, who cannot be expelled and who cannot be made legal. It is thus the French law itself which makes legal *sans papiers*, that is, people who have no papers, but who cannot be expelled.

If we take the situation in the Oise, we have 234 people who have come forward spontaneously—they have not been afraid to come out of the shadows—and have asked to be involved in the struggle. For the most part they had work but it was 'black' work. Everyone in France knows that these so-called clandestine immigrants, the *sans papiers*, make a lot of money for a certain number of employers who take on 'black' labour.

Indeed, the hypocrisy is greater than that. Most of the *sans papiers* work on state building sites: they worked on the Arc La Défense in Paris; on the Winter Olympics installations at Albertville—these are State building projects. They also work on the huge new football park in the Paris region.

So they are not unknown people, but they *are* people who are forced into clandestine circumstances. Everybody knows that thousands are involved. What they are reproached for, is their demand for a regularisation of their situation; to get papers which allow them to work normally and in accordance with the law—not on the 'black' market.

So you can see why the *sans papiers* of France are so angry and why their struggle has lasted so long.

And I believe it will last a lot longer. I will just give the illustration which is most characteristic. It is that of someone called the 'Dean'—a person who is the oldest *sans papiers*, now 58, and has been in France for 30 years. He is still without papers after 30 years of requesting and being refused them. But he has never been expelled.

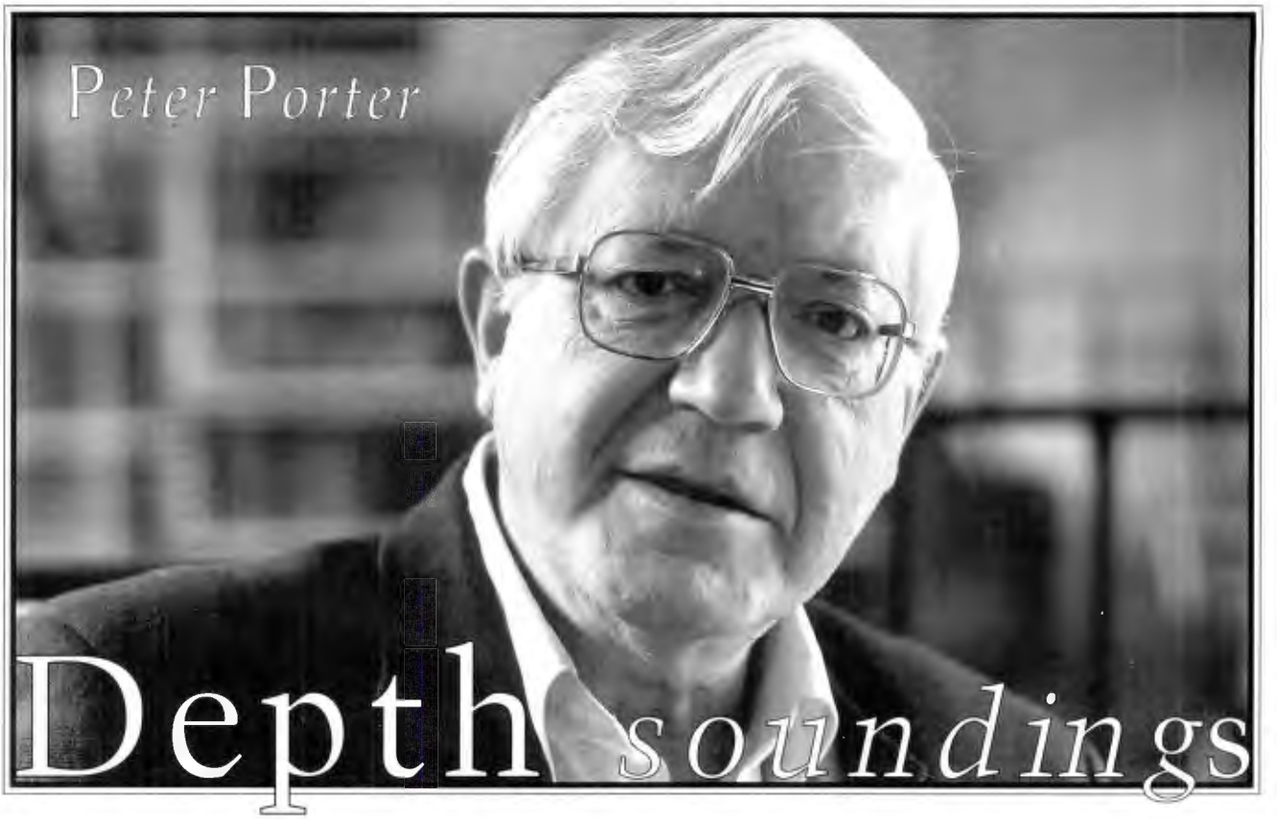
He has a family who have had to live with an 'illegal' father. He has never been economically secure, going from one job to another, with a permanent risk of being expelled. Well, he is determined to take whatever action is necessary to be 'regularised'. He refused to stop his hunger strike after 60 days and was ready to risk his life. I am telling you about his case because it is an example among many which shows that a democratic country can quickly turn into its opposite in practice if we do not take care.

We must also remember that behind the *sans papiers* are the women *sans papiers*. Their situation is special since they depend completely on their husbands, and many of them will not be 'regularised' if their husbands are not.

How many people are *sans papiers*? It is hard to be exact. But there are some of them at St. Bernard's, a church in Paris, which they occupied and where they started a hunger strike. Because of this we were able to see how many the *sans papiers* of France were, because in the weeks which followed since, nearly 30 committees in 30 different cities were set up, and these committees showed the size of the phenomenon in French territory. People without papers have been allowed in France for years. So it is a very large movement. ■

Saïd Bouamama is a professor and researcher at the *Institut de formation de travailleurs sociaux* and one of the leaders of the *sans papiers* movement and *SOS Racisme* in France. He is the author of many works including *Vers une nouvelle citoyenneté, crise de la pensée laïque* and *De la galière à la citoyenneté: les jeunes, la cité, la societé.*

Alastair Davidson is Professor in Urban Research at the Swinburne University of Technology.



IT'S A PRETTY FAIR ASSUMPTION TO SAY that today, music is the most popular of the arts. Constant Lambert's Thirties' scorn of 'the appalling popularity of music' seems now merely a Jeremiah-like clearing of the throat before the deluge to come.

Immediately, one must enter the reservation that music's popularity is of several orders, some of them decidedly low-lying. If Andrew Lloyd Webber has made more money than all the composers of the past combined, that may be a measure of the delta-like spreading of electronic networks rather than an indication of a complete decline in taste. It's also important to stress that much of what music does nowadays is a species of self-effacement and corporate underlining. Even serious films which would not stoop to kitsch scripts have to fill their soundtracks and reinforce their action with musical scores of various degrees of hyperbole. Where once a Walton or a Prokofiev provided film music, today even such a film as *The English Patient*, a work of a certain level of seriousness, is saddled with an inflated and undistinguished score.

AN AMUSING SIDE-ISSUE of this habit of the movies of never doing without melodramatic musical backing became noticeable in the sixties and seventies. Many serious classical composers in those decades had embraced the full avant-garde fig: the only place you were likely to hear new music of a diatonic order, or, as Darmstadt would have said, reactionary sort, was on soundtracks. Though Schönberg, Berg and even Xenakis could have accompanied motion pictures as effectively as more conventional composers, the movie moguls insisted on Rachmaninov-cum-Copland. Like Diaghilev refusing to embrace an entirely homosexual world and insisting that theatre would lose its glamour and its economic viability if female beauty were excluded, Hollywood maintained the Romantic convention—it knew what audiences were used to and would continue to expect. Commercialism will always have this bias. In opulent societies the highbrow and the avant-garde can prove successful and guarantee their leading figures a prominent profile and reasonable riches, but for fame on a world

scale and for fabulous wealth, the coördinates of art must stay within unadventurous limits.

Worse than what happens in the cinema is the habit of employing music as upholstery. From snatches of *Greensleeves* and *Rule, Britannia!* on answer phones to Muzak tape-loops in every sort of outlet from supermarkets to crematoria, music keeps the unmercantile anxieties of silence at bay. Music or Muzak has become the accepted equivalent of the radio engineer's signal of human existence, the call-sign of immediacy. And musical 'wallpaper' will do this better than 'white noise'. Music is not actually wrapped round purchases, but it frames the point of sale. It has become an essential adjunct of 20th century popular commerce.

All this is the decadence of a once-famous doctrine, that of 'The Music of the Spheres,' a Paracelsian notion that every human or natural action has its equivalent vibration in the sympathetic world of sound. *Live! Our background music will do that for us!* It is an uncomfortable paradox that we can weaken what we love by overusing it. And by misusing it. The despoilers of musical significance don't so much overvalue music as prostitute it. They are not innocent music-lovers whose habit of diminishing the art is simply to have it playing continuously. Theirs are the actions of malign wizards, a consequence of applying sympathetic magic cynically.

Unfortunately, there is something of real value there for them to be cynical about.

THOSE OF US WHO LOVE MUSIC and admit to the charge of relying on it too much, of wallowing in it even, feel a self-justifying need to explain not just how necessary it is to us but also the source of its power. This necessity strikes us as a metabolic as well as psychological need. To speak for myself, I experience music as a whole world—not just an alternative universe to the visible and tactile one around me, but as a different and confirming grid in which the bewilderments of existence are straightened out. Music is like Cleopatra as Shakespeare recorded her: everything becomes itself therein. It is more than art and much more than commentary; a sort of second existence.

But if this essay is to be of any use, it must come down from its unproveable high horse and make more feasible assumptions. I propose therefore to examine just one central concern of music as an art—its relations with meaning.

There is an instinct about, even an easy-to-understand intellectual basis to what moves us in literature and painting. Emotion first, then meaning, and perhaps technical mastery are all perceptible in poetry, prose, painting and sculpture. Even the most dedicated nihilist, the most devoted follower of *non sequitur*, finds it impossible to escape entirely from meaning in literature. A scrambled piece of novelist's 'free association', a page of *Finnegan's Wake* (the modern version of a medieval illuminated manuscript), a minimalist's foray at tail-chasing, a volume of 'language poetry' with few clues as to which parts of speech its constituent words are—all these literary artefacts exist within a force field of meaning. If a poem, a painting or an installation approaches meaninglessness, this is likely to be a matter of conflicting meanings cancelling themselves out rather than of pure chaos.

Meaning is not the be-all and end-all of the literary and plastic arts, but it is an inescapable concomitant.

Being a product of the human mind, music, of course, has meaning too, equally inescapably.

BUT WHAT IS MEANING IN MUSIC? How does it work and what is its language; its system of signs, its discrimination among sounds? Must we approach it always by analogy? Are we forever condemned to use the method of metaphor, of speaking of music's effect on us by indicating states of mind roused which are familiar from literature, drama, and theology, or directly from personal experience?

I have no doubt I will be using just such analogous devices as those deplored above. But I hope also to bring some major dilemmas into the open. There is bound to be a contrast between the laboured process of reasoning in words and the natural experience of listening to music. But you cannot use music to explain music.

Hans Keller attempted musical analysis employing only freshly composed music of his own as comment on the piece he was examining. He chose the first movement of Mozart's Piano Concerto in C, K.503, and indeed did manage to reveal that everything which its sonata form structure required to make it a masterpiece of logic and sensuous sound has been ordained by Mozart and set in place by him. But it hardly helps us understand how Mozart's composition was made. What is the listener to do thereafter beyond jettisoning Keller's analytical supplement? His establishment of Mozart's sufficient genius might be described as Euclidean—proof by redundancy of addition.

Stravinsky, doodling for Robert Craft, once asserted that if many composers' works might be tagged 'analytic', then his were properly 'synthetic'. Two mere words, but quite illuminating, especially if kept in mind while listening to *Pulcinella*.

That perennially surprising masterpiece is not just a time-traveller's clever scoring of another man's tunes. It is a remarkable synthesis of original materials joined to the musical hares they started in the mind of an acute creative imagination.

At any point in his career Stravinsky worked by a process similar to adjacency or symbiosis. This is what lies behind his 'borrowings', which Lambert and others found so pernicious. Already existing music (it could be folk melodies as well as scraps by Pergolesi and Tchaikowsky) is not dressed up by Stravinsky, but suggests offspring and neighbours to him which he then layers into his own composition. This method of composing is truly synthetic in that it uses one sort of material to produce another

From snatches of Greensleeves *and* Rule, Britannia *on answer phones to Muzak tape-loops in every sort of outlet from supermarkets to crematoria, music keeps the unmercantile anxieties of silence at bay.*

sort. It is not collage, montage or even variation, but collateral imagination.

Such examples may be irrelevant to this argument but they can help justify employing a general terminology, the language of humane criticism, when discussing music. As the redneck puts it in Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes*, 'I got to use words when I talk to you'. They are blunt tools but nothing else will get very far, not even an improvised workshop at the piano. Musical dissection leaves material scattered all over the dissecting-room floor.

Is there then a language of music? Deryck Cooke thought so and wrote an eloquent book on the subject. The book is the product of a well-informed and sympathetic mind. It is also the issue of one man's intense love of the art he is anatomising. But I find it impossible to accede to his general principles, most notably because they are so general.

Can musical expressiveness be categorised or pigeonholed according to the feelings or moods which seem endemic to intervals, tonalities, harmonies, phrase shapes and instrumental timbres? Might not an interval frequently encountered in the musical depiction of one human mood be found elsewhere depicting a quite other mood?

I recall hearing a young composer remonstrated with at a concert of the Society for the Promotion of New Music in these terms: 'All those minor thirds make you sound so English!' Dire warning, indeed. Only in music of the Baroque and Classical period (1600-1830) does a tendency to Sturm und Drang, a dramatically intense colouring or melancholy emphasis, seem to demand a minor tonality. Even here, Handel uses the major mode to portray sadness and the minor for stateliness.

How much does any bare tune owe to a larger relationship with other tunes? The politician's greedy shout, 'There is no such thing as society!' is proved false by music. There is nothing but society in music.

Cooke is able to list enough significant examples of intervals reinforcing Theophrastian moods to indicate some musical tendencies, though the process of selection is necessarily biased to produce the desired result. And there are further problems in his conclusion, which might be summed-up as being of the order 'the interval of the rising third often indicates sadness', or 'the octave is chosen to demonstrate certainty'.

While agreement can sometimes be reached on mood identification in a piece of purely instrumental music with no title beyond prelude or sarabande, a more definite association requires a feeling-intense text attached. We know the feelings concerned because the words tell us what they are.

Cook's copious examples of intervals and harmonies being associated in composer's minds with particular concerns and feelings is forced to lean heavily on vocal music, where argument about musical meaning can be supported by verbal meaning. Many of his chosen quotations are drawn from the intense and even hysterical poetry of Lutheran piety and 19th century Romanticism. One has to keep one's head down when discussing such matters. There is clearly an appropriateness in musical expression which is natural to our human nervous system. Exhilarating music is likely to be at a fast tempo; loud music will not usually be appropriate to meditation (though consider the F Sharp Major vigil of Don Quixote in Strauss's tone poem); only a perverse composer would set the words of the Credo of the Mass, 'et resurrexit tertia die', to a descending and not an ascending scale.

THERE ARE MAJOR DECORUMS in all arts which even the most iconoclastic spirit must take into account. Nevertheless, within such broad certainties the language of artistic expression is inexact. There is no dictionary of musical meaning equivalent to a dictionary of words. One pitch alone cannot denote a meaning. Meaning enters only when a note is sounded after another note and usually remains unclear until many other notes have joined in. I underline this truism deliberately. However you use a word, it goes on existing in the dictionary as meaning this one or some other specific thing. A note of the scale means something inside the scale but nothing outside it. The scale then relates to music in a pattern half from mathematics and half from aural experience.

This is not how meaning works in literature. Interesting literary art comes into being when the shifts and complexities of the meanings of words are exploited far in advance of their dictionary meanings. The poetry of William Empson is richer than any semantic analysis could define, but, as Empson himself demonstrates in his *The Structure of Complex Words*, the ramifications of 'honest' and 'fool'—short words with cataclysmic consequences—must still fall back on the ur-state of their meanings. The equivalent in music is more mathematical: the octave and the way it can be organised into greater and lesser powers, which we call keys, and the general assembly of the tones and semitones into the chromatic scale. And so on. This is certainly meaningful but it is not analogous to meaning in the literary or logical sense. Not for the last time in this essay I should like to warn against overvaluing argument by analogy. 'Poetic' music is as sloppy a term as 'lyric' poetry.

There is only one way to assert meaning in music and that is through the ambiguous and loose feelings which music arouses in us. It is easier to take the mathematics of music for granted than to explain how they work. Theorists like Tartini found a moral value in music's very numeracy, and every academy and conservatorium teaches music in tried and tested ways which are rationalisations of basic mathematical predominances.

Deryck Cooke's thesis, from which I have now strayed some distance, does not take into account the shifts which have occurred in Western music since it acquired its characteristic profile. The thousand years up to Guido d'Arezzo's development of a workable musical notation are really dark ages. Today we can buy a handful of discs which purport to offer music from Greek, Roman and

Byzantine times. But there are few performable scores. And while poets and liturgical compliers were adapting Latin to make it sound like various vernaculars—that is, scanning it accentually and letting it rhyme—*Dies Irae*, *Stabat Mater* and the rest—what music was doing was confined to plainchant, Ambrosian and Gregorian.

Doubtless such chants, now gathered and revised into the *Liber Usualis*, are rooted in the memory of popular forms, folk or sacred, but they are distant from our ears' present sensibility. If we take Organum and Conductus, the School of Notre Dame, as being a useful starting point of Western music as it develops beyond monody, we still have four hundred years of musical production ahead of us before we get to the classical model, which is where Deryck Cooke's examples will be found.

In the 20th century we have become used to various Promethean rebellions against the musical mainstream, and so we are tempted to assume that the orthodoxy from which post-*Tristan* Modernism departs is nothing less than the true voice of music. Triadic, Classical, Tonal—whatever you call it—this organisation into major/minor tonalities has prevailed from the Renaissance onwards and still underpins the expectations of modern listeners. It is the ambience Cooke's language is at home in. But modal music offers different tropes.

Modality's sense of a musical landscape is as different from Beethoven as Old Norse or Anglo-Saxon are from Alexander Pope. On the horizon now many new tongues are calling. Total Serialism may have succumbed to market forces, and various repetitive, single-minded techniques restoring some of the more threadbare Triadic devices (one witty commentator speaks of them as 'the boring simplicities of Baltic Monks') may be the rage at the moment, but one can have a confident expectation that over the next four hundred years there will be further radical alteration to music's practical language.

Natural sound—not just imitating Nature but recorded in and reproduced from Nature—appeals to many assemblers of new music. Pitch, harmony, thematic structure, special instruments, orthodox notation—the minutiae of music's mathematical foundations—may be dispensed with. If it gets too far from Brahms on the one hand or Ockeghem on the other, it won't be music to me, but someone writing such an essay as this in the future may find himself working along an utterly different set of coördinates. Our revolutionaries are already asserting that music is whatever they say it is.

BACK IN OUR TRADITIONAL PLAYGROUND, we have quandaries enough to be going on with. A central concern of mine is with the relations music enjoys with words. It's a bullying relationship, but more of that later. First, how abstract is music? Surely its abstract character is one of its glories. Poets look enviously on music's not being dominated by meaning—verbal meaning that is. We got nowhere when we tried to describe a language of music, but will we do any better if we discern instead in music patterns which make sense, images and shapes which please us?

Perhaps the most viable way of dealing with such a knotty question is to consider real pieces of music heard in real time. Consider the slow movement of Bach's *Italian Concerto*. It is an extraordinary piece, being a chain of notes almost like an improvisation, for the right hand over a gentle supporting bass in the left hand. Bach's weaving of this long garland of sound is intensely lyrical, but his instrument is the harpsichord, and so the lyricism is a divine cheat, being made up of individual struck notes which manage to suggest the weave of a string instrument.

Bach has gauged with supreme accuracy which notes to use—you could decorate his line with various further ornaments, appoggiaturas et cetera, but you would discover that he had foreseen this and propounded a processional sequence which adjures addition or deviation. What he writes lies beyond meaning in any applied sense: the music means itself.

Other keyboard composers have excelled at this sort of writing—Chopin's cantilena also makes the piano sing. There are no special harmonic audacities in Bach's piece but the supremely beautiful line is not primarily melodic either. (The mystery of what constitutes melody is beyond the power of any textual analysis. All the interesting chiming significances—interval recurrences, implied harmonies, sequences, aroused and satisfied cadences et cetera—end up telling us nothing. Nor does the number of permutations of the notes of the octave unravel the mystery. They are innumerable, but why are some more fascinating than others? How much does any bare tune owe to a larger relationship with other tunes? The politician's greedy shout, 'There is no such thing as society!' is proved false by music. There is nothing but society in music.)

Back to Bach. Starting and cadencing, approaching and retreating from tonally important crisis points, rising and sinking—these descriptions of the upper line's movement are just about applicable to its effectiveness and beauty. You could try breaking up the line into numerical or metrical units: you could verbalise things by speaking of Bach's 'wandering' progress as though he were anticipating that walking impulse which Schubert made his own. In the end you will have only three perceptions you know to be true—the succession of notes sounded above their supporting bass delights the ear; the pattern is satisfying without its having to be perceived as a pattern; and Bach has gauged with supreme accuracy which notes to use—you could decorate his line with various further ornaments, appoggiaturas etcetera, but you would discover that he had foreseen this and propounded a processional sequence which adjures addition or deviation. What he writes lies beyond meaning in any applied sense: the music means itself.

Immediately, one must enter a caveat to such absolutism. Bach's technique in the *Italian Concerto*, and indeed in almost all his instrumental composition,

is the same as he uses when setting words, where it must reflect and support specific and often contentious meanings and emotions. Dozens of passages from instrumental works, such as *The Brandenburg Concertos*, the solo violin sonatas and partitas, and the organ fantasias and toccatas, are reëmployed not drastically altered in his Church Cantatas. How can pieces of music satisfying in their abstract musicality be recruited to reinforce the pious hallelujahs or the intractable stiffnesses of Lutheran theology? I propose to account for this by inventing a concept called 'transferable value'.

Stravinsky thought Proust's exclamations of admiration for Beethoven's Late Quartets an example of literary men's fashionable insincerity. He also characterised Pablo Casals as 'being for World Peace and for playing Bach in the style of Brahms'.

You are Bach setting the words 'Unser Mund sie voll Lachens' for chorus and orchestra at the start of a cantata for Christmas Day. Then why not recognise that the text 'Our mouths are full of laughter ... at the great things God has done' requires a rollicking piece of music, and look among what you have written already to help out with just such a proposition. There it is, in the opening movement of the *Fourth Orchestral Suite in D Major*. It takes readily to your added vocal parts and the end-product necessarily is a different composition. It is now our turn, as Bach's inheritors, to think backwards. Does his decision to use his original orchestral music to carry his later message of Christian joy mean that the Suite possessed just such a quality all along?

The answer is yes and no. Transferable value in such cases—and there are thousands of them—is another example of music's dominance when associated with words. It is also a testament to the language of music's being so generalised that it is infinitely re-usable within a broad range of categories. What the listener who does not know *Cantata No. 110* receives when he or she listens to *Suite No. 4* is ebullience and excitement without a Christian message. Christianity has always baptised whatever it has recognised as a value. As Stravinsky puts it, 'One should worship God with a little talent if one has any'.

It follows that any art which is sufficient in itself, or which commands its own coördinates, when combined with another, will take on secondary colouring without losing self-possession. Either as the Suite or as the Cantata, Bach's invention delights us, though only one of the forms (the Cantata's) has a specific connotation.

This pushes us back into Deryck Cooke's dilemma—how purely orchestral music can be held to use certain technical means to embody demonstrable emotions. When discussing this previously I didn't ask any of the necessary practical questions. Sticking to Bach then, (who is a good case for the examination since not many of his instrumental works have been given a sobriquet or nickname from listeners' perceptions of what they are like), is the Sarabande of the *Fifth Partita in G* for keyboard sad, comfortable, pompous, processional, elegant, or any combination of these states? I hold it to be beautiful music, neutral in mood. It hardly suggests any clear-cut state of feeling.

However, the great Chaconne which ends the solo violin *Partita in D minor* moves in and out of moods which, though not labelled as portraying anything specific, do suggest strenuous feeling. The movement's structure, being composed of variations of virtuoso violinistics on a groundbass, is what analysts choose to draw attention to, marvelling at the complexity Bach achieves with limited means. Performers are amazed by the sweat and difficulty of it, and admire those of their number who can execute the music with the least compromise.

I was once in a room at a private party when the Chaconne was played, and listened afterwards to what good people felt obliged to say about it. They emphasised its nobility, its philosophical power, its undoubted profundity. Yet there are no verbal clues to latch on to and no philosophical or moral imperatives in the music beyond those its hearers can import into it. Some musicians have been very wary of the public's tendency to gush over great works. Stravinsky thought Proust's exclamations of admiration for Beethoven's Late Quartets an example of literary men's fashionable insincerity. He also characterised Pablo Casals as 'being for World Peace and for playing Bach in the style of Brahms'.

The question of music's connection with states of mind within its own value system has always troubled our understanding. It even goes back to the origins of the art. For the Ancients, as far as we know, music was almost synonymous with Nature. Gurgling streams, rushing wind, bird calls—a whole armoury of natural sounds—were adjuncts to men's feelings. An expertise in music was jealously guarded by the gods, as the fates of both Marsyas and Orpheus suggest. Nobody bothered to make permanent the tunes Marsyas played during his fatal competition with Apollo. It would seem that for both the Greeks and the Romans, (and likely enough for everyone else in the Ancient World), music was largely a matter of that 'underlining' I noticed at the beginning of this essay. Roman *bucinas* helped put the enemy to flight in a way unimaginable for the Grenadier Guards Band. A friend once sang to me the marching-song that Caesar's army bellowed out when his legions entered Rome, the one translated by Robert Graves as 'Home we bring the bald whoremonger, / Romans, lock your wives away!'. He claimed that the tune had come down to us from the last years BC, but he didn't tell me how it had survived.

We have sheaves of lyric poetry from the Classical world, much of it probably intended to be sung to the accompaniment of lyre or lute. Whatever the rules of the music it gave rise to, we now know only the forms and structures of the poems. These are often elaborate, but what scales, modes or other conventions governed the

music to which such verse was set, we have little idea of. Observation of music in the Classical world leads us to believe that it was always assigned a supporting role. Almost two thousand years had to pass before it became autonomous and—I have to confess as a devoted music-lover—a tyrannical art in its own right.

Music undoubtedly played an important role in the solemnities of Greek Drama. So much so, in fact, that efforts by the self-conscious archaisers of the Florentine Academy to revive music's part in dramatic poetry led, through creative misunderstanding, to the dominant late European art of Opera. Music will always be a fifth-column art: its patron saint might well be Thomas à Beckett rather than Cecilia. Sent to do Drama's bidding, it goes native and takes over the whole caboodle. Let music through your defences and it will put your moral citadel to sack. As an *arriviste*, it protects itself by assuring everyone that it has an ancient lineage and is properly classical. It is, however, a savage newcomer, and, at least for those who can hear its siren call, a mistress who will brook no rivals.

When the mysteries attendant on Iphigeneia's sacrifice were enacted in fourth century BC Athens, music was on hand to empower the ritual, and, in the form of the chorus' part, to reflect on the tragedy. But by the end of the 19th century words were no more than a listener's right-of-way through the harmonic forest of Act Three of *Parsifal*. Wagner's art is Midas-like, it turns everything it touches into music. The most ludicrous image of artistic misapprehension known to me is that of King Ludwig of Bavaria having Wagner's libretti read to him in preference to hearing the operas performed. Not for economy's sake but because the words excited him as the music could not do. He loved the man and the words were more the man: music was the man magicked.

But we later Wagnerians are in thrall to Venusberg and are likely to apologise for its creator's character. Wagner has replaced speech's best, which is eloquence, with the world-soul itself, the music that speech has conjured up.

WHEN MUSIC AND LITERATURE work together we encounter a bewitching and hard-to-analyse mélange. Let us plunge into an already well-documented world anytime between the early 18th century and the middle of the 19th. By now music has wrested power from the literary arts, though that isn't always obvious to composers and poets. There are sensible and practical letters by Mozart, pointing out what was wrong when some literary consideration was spoiling a musical one. He wrote to the Abbate Varesco and Gottlieb Stephanie Jnr., librettists of *Idomeneo* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, urging them to curb their own enthusiasms and find the right words to accommodate his needs. He was not, of course, dealing with first rate and important *littèrateurs*.

The exchange between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal is a more equal encounter, or is it? Critics have found it easy to applaud the tasteful Hofmannsthal and rebuke the vulgar Strauss, but it was always the composer who was in the saddle.

It is not my purpose to argue that music is a greater art than poetry: indeed, while I covet music's freedom from direct responsibility to meaning, I also value the 'shock of recognition' which is literature's special gift. What I do suggest is that when music and literature work together music will inevitably be the dominant partner.

The history of opera proves this. Imported as a means of emphasising the eloquence of speech, music quickly took over and became the *raison d'être*. Between those classicists who set up such pioneer works as Peri's *Dafne* and collaborations of professional librettists Felice Romani and Francesco Maria Piave with Bellini and Verdi, a great gulf is fixed. Music's ability to eat 'texts' is shown as early as Monteverdi's setting of Rinuccini's *Orfeo* (1607). Verdian 'brevità' is already being imposed on the text.

Music is magic. It has the full flush of original sin on it. It can collaborate only on its own terms. What it wants from words is that version of 'meaning' which verbal structures possess and music does not. When musical meaning is added to verbal or humanist meaning, we get a doubly powerful art. The cannibalism involved is not essential for musical achievement, but it is something composers have shown themselves grateful for. Bach's two books of Twenty-four Preludes and Fugues for keyboard in all the keys would make him a great composer by themslves, but the technique which fashioned them had furhter work to do: to serve the world, the flesh, and even the Devil in Passions, Cantatas and Motets.

Arnold Schönberg once related how a composer goes about setting words to music. Or at least how *he* did it. Firstly he spoke of Schubert's songs. Many of them had lodged naturally in his consciousness and yet he discovered that he could not remember the lyrics of the poems Schubert set or what they were about.

Music will always be a fifth-column art: its patron saint might well be Thomas à Beckett rather than Cecilia. Sent to do Drama's bidding, it goes native and takes over the whole caboodle.

When he read the lyrics as poems in their own right he appreciated that they made sense quite outside his experience of them as songs. When he himself wrote songs, he was inspired by the general impression of the poet's creation and was influenced only secondarily by the words he was setting. Musicians tend to compose ideas and regard words as only the necessary assembly of syllables to carry their notes. They may be attracted initially to a phrase. In some famous arias the melodic blossoming proceeds from what seems the tritest of texts. 'O mio babbino caro' with its dipping tune and octave leap is a teenage girl's wheedling of her Daddy to go down to the jewellery quarter of Florence, 'la porta rossa', and buy her an engagement ring.

Stravinsky always asserted the divine right of music to treat words just as syllables, being sure this would justify his iron control over both sound and sentiment.

He had the Cocteau libretto of *Oedipus Rex* put into Latin for him, because, as a dead language, it was free of the tendency to over-emotionalism of a European vernacular. Perhaps also the Latin helped him serve a concept greater than local meaning or autonomous sound. The vocal line of *Oedipus Rex* disproves emotional indifference on his part. Just before the climactic Gloria which ends the first part, Oedipus sings 'Invidia fortunam odit...': he has reached the high point of his confidence and indulges in the hubris of defying both men and gods. Stravinsky's setting of the Latin admonishment of envy is tortured, melismatic, almost unbearable—one of the most involved pieces of declamation in his œuvre. It gains by being strung along the syllables of a distancing language.

FOR THE SAME REASON thousands of composers have been able to make great art out of liturgy, especially the most overworked part of it, the Ordinary of the Mass. The words are familiar to the point of exhaustion, but the beliefs they serve are universal and inexhaustible. Most composers have the natural skill and good sense not to try to set (say) the Credo in some smart way which will call the wrong sort of attention to it. Prevailing conventions are useful without being stifling. The 'Crucifixus' is a natural crisis point and demands hushed treatment, the 'et incarnatus est' is an occasion for lyricism and the coda 'et vitam venturi seculi' calls for triumphant setting.

The syllable-isation which music imposes on language is different from any of the localising techniques which poetry itself indulges in. Composers are attracted to poetry's distillation of effect when seeking texts, that concentration of essence which already separates verse from the more expansive patterns of prose. Despite Auden's credo that an operatic libretto must decently be in verse, I doubt that rhyme or metre have much to do with it, though the factory-produced libretti of Italian theatre hacks are always in rhymed verse. Music identifies in rhymed poetry a symmetry which is a paradigm of its own. Where effectiveness of setting is in question a composer will always be cavalier with the rhyme and metre of his text, if he has to be.

Hugo Wolf disapproved, or said he did, of over-melismatic setting of words, of excessive coloratura, embellishing of melodies, in fact the whole elaborate millinery of *bel canto*. He would not have wanted to do what Handel and so many others did in the 18th century—make a handful of words the hanger on which to display up to ten minutes of florid vocalising.

But even Wolf didn't insist on one note to one syllable, and the reason is easy to understand. Poetry, if one sticks strictly to the metres commonly encountered in European languages, is unresourceful compared with music. Most triple metre in verse becomes tiresome or comical very quickly, and is not easily given variation by metrical change. Music has so many more rhythmic possibilities than verse. In practice, admittedly, we seldom let the official scansion of a line of poetry govern our delivery of it. Instead, we introduce humane inflections instinctively. But poetry has never developed an exact system of notation of pitch or metre. This is probably why, in English, iambic pentameter blank verse has been such a favoured form among poets, especially for dramatic purposes. In blank verse the metrical insistence is subliminal rather than profound, and the actual rhythm of each line is subject to the ebb and flow of meaning. What the speaking of poetry does so advantageously within its own metrical bonds, music can afford to do much more extravagantly.

As you consider the ways composers have managed to set poetry, the opportunities they have relished to give solo singers and ensembles such adventures among words, the more you marvel at the ingenuity of music. From plainsong melismata, such as the extensive ululation of the word 'caput' in the famous Sarum antiphon, through to the eleven-minute polyphony which is the *Kyrie* and *Christe* of Bach's B Minor Mass, music has festooned words as mistletoe covers trees or convolvulus a civic garden. Yet just as these vigorous parasites could not exist without their hosts, there remains an idea and a skeletal means of pinning it down beneath much exfoliating vocal writing—and this is embodied in words. Floridity is not the only response to texts, but it is the most interesting if we are to examine the vexed question of how words and music work together.

It is customary to write the history of music as a progressive, even a triumphant story. It is also reported as vindication, as a humanising improvement. Thus, from Schubert onwards, the 19th century disapproved increasingly of settings where the notes so obscure the words that audiences cannot know straightaway what is happening in a song. Centuries earlier, at the Council of Trent, the Doctors of the Church had also worried that an excess, however pious, of musical flowering was tending to bury important doctrinal concerns in the liturgy. The Fathers wished to rescue dogma, while the theorists of the Victorian Age, especially Wagner and his followers, wanted to restore a paramountcy of humanism and philosophy. There are many florid moments in Schubert's songs—think of *Des Fischers Liebesglück* and *Am See*, but the great songs at the end of his life show him matching notes to words with inspired economy—as with *Am Meer* and *Der Doppelgänger*.

THEN CAME MUSIC'S GREATEST CRISIS—an increasing chromaticism until all sense of key evaporates, which was flagged by Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. From this point radical change was speeded up. The coherent collaboration of music and humanism disintegrated into pioneering attempts to radicalise every aspect of form. Experiment concentrated on elevating technique into various local rebellions. In turn, early 20th century liberalisation was succeeded by a draconian puritanism where words and notes marched in mathematical uniforms.

Eventually, floridity returned as composers began their long trawl back to a past which offered models more congenial to creativity than such absolutisms as Atonalism and Serialism. Stravinsky ranged across several centuries and Britten found in Purcell a way of adding brilliance to the art of Schubert and Wolf. Michael

Tippett ransacked the rhythmic audacities of Renaissance madrigalists.

In this century, words have been assigned an even more equivocal place in music. They are not the custom-made felicities which the 18th century demanded and which were literally more in theme than outline. Texts of most contemporary compositions cannot claim partnership on equal terms with scores, as was the case in 19th century Romanticism. Today all the arts enjoy a dubious equality: they have lost their way and a good part of their audience.

All except one, that is—and even that one owes its success to a kind of debasement. This is Pop Music in all its manifestations. I feel poorly equipped to discuss Pop, Rock, Tin Pan Alley and the like, and scarcely better acquainted with Jazz, Swing, Modern Jazz, Country and Western, Folkloristica and Ethnic Music. But it seems to me that in all these forms the partnership of language and music is a more equal one. The 'book' of a show still matters on Broadway. Though many contemporary musicals are thin stuff indeed, vintage Broadway, from the turn-of-the-century through Jerome Kern, Rodgers and Hart, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, *Guys and Dolls* and *Pal Joey* and up to Leonard Bernstein's shaky crossovers, enjoys living interaction between humanity and popular music. We tend to remember these shows for their songs, but the best of them have not degenerated into 'highlights' in the manner of so many serious operas. Wagner would be surprised to discover that the true inheritors of his concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* today are the best Broadway and Hollywood spectaculars.

WHEN TWO ARTISTS COMBINE, the tension set up between their contributions may wax and wane in an audience's mind. There can be no doubting primacy when one of the collaborators is a genius, so that while we are full of admiration of Lorezo da Ponte, we would never assign him equality with Mozart. Our proper reaction is gratitude that so excellent a librettist should have served so transcendent a composer.

I've already emphasised the adage that no opera has been saved by its libretto. Alleged masterpieces of sophistication by Abbate Casti, Da Ponte's rival, are seldom heard, since the music they serve has been given the thumbs-down by posterity. The opposite observation, however, is spoken of less: that good musical works may be betrayed by poor books.

The position here is complex, since one must distinguish between a poorly executed libretto and a decently-written but outmoded kind of text.

Handel's operas make an informative study in this respect. While many are mediocre examples of a questionable sort of libretto, several have books which should have guaranteed them a place in the modern repertory. *Giulio Cesare* compares quite favourably with Bernard Shaw's play *Caesar and Cleopatra*: The opera even has the same sardonic emphasis. What militates against all these Handel operas on the stage is the convention in which they are written. However good their books, modern audiences just cannot get on with *da capo* aria format. This is unfortunate, since if one forces oneself to follow the action with proper concern, then Handel's undoubted dramatic gifts begin to come to life. Mostly we look at and listen to his operas as if they were concerts. Bach's *Passions* offer an illuminating contrast. Though they are not intended to be staged, their combination of narrative, chorus, reflective aria, dialogue in arioso and Lutheran chorale is felt as a genuine dramatic progress, almost a musical Stations of the Cross.

Here the power of the New Testament story, even though largely conducted in recitative, is the reason. This is not because the subject is sacred but because it is direct and pointful, unlike the extreme artificiality of so many operas set in Classical or mythical times, with their complicated amorous intrigues. The *Passions* illustrate music's indifference to merely literary value. Their overall theme is so profound. Bach sets the several sorts of language with an eye to their importance in the story and not to any sense of their quality as poetry. Thus the words of the Gospel, including dialogue for Christ, Peter, Pilate etcetera, the mawkish piety of the interpolated arias and choruses, written by such poetasters as his colleague Picander, and finally the congregational hymns, are regarded as equally demanding of eloquence. The whole pattern is a simulacrum of the divine order: the theme is 'Divine Grace is dancing'.

Music, more than words, does not comment on the universe; it invents it. Its unmatched palette for lamentation, pastoral, ferocity, exhilaration, even equanimity is not commentary but the transformation of secondary states of mind, familiar from verbal annotation, back into primary assertion. We are born knowing music's language and need no special Pentecost to comprehend what it is saying.

The same sense that the whole created world is animated by God's spirit informs Bach's Church Cantatas. Here there is a place, as there is in Milton, for the malign parts of Creation, especially the Tempter Himself. In No. 130, *'Herr Gott, dich loben alle wir'*, he introduces the dragon of the Apocalypse in a hair-raising bass aria accompanied by three obbligato trumpets and tympani, which goes further towards giving the Devil the best tunes than almost anything I know in music: 'Der alte Drache brennt vor Neid'. Music, more than words, does not comment on the universe; it invents it. Its unmatched palette for lamentation, pastoral, ferocity, exhilaration, even equanimity is not commentary but the transformation of secondary states of mind, familiar from verbal annotation, back into primary assertion. We are born knowing music's language and need no special Pentecost to comprehend what it is saying.

The sad liaison of good music and bad or undramatic verse continued through the 19th century. Perhaps there has been no one musico/dramatic form as doomed as the

classical opera of the entrance-and-exit-aria kind, but poorly constructed major operas and oratorios have carried generations of inventive composers into limbo. Just to name *Alfonso und Estrella, Euryanthe, Genoveva, Rusalka, Der Corregidor, Palestrina* and *Moses and Aron* is enough to show the waste of good music on bad texts. It was left to the often lowbrow or vulgar geniuses with an instinct for drama to propel opera into the modern theatre and make it a popular arts. Hats off to Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi, Bizet, Massenet, Puccini, Richard Strauss and Britten—all men who exploited language in the interest of musical effectiveness. And, of course, the presiding Spirit of Overreaching, the Great Beast himself, Wagner.

We should consider an even older habit of mankind—that of our invention, music's, tendency to imitate Nature. This is not surprising since such imitation may be the origin of the art. But in its more sophisticated garb it shows a process of considerable complication working for a fairly simple-minded end. Or is it a case of the end only seeming simple, and being, in fact, a gestalt, a symbolism with widespread significance. The myths which suggest music's origins in the imitation of natural sounds are anecdotal metaphors. The shepherd cuts a reed, makes holes in it at calibrated distances, and is able to imitate the songs of the birds which surround him.

POETRY IS BORN, again according to myth, through shepherds discovering the potential of 'numbers' which imitate Nature's own 'divisions' of sound. These notions, however, are likely to be back-derived, explanations of important *données* made after the event. Music's and Poetry's creation are lost in time, and happened presumably through complex inspirations. What is still audible, after many years of a highly developed art, is music's imitative faculty.

The quaver murmurings in the piano accompaniment to Schubert's song 'Gretchen am Spinnrade', suggestive of her spinning wheel (and the same figure transferred to the violin and viola parts of the opening movement of his A Minor Quartet Op. 29, where it is the mood of the song rather than its spinning-wheel echo which is evoked)—this would be Exhibit A in any catalogue of musical empathy with Nature. Further examples abound—the strings creating the movement of river water in the opening chorus of Bach's Cantata No 7, '*Christ unser Herr, am Jordan kam*'; the E Flat pedal sounding from the depths of the orchestra and continuing throughout the first part of *Das Rheingold*, representing the *ur-laut* of the Rhine itself. Music's imitative faculty is its equivalent of literature's 'on-the-spot' recourse to simile. They are aural hieroglyphs, or at best cuneiform or semaphore. Music never abandons its artificiality. It has no need to because its language is a system of sounds-as-signs appealing to a pre-ordained knowledge. We discover the meaning of music by experiencing it. What remains unexplained could never be explained.

Having declared that you cannot describe music by using music and having been forced to depend on words about it, I am left with one special department to look into. This is music's own comprehension of music. Is there any way of accounting for musical shapes and how they satisfy the requirements of adepts? Are the patterns of music encoded by the types of instruments employed or is the truth the opposite of that, vice versa? Certainly music's rules are taught and analysed technically. Indeed, analyses of compositions are all too familiar, with their armoury of technical terms, tonic, dominant, subdominant, inversion, exposition, development, recapitulation, and so on. They make sense of what happens in a musical work but only because they are self-referential. They were made for a pre-existent reality rather than their being in at its making. They are the *Gray's Anatomy* of music. Many people who have studied harmony and composition might be surprised to learn that academic analysis is not analysis at all. It is a post-hoc attempt to present what went on in the composer's mind while he was choosing the sounds he needed for his inspiration. Sound first, rule book afterwards.

Once you have become familiar with classical music you find no difficulty in moving among its shapes and structures. To the tone-deaf these are meaningless. On the face of it, there is no reason why the materials which make up a movement of a Haydn String Quartet should ravish our souls, but indisputably they do. One reason why commentators prefer the social language of academic analysis is the illusion of precision. In all the arts there is a nervous tic brought about by envy of scientific objectivity. We have learned to be suspicious of romantic and personal interpretations. Literary people have written comical things about music—for instance, E.M. Forster's embarrassing reaction to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. And popular legends and radio and record commentaries are usually pretty irrelevant. However, none of this is as annoying as the smart jargon of modern reductive theory. Before the present age, when so many composers are earning their living not by their works but by teaching,

the masters rarely referred to the grammar of music at all. Wagner complained to his devoted Cosima, herself a musician's daughter, 'these wretched key signatures, but one must be neat'.

On the brink of the new millennium, music lovers may be swayed by arcane worlds which wait beyond the folds of time. But it is more likely that they will see themselves as custodians of a rich inheritance, responding, for instance, to the genius and fecundity of Schubert, whose anniversary is upon us. Contemporary composers will stay in their ghettoes, the experimental workshops and the university music departments. Something may be on the point of being born, though whether it will be a Golden Age or 'the rough beast' feared by W.B.Yeats we shall have to wait to find out. Certainly, if music ever had a universal language, it does not have one now. Instead, we pick and mix across a wide range. The 20th century has taught us, as W.H. Auden wrote, 'Man' ... {has} ... no more nature in his loving smile/Than in his theories of a natural style'. We may weep that at one time our most glorious synthetic construction, music, sounded so human and moved us so readily, but we cannot assume that we know the reason. Nor what we should do now to recover such potency. Those who call on History for help will get only siren answers and new rocks to founder on. Seeking rules from our oracles, we may be told there are no rules.

Much of what any avant-garde attempts is by definition that which cannot be done. Accordingly we should remember that music, as with any art, prospered by pursuing the possible. Ears and wrists have been the real virtuosi. For centuries improvisation was an important technique nurturing composition. Put the instruments in place, including the human voice, and mind and fingers will seek the music waiting platonically for them. As with poetry, a creative artist hardly knows what he wants to say until he has begun to say it.

To end this peculiar chronicle: a few assertions which are more bits of talking to myself than wise instances or noble maxims.

—We should depend on axioms, not analysis.

—Extreme complexity may be a smokescreen for a new sort of simple-mindedness (hear the works of Geörgy Ligeti, passim).

—'More a matter of feeling than a question of painting'—(yes, but the foreground is painted in in considerable detail).

—Prima la musica e poi le parole *is still true.*

—Subtraction is usually more deleterious than addition.

—No-one has ever believed in Gebrauchsmusik*: music will suffer no rival near the throne.*

—You cannot tell a composer's moral character from his or her compositions. Nevertheless, Wagner may not have been as vile a man as his biographers make him.

—Literary men must be expected to misvalue music. Their greatest vulgarity is to swoon over opera and ignore instrumental music.

—The composer composes the world, not the text.

—'I looked in meaning for whatever wasn't meant'. So with Wittgenstein, so with Beethoven.

—There are no parallels in the arts and few analogies, just a handful of metaphors.

—As with poetry, the doing cleanses the obscurity without destroying the mystery.

—Keys have affinities (F Major, 'pastoral'; E Major, 'richness', and so on.). But you will encounter 'pastoral' in D and 'richness' in C.

—Those who would thrust sublimity on music will only cheapen it.

—'Intervals, tonality, inversion, chord of the diminished seventh, stretto, pedal point'—now wash your mouth out!

—The meaning of music is music.

There are many ways of paying tribute to this beautiful and generous art. The best is to use it—to play, to listen and to be grateful for such a pleasure. If the skilled doctors upbraid us for our lack of academic understanding, we should just turn the volume up and ignore them. At music's apotheosis, words will be invited, but only as observers. Perhaps occasionally, they will be permitted to help as paid bards praising their betters.
Here is how one poet, who loved music, sang his praises of it—the second section of W.H. Auden's *Hymn to Saint Cecilia*, written by Benjamin Britten.

I cannot grow;
I have no shadow
to run away from,
I only play.

I cannot err:
There is no creature
Whom I belong to,
Whom I could wrong.

I am defeat
When it knows it
Can now do nothing
By suffering.

All you lived through,
Dancing because you
No longer need it
For any deed.

I shall never be
Different. Love me.

If we love music enough, we will always know what it means. ■

Peter Porter is a poet and critic. His most recent book of verse, *Dragons in Their Pleasant Palaces*, published by Oxford University Press in April.
Photographs, taken in Melbourne in 1996, by Greg Scullin.

PETER PIERCE

Into the Manning crowd

Suspect History. Manning Clark and the Future of Australia's Past,
Humphrey McQueen, Wakefield Press, 1997. ISBN 1 86254 410 7 RRP $16.95

SINCE EVERYONE ELSE SEEMS to declare an interest in the matter of Manning Clark, permit me. In 1968, in a first year History lecture at the University of Tasmania, I had the privilege of listening to an inspiring talk from Clark about Australia's past. The vital interest which he created for me in what had seemed a dull business has never slackened. Emphatically he demonstrated that Australian writers, whether of history or fiction, need not be embarrassed about all that is rich and strange in their local materials. Certainly they need not reward fake multiculturals with literary prizes because European history is more real than ours. Clark intuited and analysed the neglected and misunderstood wonders that the study of this national history could afford. And he shared his sense of them.

Nearly 20 years after that lecture, I was reproved by Clark. I had reviewed a slack collection of essays on Australia, *The Daedalus Symposium*, in which I mocked his description of Carlton footballers as 'Wagnerian godlings'. He complained of my impertinence to Peter Ryan, Publisher at Melbourne University Press and a friend of mine. 'Doesn't he know they ask me to write this stuff?' Clark inquired. 'Indeed he does Manning', is how Ryan recalls his response.

The point of that anecdote is to clarify one of the many misconstructions in Humphrey McQueen's account of 'Manning Clark and the Future of Australia's Past', *Suspect History*. More than once he mentions Clark's error (picked up by an MUP storeman) in believing that Phar Lap rather than Peter Pan won the Melbourne Cup twice in the 1930s. This is typical of Clark's sovereign carelessness with facts. More importantly, it indicates his snobbery about popular culture. Cricket was always admirable (Clark had been a very tall and talented wicket-keeper batsman), so was the silvertail Carlton Football Club, but racing—it seems—was a desperates' endeavour for which he mustered scant sympathy.

Suspect History is primarily a defence of Clark's reputation first against the *Courier-Mail* accusations that he had been the recipient of a Soviet Order of Lenin (for

unspecified services) and, more generally, against attacks on Clark's worth as an historian. But there is a lot more besides and incidentally. *Suspect History* is a means of getting into print parts of other books that McQueen may never have the opportunity to write, and of settling scores that have long festered. It is, in consequence, a mess. McQueen may feel, however, that the intensity of the fire which he has drawn from antagonists confronted in *Suspect History*—Robert Manne in the *Australian* (7-8 June), Ryan in the *Courier-Mail* (14 June), Christopher Pearson in the *Financial Review* (16 June)—justified his enterprise, flushed out nettled critics smarting at his barbs.

HOW DID MCQUEEN GO about his task? Alerted to the eight-page 'exposé' in the *Courier-Mail* he feared, no doubt correctly, that the damage had been done: 'Clark's enemies would henceforth be able to refer to him as "the alleged spy"'. His rebuttal of the standards of evidence of the Brisbane paper is almost always persuasive. It would have been more convincing had not the *Courier-Mail* at last—in June 1997—come upon the text of the speech which Clark gave in Moscow in 1970 when he did indeed receive a Lenin Jubilee Medal. Clark concluded this address unapologetically. Even for those who might disagree with Lenin 'he was one of those mighty and great people, one of those giants, who are leading the world to creation and well-being'. The sentiments are naïve, hyperbolic, politely suited to their occasion. They are these things before, if ever, they could be construed as sinister. Yet where is the professional historian's acerbity, disinterest, commitment to demystification?

McQueen shows how Clark has been assailed from the left for his relative indifference to 'the fate of the Aborigines, the oppression of women and the ill-treatment of ethnic minorities'. In a clever stroke, he seeks to rescue Clark from the feminists, on the basis that his writing 'threatened masculinist historians of either gender through its insistence on the psyche as essential to an understanding of any national culture'. Partisanship goes further for McQueen. He reckons Clark's *Meeting Soviet Man* to be a more profound 'attack on the Soviet experiment than Kruschev's 1956 speech against Stalin'. That is news to all concerned.

Suspect History defends Clark by demolishing the weakness of the *Courier-Mail* arguments, but more particularly by a series of *ad hominem* attacks on critics of Clark. If Peter Charlton is arraigned for 'snide poofter-bashing' of David Marr, what of the snideness of McQueen's reference to P.P. McGuinness for working at the Moscow Narodny Bank in London from 1966-7, or to Dame Leonie Kramer because C.J. Koch is her 'favourite current novelist'. And why bring into the discussion Kramer's lamentably slight publishing record? McQueen's point, one supposes, is that Clark was condemned to publish *and* perish. His academic foes thrived through their silence.

McQueen argues often by conjecture—'could have', 'would have' are favourite locutions. Frequently, and not always without reason, he is roused to invective, for instance about the 'febricity', 'foulness', 'putridness', 'this miasma of mania and scurrilousness', which distinguished the practices of ASIO. Yet even that despised acronym was expected to provide sources for its allegations.

Far too regularly McQueen does not identify the person whom he is quoting. Or, if he does, a casual epithet is meant to explain all: '*Quadrant* conservative Robert Manne' is a signal instance. The vexed history of Manne's relations with the magazine that he edits ought alone to have called for a less careless account of his conservatism.

But there is more. Peter Ryan will be delighted to learn that his 'self-image depended on his being recognised as an "advanced fucker"'. Scholarly critics of Clark who craved the limelight 'if only a reporter would prod them into life with a microphone' have less cause for complaint. McQueen is unguarded about the looseness of his own use of evidence. He might have been more reticent though, thus to spare us this comparison of Clark—his erstwhile mentor—and himself: 'While he was learning to cope with a weak heart, I was getting over a broken one'.

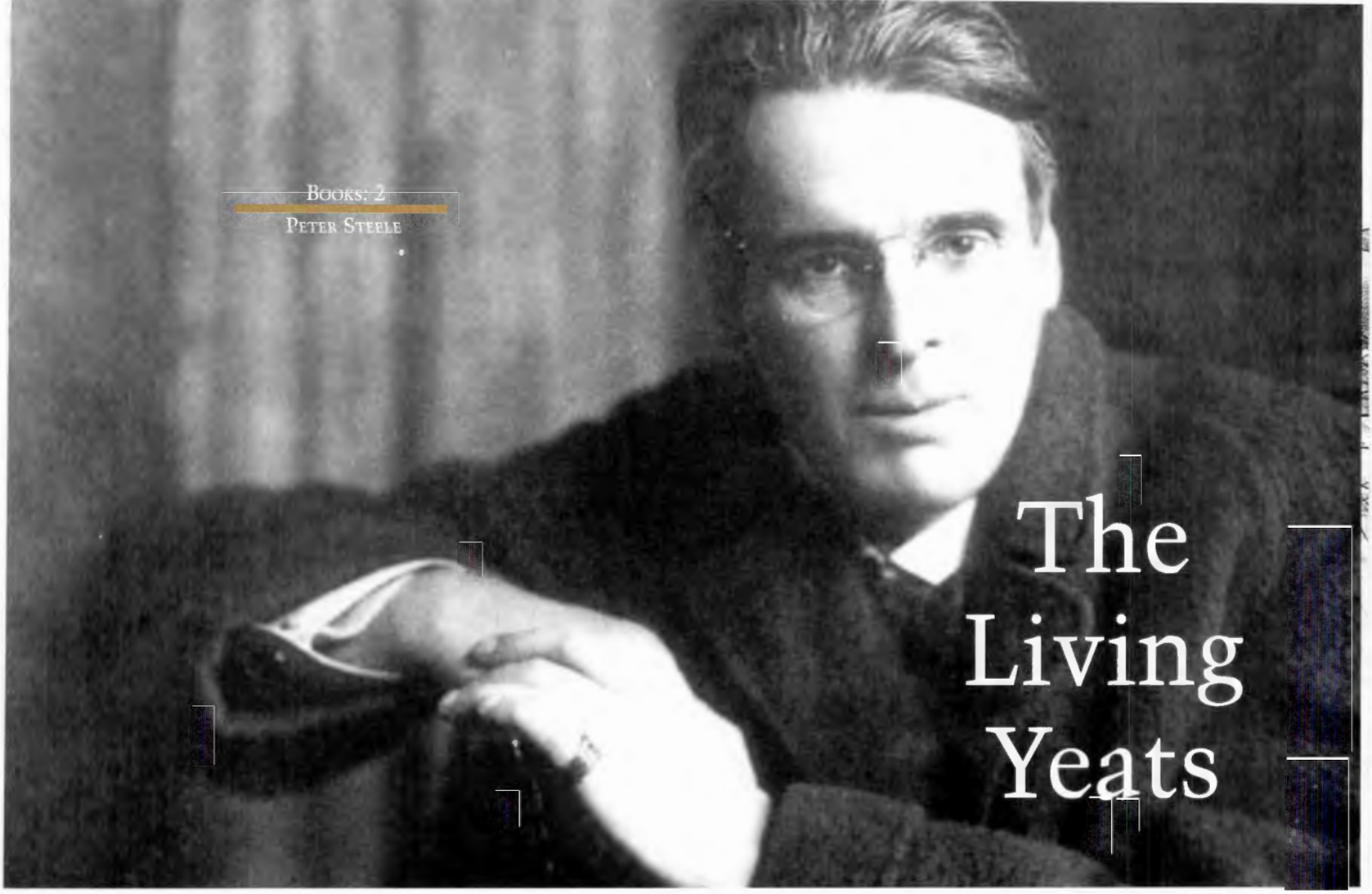
In his review of *Suspect History*, Ryan contended that the question that matters most through all this impacted controversy is this: 'Is Clark's *History* any good?' The collection edited by Carl Bridge, *Manning Clark. Essays on His Place in History* (1994) ventilated criticisms of the *History* and included various defences. In *Australian Melodramas* (1995), my book on Thomas Keneally (who saw Clark as a great enabler of his historical fictions), I contended that rather than regarding the *History* as wisdom literature or prose epic, it might more honourably be seen as belonging to just that artistic mode which Manne damned it for being. For 'the *History* is one of the great works of the melodramatic imagination to have been written in Australia'. It is consonant with the genius of the national literature.

Those are the terms of my defence of Clark's *History*, but I would want to pose—as central—a different question from Ryan's. It is one addressed by McQueen. Why has Clark been so demonised? McQueen's response is bland: 'three sources of enmity can be distinguished: resentment by other academics; unease with his personality; and antagonism towards his politics'. However cogent this combination of reasons might be, the disparagement of Clark is out of all proportion. He won an international reputation which some of those who have published much less may covet. His posing as an Old Testament prophet in a wide-brimmed hat was risible. That his fulminations offended the Tory side of politics need neither be denied not regretted. What other explanations can be sought? McQueen says justly that 'the nexus of Menzies, Whitlam and Clark has become central to the history wars'.

It's great to have those wars, if we do. Better by far to debate in passion the meaning of our past than to forget it, or turn it into mini-series fodder, or to partisan uses. The currently unfashionable task of reading Clark would be an antidote to misleading views of what he said, and failed to say. Rightly McQueen points to the complex, not unsympathetic portrait that Clark gave of Menzies. Nor was Clark enlisted by Keating (who is gratuitously insulted by McQueen) until he was dead. Clark's pessimism, one is inclined to suggest, was—if not apolitical—then quietist. Individuals might be redeemed, but the burden of his *History* (if not the Lenin speech) was that wholesale social reformation is more like a millennial dream than a possibility at hand. Dickens thought similarly. Not all their characters agreed.

In a country so free of ghosts and demons, Manning Clark has suffered an unlikely elevation to the ranks of the damned. McQueen's *Suspect History* is an imperfect vindication of Clark. Exculpated in some ways, he is more deeply incriminated in others. For example, the sloppiness of McQueen's procedures appears as perverse homage to Clark's own. But the crucial question abides: why do so many seek to destroy the reputation of this dead man, who was, for all else, a great teacher of the history of his country? Measured criticisms of his work aside (whether by Ryan or John Hirst), Clark suffers from guilt by association. He admired Lenin. Keating admired him. Outflanked from the right by Hanson, Australian Tories have made Clark the historian by whom the study of history can be discredited. No matter to them that such an election is ludicrous and malign. ■

Peter Pierce is professor of Australian Literature at James Cook University.



BOOKS: 2

PETER STEELE

The Living Yeats

ABOUT A YEAR AGO, idling my way through the poetry section of a library, I came across a book which had been rebound. Whoever stamped the author's name on the spine must have been nodding, since it read, boldly and simply, 'Yeast.' How the author, a man with a very good conceit of himself, would have disliked this! But he, who loved the symbolic, would have had to concede a certain appropriateness in the blunder, since his poetry has in fact gone on working away like yeast in the imaginations of many readers, and many writers.

R. F. Foster's *W.B. Yeats: A Life. Volume I: The Apprentice Mage 1865-1914* shows us, as well as any biography can, how this came about. It is difficult to see how the book could have been improved, combining as it does a commanding knowledge of the relevant materials, intellectual elegance in picking a way through them, and an unusual skill at narration. It gives a thoughtful pleasure from beginning to end.

As Foster acknowledges generously, Yeats has been blessed in some of his biographers, especially Richard Ellmann, whose work he calls 'a masterpiece of intellectual analysis and psychological penetration, to which all Yeatsians are for ever indebted.' But Foster has found another way, namely to 'restore the sense of a man involved in life, and in history: notably in the history of his country, at a time of exceptional flux and achievement.'

W.B. Yeats: A Life. Volume 1: The Apprentice Mage, 1865-1914, R.F. Foster, Oxford University Press, 1997. ISBN 0 19 211735 1 RRP $49.95

It is a task for which Foster is well equipped, given that he has written one history of Ireland and edited another, and has written biographies of Parnell and of Lord Randolph Churchill, besides a collection of sprightly essays, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History*. Foster is obviously not daunted by the frequent proclamation that the facts of a writer's life are of no interest when set down beside his work: Yeats certainly did not believe this, and he came to make great poetry precisely out of life's gritty actualities. It is often humiliatingly true that, as Auden wrote in 'At the Grave of Henry James,' 'there are many whose works/ Are in better taste than their lives,' but that is the beginning of a story, not the end of one, as Foster shows with concentration and discernment.

It will perhaps be helpful to quote a couple of passages from the book, to give its flavour. The first has to do with the Lady Gregory so frequently alluded to and celebrated in Yeats' writings:

> How he appeared to her at the outset of their long relationship is more conjectural. His humour appealed: and WBY presented himself to her, through letters and anecdotes, in a feline and amusing way. His genius and charisma were electrifying. And so were his good looks. In his relationship with Gregory, as with many others (men as well as women), WBYused his gift for fascination to 'loan himself out'. He slipped easily into the fantasies of people as diverse as Horton, George Moore and Annie Horniman, rather like one of the succubi he read about in treatises on magic. But Gregory's firm grasp on reality meant that

their friendship, unlike many others, never soured—though it may at the outset have rested on some unfulfilled hopes. Their relationship quickly stabilized into mentor and artist: while she addressed him as 'Willie', his letters to her remain to 'Lady Gregory'. The adherence to formality is surprising even for the time: yet they rapidly became each other's closest friend and confidant, and remained so—with only an occasional slight passage of annoyance—until her death nearly forty years later. Over that period, while she sustained him in many ways, he helped her to emerge as one of the most prominent Irish writers of the day. In identifying her so deliberately by her title rather than by her Christian name, he not only defined their relationship, he helped create the image and the name by which she would live, write and become famous.

'Players and painted stage took all my love,/And not those things that they were emblems of'—so Yeats was to write in old age. Whether or not that was the whole story, it is certainly true that, to an uncommon degree, he conceived of life in terms of theatre. This could degenerate into attitudinizing, but it could also make for vividness and complexity in relationships and in other personal activities; and almost by definition it required a preoccupation with roles. Such a state of affairs is a blessing for a biographer, and Foster has made the most of it.

In the present passage, for instance, not only does he identify the relationship between Gregory and Yeats as one of mentor and artist, but nuances it with 'she sustained him' and 'he helped her'—the kind of distinction which is more than an elegant variation, pointing as it does to distinctive characteristics in each of them. There is also the adroit use of 'loan himself out,' which both fortifies and refines what has been offered in the phrase 'a feline and amusing way.' The contrasting of the fantasies of some with Gregory's 'firm grasp on reality' is another reminder of life's dramatic possibilities, for good and for ill: and Foster's shrewd observation of the uses of a personal title is something which Yeats himself would have been intrigued to see, given his fascination with the singular and the heroic.

BUT FOSTER IS ALTOGETHER too well informed, and too sensible, to suppose that either the rising young man or the middle-aged Yeats could always be lording it. Heinrich Böll relates, in his *Irish Journal*, how he went on pilgrimage to Yeats' grave in Sligo, only to be distracted by conversational and other trivia. Inevitably, Yeats himself had his ration of such things. Foster, writing of the production of Yeats' play *On Baile's Strand*, says,

> For all the dynamic effect of his players, WBY struck one observer in Leeds as 'a ghostly wraith' who avoided contact with people. He had good reason. He was distracted by Gonne's affairs, with the MacBride libel hearing fixed for early June and the divorce case coming on in July: he suggested visiting her in Paris during April, encouraged by Gregory (who sent him 10 pounds for the purpose). But he threw himself instead into rehearsing the players, often to their incomprehension ('Well, Mr Yeats says I've got it: what it is I've got, I couldn't for the life of me tell you; but I hope to God I don't lose it'). Another actor, complimented by WBY on the emotional intensity with which he declaimed the names of old Irish heroes, replied, 'Sure I thought they were mountains.' There were always minor problems to do with the theatre (a draughty skylight, wigs to be collected in London, disobedient smoking backstage), and Horniman's determination to design 'artistic' costumes remained a sore trial. But after the late April performances in England, WBY was convinced they were on the right track.

Anyone with even a passing knowledge of Yeats' poetry will find antennae go out to the names 'Gonne' and 'MacBride,' she being the woman he loved to distraction for much of his life, and he, her husband, the 'drunken vainglorious lout' of 'Easter 1916.' Yeats wrote of Maud Gonne as a modern Helen of Troy, and as a goddess, and of MacBride as one of those through whose insurrection 'a terrible beauty is born,' but even the larger-than-life can in season seem too small for it, and Foster has a keen eye for both calibrations.

'REHEARSING THE PLAYERS, often to their incomprehension'—it might be the epigraph to a book of Jewish or of Christian theology: God knows what God makes of it all. Conceivably he finds much of it farcical; certainly Yeats must often have found things so, whether on the various English stages, or in the Irish political and cultural cockpit. At all events, Foster is regularly alert to incongruity, whether of thought, word or deed. This makes for entertainment, and it also makes for plausibility. He quotes, from a notebook of Yeats for about 1913, 'Great art, great political drama is the utmost of nobility and the utmost of reality compatible with it ... Nobility struggles with reality, the eagle and the snake.' Yeats concedes more to the snake than is often supposed, and Foster is there to watch him doing so.

I have not said how crowded the book is with characters, some poignant, some mordant, some waif-like—in other words, with a normal human array. Of recent years, other excellent books have traced the fortunes of members of Yeats' family and acquaintances, but Foster gives another shake to the kaleidoscope, so that we see them in new patterns and with renewed distinctiveness. Yeats wrote often, in poetry and in prose, directly and obliquely, about these people, sometimes to aggrandise and sometimes to diminish: when they could, they responded in kind. Someone with both the time and the interest might prepare for a reading of Foster's volume by going once more through Yeats' *Autobiographies*, to find two strikingly different but complementary ways of addressing the one body of experience. He claimed that his glory was that he had such friends: and they too did well out of the bargain. ■

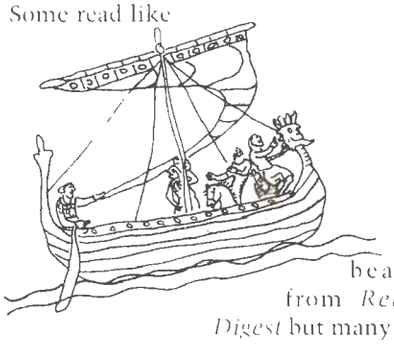
Peter Steele SJ has a Personal Chair at the University of Melbourne.

MAX TEICHMANN

The past is another continent

Europe, A History, Norman Davies, Oxford University Press, London, 1996. ISBN 0 19820 171 RRP $49.95.

As we approach 2000 AD we are being confronted by overviews of the past. 19th Century Europe, the rise and fall of civilisations, the World; and now this. *A History of Europe*. 'from the Ice Age to the Cold War, from the Minos to Margaret Thatcher', proclaims the jacket. Well, it certainly *is* a long read, with 1136 pages of text, and 200 more pages devoted to chapter notes, maps, appendices, capsule notes and Index. The capsules are 'telephoto' illustrations of specific issues and persons featuring in the text—and vary considerably in quality. Some read like

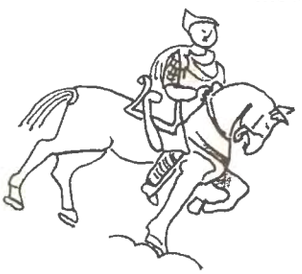


beat-ups from *Readers' Digest* but many others fascinate.

So—a good reference book, given zest by Davies' unorthodoxies. The author is professor of Polish history in the School of Slavonic and Eastern European studies in the University of London; and his book benefits from a long, and detailed look at the stories of Russia, Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Davies has a Polish wife, which no doubt has exercised some influence. Indeed, a few of the observations could have been made by a member of General Anders' Army a *Polish* member.

People write many kinds of history—and Davies outlines some of these in his chapter on historiography. *His* history seems a trifle teleological, with the whole long struggle of Western Man leading to its desired consummation: the European Union. He sees this as about to happen, but he at least worries as to how Russia is going to fit in. Yet, speaking of more recent times, he says, 'On the moral front, one has to note the extreme contrast between the material advancement of European civilisation and the terrible regression in political and intellectual values'. So the European Union may not be the end or the whole of the matter.

A few weeks ago, German president Herzog said 'The world is in ferment. What do I see in Germany? The lack of courage is overwhelming. Crisis scenarios are fostered. A feeling of paralysis has settled over our society. What is wrong with our country? The loss of economic dynamism, the enfeeblement of society, the unbelievable mental depression. Such are the essentials of the crisis. Modern Germany is a country of manic depressives and congenital pessimists, led by timid politicians'. I think the same could be said, allowing for some differences of degree, of other

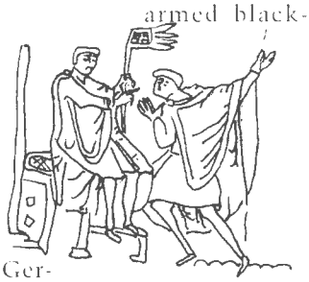


European countries—especially Russia. So the jury is still out on the future of Europe.

But there are few doubts or reservations about the beginning of our story: only a sense of real loss that Ancient Greece and the Mycænians had to disappear. I find it hard to feel *that* about any of the other centuries or eras that Davies sets down. Perhaps never again does one have the chance to stare unabashed, amazed, at the wonder which is Man. Some think the Fall occurred with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, but I imagine that Man lost his innocence and perhaps his way, when Hellas perished. Thereafter it all seems a little bit forced, slightly second rate. There has been no shortage of enthusiasms, and fanaticisms, or hubris, but they have been somehow over the top—ersatz. And there has been no shortage of questing minds and would-be masters of the Universe, materially or intellectually.

But the mobilisation and bureaucratisation, and the sanitising of the minds and the imaginations of men in the end produces a subliminal boredom and claustrophobia, and finally déjà vu. What has it all been for, really? King Solomon's cry, vanity, all is vanity, seems appropriate. Whereas it isn't appropriate *at all* with the Greeks.

Leaving Davies' teleological intimations aside, it is clear that he has tried to write a general history for the literate common man—wherever he/she may be hiding. Apparently there is one page for every two years in this chronicle, and it often reads like that—even-paced to the point of being one damn thing after another. In the process, you often finish with little of the excitement, the grand delusions or the states of mind of so many people during the Revolutions, the Crusades, the witch burnings, the festering nationalisms. Nor does one pick up the sense of absolute fear and horror people must have felt during the Great Plague, or when the Mongols or Teutonic Knights would suddenly appear. Or when Dutch or Yugoslavs awoke to find masses of grim, heavily-armed black-

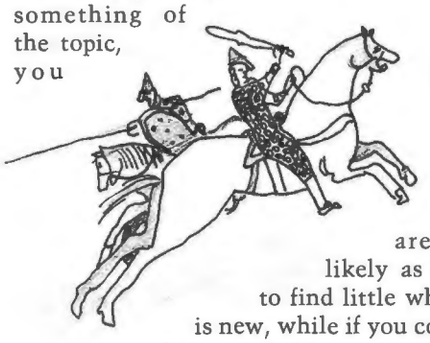


uniformed Germans in their midst, led by malevolent machines, spitting death, and with men inside directing them. Prefiguring *The Empire Strikes Back*. What would a Polish farmer have *felt* as they came towards him? Alas, there were no Ewoks about, no Luke Skywalker and his gallant friends from Year 12.

This is probably a cavilling literary complaint of mine—deriving from the memory I have of encountering such immediacy every now and then, *strangely enough* in Victorian State School Readers. But Davies does go quite some way in bringing out the evil—incomprehensible to many of us—of the Holocaust, the extermination of the Kulaks, the Ukrainian famines, and the Gulags. He quotes Hitler briefing his Generals at Obersalzburg on the eve of the invasion of Poland, and his plans for the Polish nation. 'Genghis Khan had millions of women and men killed by his own will and with a gay heart. History sees him only as a great State builder... I have sent my Death's Head units to the East with the order to kill without mercy men, women

and children of the Polish race and language. Only in such a way will we win the Lebensraum that we need. Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?'. This was not to be a 'final solution', but a massive population cull and subsequent enslavement. Thus, Davies, using Admiral Canaris' notes from that meeting; his intention, to go out to bat for the Poles. And why not?

This is essentially a political/military history, though the author assiduously supplies us with economic, scientific and technological material adhering to each period. He also gives us accounts of the theological, philosophical, educational and artistic movements, activities and theories as they arise. Trouble is, if you know something of the topic, you



are as likely as not to find little which is new, while if you come to the topic freshly, so to speak, you often can't get a handle on it, for it doesn't tell you *enough*. In history, at least, it seems possible to over-simplify small things as it is large, leaving obscurity and a sense of dissatisfaction. I think this may be an insoluble problem of very large studies which requiring generality, but trying to compensate with a host of minutiae. But the minutiae, with catchy titles like Nez, Ludi, Lugdunem, Taze, Syphilus, Violets, often seem there for their own sake and don't connect with the main themes. Like match box covers. And the florid proliferation of these interesting or intriguing facts is encouraged by the very porous nature of the themes themselves. And one is not always sure what the theme *is*—assuming that there always is one

One reason for remarking on all this is that Davies pours scorn on 'specialism', and 'specialist' studies. We all know the arguments. Well he has shown here that specialist studies are important, indeed irreplaceable.

Davies appears to be no economist or philosopher or historian of economic thought. Why should he be? Because he writes about those fields. Nor did I detect a sociological dimension. And yet, sociology employed with sensitivity and imagination, can often create order and make sense of an apparent ragbag of facts, which otherwise just seem happenings—giving support to a Chaos theory. I won't raise the possible great value of psychoanalytic reasoning, especially in talking about Western Man this century (or what's going on in Australia at the moment) only because it raises too many hackles, and Davies wouldn't, I suspect, touch it with a barge pole. So Nazism and Western Stalinists and Maoists escape unscathed.

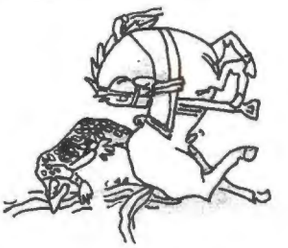
Among the many areas he does do well is the place of Russia, pointing out how by 1914, she was developing so fast as to appear set to become the greatest power in the world, with masses of gifted, energetic

and sophisticated people—highly advanced in science, mathematics and technology, as well as in economics and the arts, standing waiting in the wings. And unlimited natural resources. But World War I threw Russia into a melting pot filled with blood—to become the sport of the Grand Vivisectionist.

DAVIES IS AT HOME with never-ending wars and conquests and describes them well. He places strong emphasis on the role of religion, especially Catholicism, and the different waves and layers of religious thought and disputation over two millennia. Then there is the long struggle between religious and secular thinking. The secular victory was completely by capitalism and commercialism and the rise of the state. As the church retreated from peoples' thought and private space, the state and the industrial system moved in. There was little time for people to think or decide for themselves or grow.

We are all drawn to the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the Romantic movement, though not so many to the English Civil War and the work of Locke and Montesquieu and Mill, whereby our liberties, the sovereignty of the people, and the rule of law were established as central ideas, making democracy, liberalism, and then socialism seem more and more desirable. By the thirties and the Depression, these ideas seemed mockeries to many Westerners, who saw fascism or communism as preferable. They know better now—Davies describes Leninism as 'cargo cult socialism'. But democracy is not working either.

Davies is a conservative, so no lover of revolutions. The French and Russians come in for different kinds of disapproval. The aftermath of the Russian? Fifty million Russians etcetera died at Stalin's orders, ten per cent of the population were in a gulag at any one time at their peak when the gulag was the largest employer in Europe. The working life of a prisoner was, on average, one winter. Prisoners at Vorkuta were pushed harder than those at Auschwitz. QED. The French Revolution was a far bloodier affair than our historians have been saying, although everyone at the time knew how bloody it was. Nine times more people were killed in the provinces than in



Paris. I think it permanently divided and traumatised France.

This history seems to be so much about leaders, kings, generals, popes, emperors or elites, that one starts hearing the old radical cry, 'What about a history of the common man?' Well, social historians are doing that and Davies *does* incorporate some of their work. But he is more interested in the march and counter-march of tribes, nations, armies, classes and their conflicts. The ordinary man has no say, being set up for one conflict after another. The spoils go not to the victors but to their leaders. As technology improved, and literacy, it became possible to mobilise and indoctrinate more of the population. Such was progress.

But Davies is neither gloomy nor apocalyptic—for he describes events and whole centuries where people seemed as vile as anyone living now, and cruelty and tragedy were the normal diet. So looking over 2000 years of hopes blasted, then hopes renewed, may actually be good for the spirits. ■

Max Teichmann is a freelance writer and reviewer.

JIM DAVIDSON

The Unconscionable Society?

The Unconscious Civilization, John Ralston Saul, Penguin, 1997. ISBN 0 14 026464 7 RRP $16.95

THERE MUST HAVE BEEN MANY people like myself, who, watching all that footage of the delirium in Berlin in 1989 that swept over the tumblingWall, wondered what the event would portend. Eric Hobsbawm saw it quicker than most of us, and declared it ended the (short) twentieth century. Before so very long, it didn't seem such a bad idea (if only a joke) to think of putting it back. For as a symbol of when capitalism proceeded to move into overdrive, it is richly suggestive: Marxism may have been vanquished, but the bogey it had always spoken of not only really existed, but was already readying itself to breathe down our necks.

Never has there been a time when money values have been so sovereign. (Old coins, such as the sovereign, were named after the king; but last year there was a proposal that some African republics, being bankrupt, should cede sovereignty and allow themselves to be privatised.) Communism has virtually gone, socialism is in disarray, and even notions of collectivism or just plain coöperation are unfashionable and run against the grain. Education (increasingly individualised) is no longer valued for itself; once the word 'trivia' popped up in the 1970s to be hurled against any fact or factoid, the way was wide open to dethroning knowledge, or even expertise. Not even scientific knowledge is as valued for its own sake as once it was, while education, even before its amalgamation into the fiefdom of DEETYA, has increasingly been seen as a kind of tooling up or retooling exercise. As for religion, the traditional counterweight to excessively materialist values, we have now reached the stage when the church as social conscience can be jeered at by such as Jeff Kennett, and where—if in America more markedly than here—a symbiosis with right-wing and materialist values is often more striking than any questioning or contestation. The widespread collapse of all vectors apart from the managerial is responsible for the peculiarly skewed character of the present time.

JOHN RALSTON SAUL'S RICHLY suggestive book, *The Unconscious Civilization*, was originally given as the Canadian equivalent of the Boyer Lectures. A sustained trumpet blast against the excesses of managerialism, it carries across to the page the incisiveness of verbal delivery.

Saul's thesis is that we have become the Unconscious Civilization of his title, going about our business like zombies. We drift along with little self-knowledge, which after all implies knowledge of the self in context; instead, a socially-sanctioned selfishness is everywhere in evidence, having 'hijacked' an older, broader individualism. Saul says one can even speak of the newer, narrow individualism entailing 'a hijacking of Western civilization', since it constantly endorses the primacy of self-interest at the expense of the common good. And perhaps the common good has receded so quickly because a post-Freudian preoccupation with 'personal growth' has led to the self being perceived as the main arena, both the locus and focus of concern.

The result is a curious inversion of traditional individualism. Postmodern people are adept at conforming to the point of passivity in all the things that matter, while often asserting non-conformism in those which don't. Saul's contention can be evidenced everywhere. There is the world of the suits, and the world of weekend play clothes—now sometimes permitted, in a gesture towards integration, to be worn to work on Fridays. In Australia, the most passionate politics—at least till Pauline Hanson came along—tend to be symbolic politics. Thus the campaign against French tests in the Pacific, however justified initially, soon came to resemble the hysteria that led to the chopping up of German pianos during World War One. Similarly, political correctness is often just a matter of conjugating issues into trendiologies.

If Nature abhors a vacuum, so does society, and it is Saul's contention that corporatism has expanded to command centre stage. It has been there all the time, biding it; in fact, says Saul, the present is the third or fourth offensive it has staged over the past century or so.

So it is of corporatism that he speaks rather than 'managerialism', which he sees simply as the current, reductive version.

Managerialism, of course, emphasises practicality, getting things done—which is probably why it has caught on so completely in America and Australia, former frontier societies: the Europeans are less convinced of its efficacy. (As well they might be: here there is the odd effect—even before Sandy Stone became prime minister—of many things being cut back and impacted to what they were in the 1950s, all ultimately in the name of efficiency.) Yet for all the vaunted practicality, there is an air of disjunctiveness about management as there is about most ideologies. Managers have been able to convince themselves—and effectively the world—that they are *doing*, or making. Only a generation ago it would have been impossible to make that mistake: the last steam engines were still around to establish the connections between coal, stoking and movement: no bullshit there. Later, to pull up the bonnet was to see the car engine laid out before you: not now. Instead, following the lead established by the hospitality *industry*, banks have recently taken to calling their various lending ventures *products*. Management has refashioned productivity in its own image.

The same howling disjunction can be seen, as Saul points out, in the constant evocation by conservatives of small-town America even as they endorse downsizing and the rampage of market forces—much crueller in their impact on small communities than they are even in the cities. John Howard's attachment to an anodyne view of the fifties—one where there was no sexism, no abuse in church institutions, no stolen children—is rendered even more pathetic when one considers how inadequate the palisades of the white picket fence would be against the forces that have now been loosed. The government talks middle Australia and family values, but delivers deracination.

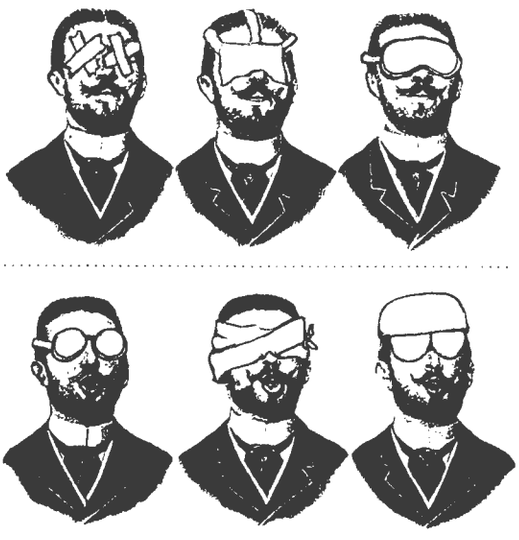
SAUL STATES THAT MANAGEMENT is 'about systems and quantification, not about policy and people'. Busy-ness becomes a substitute for thought; imagination is discounted as subversive, while expertise arising from

a given area is usually regarded as an impertinence or special pleading compared with the mantras of management. Efficiency, he points out, is the watchword now, not effectiveness. That is too loose, too adaptable, almost threateningly multipolar. And so education becomes more programmatic, less concerned to promote reflectiveness, adaptability, or even general survival skills. 'What could be cruder than a human being', writes Saul, 'who is limited to a narrow area of knowledge and practice and has the naïveté of a child in most other areas?' The image immediately springs to mind of those suitcases neatly lined up next to the beds of the cult members of Heaven's Gate, computer whiz kids all.

Given the general abdication of the universities in the face of contemporary complexities—for the post-modernist distrust of language goes a long way towards negating even an attempt to see the big picture—it is not surprising that an ever-strengthening specialisation and a technological imperative should proceed hand in hand. Technology, Saul reminds us, tends to follow a trajectory of its own, its demands often masking the incapacity of management to show creative leadership.

The computer is to the managerial revolution what the clock was to the Industrial Revolution, a tool of regulation. There are offices where it has finally effected a Benthamite surveillance; people have to clock off when they leave their work stations, and if the minutes added up over a week exceed the deemed allowance, they are called in to explain themselves. And in many minor ways it reveals much about the contemporary managerial sensibility. The cursor can glide over prose, eliminating bumps and bumptiousness. At the same time language is procedurally mangled by shortened file names or keywords, by ludicrous spell-checks, or by the sheer facility of over-production—in prose that could often be said to suffer from tin ear. The very equalisation of the computer print-out finish can be deceptive, and is meant to be: packaging is more than half the product. We live in an age of icing the shitcake.

The computer and its cognates are now the test of literacy almost as surely as Latin was in the Middle Ages. But with its worship of quantification, and relentless capacity for measurement ('The Vice-Chancellor made a statement at 8:53:31 this morning'), there is constant reinforcement of the contemporary bias to instantaneity. The lack of memory Saul refers to arrives with the obsolescence of soon-to-be discarded machines and programmes. Who bothers now to go back to Wordstar files on 5-inch discs? This, combined with increasing staff turnovers and downsizing, means that there is no collective memory—indeed sometimes it has been deliberately destroyed. Even so, it is surprising to find university and municipal libraries throughout the western world often deliberately reducing their holdings—sometimes even resorting to landfill to get rid of unwanted books. If they have not been borrowed during a short specified period, then the assumption is that they have not earned their keep. Never mind that intellectual concerns shift, change, even fold back, usually in ways that cannot be anticipated.



We are, in addition, witnessing the beginning of the end of the Enlightenment tradition of free public libraries; the user-pays nostrum is eroding that along with much else. Now that there is less public debate than there used to be—corporations, like the Victorian premier, hope to stifle criticism by simply ignoring its existence—then one of the arguments about the necessity for a well-informed citizenry can appear seriously impaired. Quality information is to be paid for; already in England some notable journalists work for private newsletters.

The reduction in public space is one thing that very much concerns Saul—although he does not point out, as he might, that once you have privatised the town halls, sold off the churches and shunted the post office into a shop, how do you give the community the necessary visual reinforcement of its existence? At Kew, outside the old post office, stands an impressive circular colonnaded war memorial: it was inadvertently sold off with the post office. But apparently once this was realised, nobody thought of amending the title: the assurance of the new owner was accepted when he said that he would not pull it down.

As this book points out, the private sector has less efficiency to commend it than the public, together with a much greater debt, yet paradoxically government—and universities—have increasingly felt the need to adopt the values of corporations. Once Thatcher swept to power, the sudden take-off of the word 'consumer' was an indication of the way things were going: in its plural form it began to replace the good honest word 'public', which not only suggested a general responsibility, but was intrinsically democratic: the aged, the young, and the poor were all equally enfranchised. But 'consumers' means purchasers, and just as a fire consumes, so there is something corrosive about money.

Nowadays the word 'customers' has invaded university corridors: of all the ways students can be thought of, this should be the last.

Saul's canvas could scarcely be broader. Noting that contemporary western democracy has become leached of meaning, he senses that the era which began with the great reform bills in England (culminating in the welfare state) is now over; the tide is being rolled back. In the 1960s we were told that the price of liberty was eternal vigilance, and even by then had forgotten how recent had been the gaining of the vote for all adults. Democracy was surely impregnable. But, writes Saul, 'It could be argued that we are now in the midst of a *coup d'état* in slow motion.' Already there are people like the Tofflers arguing for a return to 'minority power', albeit buttressed by the consultative referenda technology now makes possible.

Saul identifies such a program as endorsing a hierarchical society, and of advocating rule by interest groups. He convincingly connects it with the corporatist program of Mussolini, and even with Napoleon's invention of the referendum, infinitely more manipulative than it is democratic. For him, 'Marxism, fascism and the marketplace strongly resemble each other. They are all corporatist, managerial and hooked on technology as their own particular golden calf'.

But such a broad-brush approach to history is not always felicitous. Saul's

misrendering of the 1891 papal encyclyclical *Rerum Novarum* puts one on guard when reading his account of the origins of modern absolutism, located in the similar assumptions he finds in the activities of Calvinists and Jesuits. Similarly, his attribution of communism, fascism, serious civil strife and both world world wars to 'impossible work conditions, uncontrolled preference for technology over humans and a market-led society' does rather take the breath away —particularly as all this is despatched in a paragraph. What one would have liked to have seen is a little more *recent* history—how we got into the present predicament via the breakdown of Bretton Woods and the rise of the Harvard MBA. Or even a bit more on the spread of benign assumptions about youth, and the enthronement of inexperience (so long as it's smart).

Not the least attractive feature of Saul's book is the way it quotes Adam Smith and David Hume against the economic rationalists, showing how much more liberal they were than their twentieth-century disciples. As we might have expected, the eco-rats have imposed a particularly narrow reading on their work. Less convincing is the book's title, which strikes me as unfortunate: 'unconscious' can suggest the result of unpleasant and sudden impact. A formulation suggesting amnesia or zombification would have been more in order: even *The Unconscionable Society* might have done. Similarly the upbeat chapter titles ('From Corporatism to Democracy') are not always a good idea, since often the argument runs in reverse.

Like any good polemicist, Saul makes some suggestions as to how we might set about reversing the hold corporatism has gained over us. First we must nurture the basic human qualities: 'common sense, creativity or imagination, ethics (not morality), intuition or instinct, memory and, finally, reason'—the last listed where it is because in recent times it has been mistakenly privileged over all the others. We need openness, not closure: not the dread fear of time that all absolutist dispensations trade on, in order to produce immediate and self-serving results. 'Practical humanism', writes Saul, 'is the voyage towards equilibrium without the expectation of actually arriving there'. So the universities should shun corporatism, and set about giving students a broad *education*, even those pursuing technology.

Saul is naturally opposed to the activities of the 'runaway money markets', and urges on western governments 'a few simple joint agreements' which 'could actually shut down the most harmful parts of the speculation that rages about us.' Elsewhere he refers to the activities of transnationals, and to globalisation; but there is not enough sense in the book of how these elements are not only sapping the power of nation states, but redrawing the world according to new principles of cohesion and exclusion.

Amongst other things, corporatism involves a regrouping, a new way of conducting imperialism in a postcolonial world. Similarly, managerialism is the boys' own response to feminism—although women can occasionally be promoted above the glass ceiling, so long as they sharpen their objectives and coolly refashion themselves.

One can then draw little comfort from Saul's proffered solutions. Managerialism is so powerful now because it represents a true synthesis: it has taken over the left's predilection for analysis and bureaucracy, and, turning to the right, moulded a new class into a hierarchy and invested it with authority. One cannot even begin to see from which quarters it will eventually be overthrown. Both major parties are still in the grips of its assumptions, and the Hanson protest is the twentieth-century equivalent of a *jacquerie*.

At least these days concerned Marxists and concerned Christians often talk to each other about the social questions which should concern us all. But whatever the merits of that alliance, it doesn't contain many votes. ■

Jim Davidson teaches at Victoria University of Technology and reviews for the *Age*. He sees operatic villains everywhere.

Books: 5

Alan Wearne

Lehmann's guide

Collected Poems, Geoffrey Lehmann, William Heinemann, Australia, 199 ISBN 185 561 RRP $2 95

You are thinking 'men' and you want one man's imaginative plain-speaking distillation that, at its best, isn't merely local but could be heading out into the world. Then, probably around Father's Day, *The Good Weekend* (or its Murdoch rival) publishes their annual 'men's issue': cute, earnest, just-this-side-of-daggy and above all facile.

Anyone finding this magazine occupying their Saturday morning should forsake it for Lehmann's collection: a fine distillation of much that is male, male without any attendant tub-thumping, or, as far as I can see, misogyny. And yet, though men in various guises propel much of the verse, you only notice this when standing back from the proceedings. Why? Because here is a writer who mostly does what good poets always have done: crafted poetry. Once that is attended to, of course, any messages and all obsessions will take care of themselves.

But nothing helps fuel poetry quite like obsession (even if it is that most basic of obsessions: language). A poet who lacks obsession lacks the world. And here are the figures from Lehmann's volume who dominate his work: an imaginary Roman governor, the Emperor Nero (though not the Laughton madman of legend but a more intriguing revisionist figure) the poet's grandfathers (though particularly his paternal one), father, former father-in-law (the narrator of 'Spring Forest') and an approximate Lehmann, first as a young man, and finally as—you guessed it—a father. What an amazing variety, what an even more amazing consistency.

It is the task of the traditional to be

unique, time after time after time. Grounded so much in tradition (even if the tradition has merely endured the length of some performance-based fad) poetry's task is, perversely yet naturally, to constantly celebrate the unique. And fatherhood must be humanity's second most traditional role; though that doesn't mean it should be dismissed as the subject for a poet's imagination. I doubt if Lehmann ever consciously decided 'Oh well, time I dealt with fathers etcetera again.' If strong enough, your obsessions will find you, always.

It would be interesting if the poet (one-time solicitor, university lecturer, co-author of 'Taxation Law in Australia', and presently partner in an international accounting firm) should take the relevant risks and one day write poetry about his parallel occupations.

Circa three decades back, Melbourne poet Leon Slade (a kind of white-collar Bruce Dawe) was known to cast a bemused eye over aspects of his accountancy career, but Slade was much the happy amateur whilst Lehmann is the dedicated pro. Both categories, of course, can produce great verse: and when the former are bad they're sloppy, when the latter are bad they're pretentious. Perhaps work poems should remain the domain of amateurs; perhaps Lehmann has tried and the results are dreadful. Perhaps, as in 'Spring Forest', it was easier to reconstruct a soldier-settler's family and farming life. Certainly to have written 'Spring Forest' must have been one great adventure.

Though what surrounds 'Spring Forest' in the volume is well crafted (even at times exhilarating) this suite/sequence is the highlight of the poet's career till now. Sometimes in the verse business a writer extends him/herself and gives across a book-length narrative that remains their benchmark. Style and language in such a project are important but ... oh the latitude it gives to cover a variety of incidents and emotions!

My favourite is Louis MacNeice's masterpiece of late thirties England spooked by Munich: 'Autumn Journal'. But running it close are three Australian works: Bruce Beaver's 'Letters to Live Poets', John Tranter's 'Crying in Early Infancy' and Lehmann's 'Spring Forest'. MacNeice and Beaver 'narrate' their volumes and Tranter's imagination is the ring master for his sonnet sequence. But if 'Spring Forest' is *written* by Lehmann it is *spoken* by Ross McInerney.

Outdoors at Night
It's surprising
that the universe is able
to look at itself, from end to end,
the near fires and remote fires
burning in a clear vacuum.
I stand under the grey antlered limbs
of my dead box tree at night
and watch the stars
signalling to each other.
As light a million years old glimmers on me
I ponder, among my white bee boxes,
how much more likely
that space should be opaque
an obscurantist's delight,
a vast sponge to be lost in.
No ... the stars announce
their presence over huge distances
to my yellow tractor, a beetle and myself.

Spring, Ayer River Reserve in the Otway Ranges. Photograph: Bill Thomas.

This random example shows the best of Lehmann, and I can safely use the word random because as a craftsman he is so damn consistent. Even when stilted, too well-behaved (though not in 'Spring Forest') he is never sloppy. And even if writing in any vernacular has its most decided place it does take as much art to turn plain words/simple language into poetry. *I have decided to chose this word and to place it here!* Far more than prose, poetry is as basic as that, something which must have most novel-

ists and journalists foxed. It is even better when, as with Lehmann at his best, the result is never facile.

'Nero's Poems', Lehmann's other major sequence is an ambitious, slick curate's egg, at times powerful, almost always fun. But in pretending to be Nero pretending to be a poet of the Catullus/Martial variety, Lehmann has to strain in a way he never had to in 'Spring Forest'. I can't quite conceive of Lehmann as some Oz Catullus: master of pithy, self-deprecating tours of the *demi-monde*.

If such a guide were abroad it would be Lehmann's dark cousin-poet, Nigel Roberts. Sure, their actual styles may seem like alpha and omega, one playing Lowell to the other's Ginsberg; but near to exact contemporaries, the solicitor/accountant and the art teacher share a very similar professionalism; and both are writers of a most 'male' verse (like Catullus). Roberts, by the way, should get himself a Latin scholar and attempt a few versions of the Roman. The result might be great fun.

But let's hope when the Collected (or Selected) Roberts arrives he, at least, will get some attention. For throughout literary Australia the reception for Lehmann's volume has been a non-reception: the reviews have been few, no profiles have appeared in any major newspaper or magazine. The ABC art shows have ignored him.

And his publishers have hardly promoted the volume; a 'media kit' might have been overdoing things but anything would have been preferable to the scrap of paper which accompanied the book, and that merely reiterated the blurb.

ALL OF THIS IS DISPIRITING, for Lehmann deserves to be wider known, better appreciated. Is the reading public, and those conduits leading to this public (publishers, literary journalists) so scared of poetry even at its most small 'c' conservative? Do they find the leap from sentences and paragraphs to rhythms, lines and stanzas so gigantic? If I make Lehmann a case for special pleading it is because I believe he is the sort of poet that the mainstream of literate Australia might appreciate, if jogged along in that direction. Now into his 50s, he started being published when still a teenager; and even this early work, sombre, well crafted, told you *I know what I'm doing.*

But promoting verse is hardly a priority within the arts industry: doing it can be such an effort. And yet, a year ago, before the self publication of Pi O's epic '24 Hours' a campaign was launched by the friends of Pi to make sure this remarkable tome (and its author) got the attention they deserved. Couldn't a comparable effort have gone into promoting Lehmann?

Okay, a 'collected' is a summation, a retrospective, and reviewers and publishers cannot tackle it in quite the same way as a new Peter Carey or the latest Elizabeth Jolley. But can you imagine a *Collected* (or Selected) *Short Fiction of Frank Moorhouse* being so ignored? ■

Alan Wearne's latest book is the football-based satire 'Kicking in Danger'.

BOOKS: 6

MARK TREDINNICK

The mind's eye

It is only with the heart that one can see rightly;what is essential is invisible to the eye.
—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

Glass after Glass: Autobiographical Reflections, Barbara Blackman, Viking, Australia, 1997. ISBN 0 670 87272 5. RRP $39.95.

I HAVE READ THIS BOOK in many places—on the ferry, in cafes in Canberra and Sydney, in moments stolen between classes.

One day as I read it at my desk, I heard Barbara Blackman talking about her book on the radio. She spoke, as she writes, of many things, in a voice rich with conviction, calm and generosity. She spoke of books read to her, because of her blindness, by others—her two husbands, her mother, the voices on talking books. Among her best-loved writers she named the Frenchman, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, author of *The Little Prince*. She spoke of Exupéry—that explorer of the inner and outer worlds—as one of those rare people who has lived the poem of their life. *Glass after Glass* is the poem of Barbara Blackman's life—a life well-lived and richly observed.

In *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau wrote:

> It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look ... To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts.

Barbara Blackman has done what Thoreau had in mind. *Glass after Glass* is like sculpture in the crafted, tactile quality of its prose. But it is not just a work of art that depicts one life in the world; it gives us a new way of seeing. 'Life seen from the interior is all

metaphor', she writes. 'This is the seeing with the other eye, which is 'akin to eternity'.' Perhaps her blindness was her gift—she sees with the heart. In this book she notes her blindness only once or twice, with sadness. But the great joy of the book is that we see how life may be lived from the inside.

THE LAST YEAR OF THE YOUNG Barbara Patterson's schooling in Brisbane was 1945. It was the year she learned that her dimming eyesight would never improve. It was when she first learned, with the rest of the world, about Belsen and the Holocaust; and the year the war ended with Hiroshima. That year, at the end of girlhood, she struggled to see the blackboard in her physics class, taught by the headmaster. 'Miss Patterson,' he says in her memory, 'is not interested in all this. Her mind is on poetry, her thoughts in higher places.' She writes in *The ABC Weekly*:

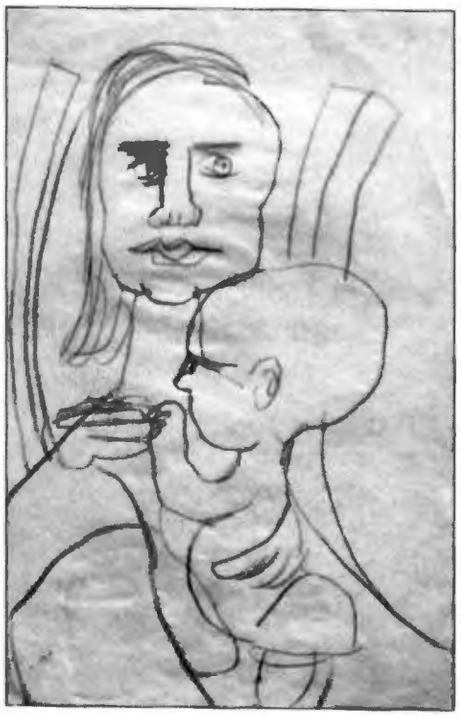
I pity men
Who are mathematical men
With mechanical steps
And parts in their hair.

She is elected Head Girl, but the headmaster comes and wipes her name off the board, and another girl is elected. It is the end of childhood and innocence. She marches into adulthood with some sadness but no resignation, not to seek comfort or success, but, like Thoreau, 'to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life'. She writes: 'The great poem of T. S. Eliot, his *Four Quartets*, just published, has enveloped my own poem of life. Its full meaning hovers out of reach. I grasp the tip and I trust my life to its slow revelation.'

This book is about that slow revelation, over the course of her life so far—as a young poet and wife of a painter; as mother, muse and artist's model; at homes in Melbourne, Brisbane, London, Sydney, Paris; crossing a threshold alone to a new life in her fiftieth year, having left her marriage to Charles Blackman; then married again to Marcel Veldhoven, living in Western Australia; right up to today, a grandmother, 'upstairs in my window sky attic... or out on the wide balcony with a tea tray' or sculpting the path with her feet and her stick on the way to her collect the mail. 'Now, in my new days, I lived a certain stillness', she writes late in the book.

Many of the chapters have been published before in different forms. But there is much that is new, and some of the new essays—particularly the endpieces, 'The Autobiographical Archeological Dig' and 'Transparencies'—are the best things in the book. Some, like the chapter on the her Paris days, have an immediate, intimate and almost hectic feeling that may come from being written close to when they were lived. Many readers will particularly enjoy chapters like 'Days of Wine & Roses' and 'The Good Ship Mora' so full of places, concerts, parties, galleries and the names of friends—Joy Hester, Barry Humphries, Fred Williams, the Boyds, John and Sunday Reid.

But these sections are not the soul of the book. Blackman is best when she dwells, not with the paraphernalia of life, but with its meanings. She writes best about the essence of things, 'the still point of the turning world'. At the heart of the book is the 'Poetics of Family Life', a reflection on the meanings of home and belonging, and the way our houses contain, shape and express our inner life—which also carries us lovingly through the many Blackman family homes. The detail is rich, the understanding richer. Of their Central London home she writes (p 237): 'In this parameter of dignity, authority of space, we made ourselves at home, at rhythm with our poem.'



Charles Blackman: Barbara and Auguste, *sketch, 1957.*

Of their first terrace in Highgate: 'It was an archetypal house, the attics nested high in the tree of it, the cellar secret dark in the cave of it, the kitchen blood warm and nerve stirring, half subterranean about its ever-cooking never-cooling Aga stove.'

The book is lovingly written but is also sometimes thorny, unfamiliar and difficult. But always rewarding. It reminded me of Michael Ondaatje's novel, *The English Patient*, also the work of a poet, mining the sensual world for the meaning that lies hidden.

'One life can have many autobiographies', Blackman writes in her prologue. 'It depends how one sinks one's shaft of remembering.' *Glass after Glass* is many autobiographies—a book of reflective essays, a series of archaeological digs, discovering the meanings of experiences lived, turning them into stories. There are many stories here to get lost in: life as an artist's muse, the art of life-modelling, a Brisbane childhood, motherhood, a woman's journey of self-discovery. The story that runs through them all is one woman's journey of self-knowledge, her quest for an authentic life. At the end, with that calm, wise voice of hers, Blackman reflects that 'Life moves in us, we move nothing'.

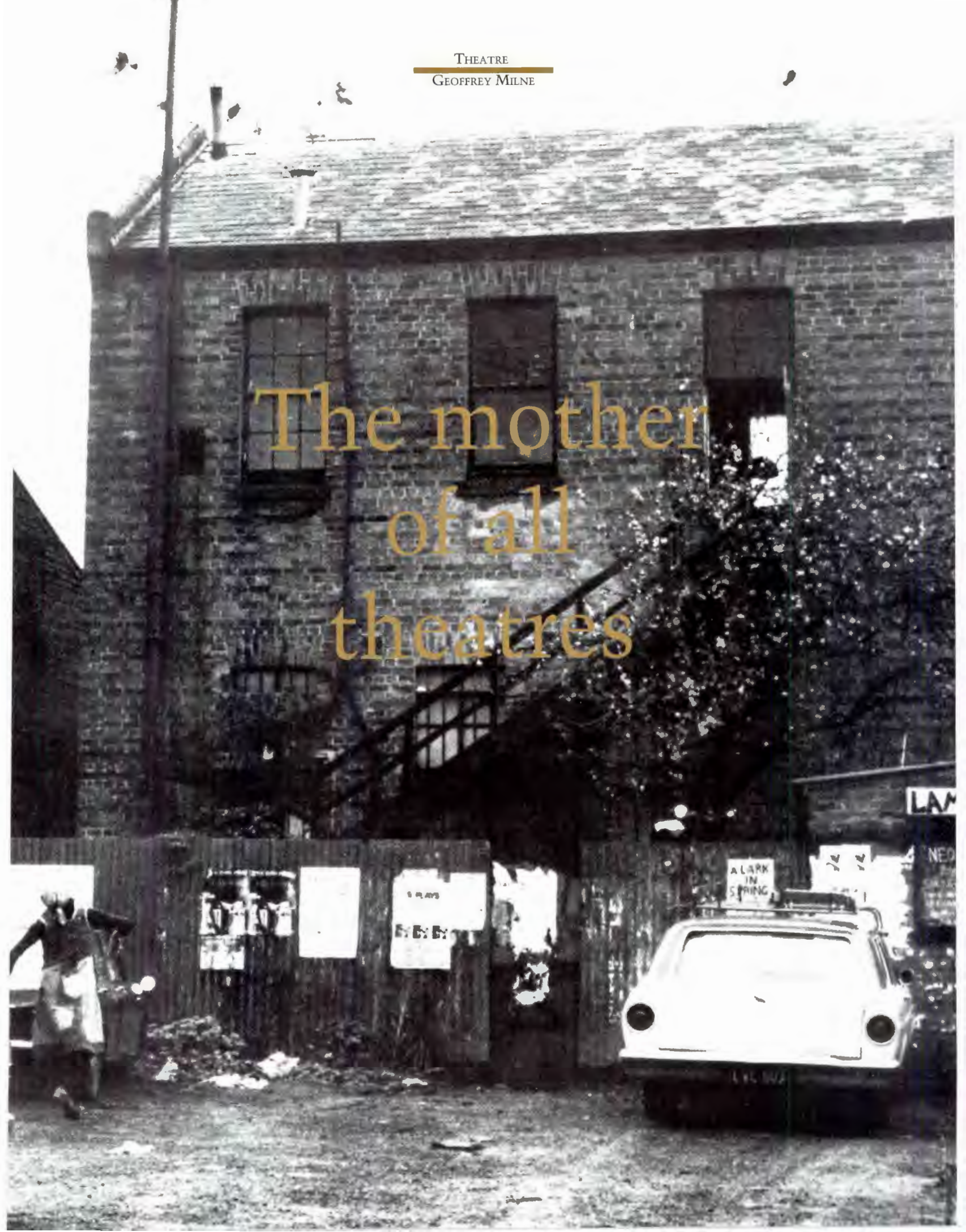
Hers is the kind of remembering we need to do more of in Australia—looking back to see what the stories of our past may teach us about what we once valued and need to value now. Blackman reminds us of T.S. Eliot's warning about having the experience but missing the meaning. When we look back, as Barbara Blackman does—not with regret and shame but with clear eyes seeking meaning—we free ourselves of the burdens of forgetting, and make ourselves new.

Non-fiction of this kind has a power beyond the reach of most fiction—it uses a plain and lyrical language to make meaning out of a life actually lived. In the honesty and courage of its personal reflections, *Glass after Glass* is like Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker's Creek* and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. Australia has not had a literature of such wise autobiographical essay writing—until now.

James Lord wrote of the sculptor Alberto Giacometti that 'he had delved very deeply into himself to see what it is that makes everyone extraordinary'. This is what Barbara Blackman has done in *Glass after Glass*. ■

Mark Tredinnick is a Sydney writer and reviewer who also teaches leadership and literature at the University of Sydney.

The mother of all theatres



THESE WORDS to the right were the first lines of dialogue spoken in front of a cash-paying audience in a former shirt factory just off the corner of Faraday and Lygon Streets, Carlton.

The play was a little one-acter called *Three Old Friends*; it was written by a young doctor named Jack Hibberd (right) and the date of its first performance was July 29 1967.

The place, of course, is the now-legendary La Mama Theatre and that it has gone on nurturing new Australian drama for thirty continuous years is cause for real celebration.

Steve: (offering to Ron) Would you like a cigarette?
Ron: No thanks, I've just had an orange juice.
Steve: Think I'll have a cup of coffee.
Ron: Go right ahead.
Herb: Yeh, take it away, Steve.

At the time of La Mama's founding, the Melbourne theatregoer's (indeed the Australian theatregoer's) choice of fare was pretty limited. You could choose between the almost invariably foreign offerings (mostly musicals and occasional dramas) from the commercial operators like J.C. Williamson's, the largely Eurocentric and mainstream St Martin's and the Union Theatre Repertory Company (which became the Melbourne Theatre Company in 1968) or the occasional touring productions of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust.

While these organisations were generally substantial employers of actors, there was little opportunity for actors to speak in their own accents of matters directly concerning their own communities. As Bruce Grant had observed in 1958, we had grown up with the tradition that 'romance and drama suitable for the stage occurred only in the lives of people who lived overseas; interesting things happened only in Surrey drawing-rooms or in New York penthouses or tenements in Dublin. Historically the Australian audience [had] never associated enjoyment of the theatre with its own environment.' At best, they could expect to see only one or two Australian plays a year on the Australian professional stage in the 1960s.

Returning from New York in 1967, Betty Burstall set out to change all that. Her little coffee-house theatre (modelled on some of the small off-Broadway theatres in garrets she had seen in New York) was opened specifically to give local playwrights (and poets and musicians) a chance to have their voices heard.

Her initial plan was to play on Sunday nights because that was the professionals' night off, her hope being that local plays would get an airing (albeit a brief one) in professional hands. But such was the popularity of the experimental new drama that began to trickle and soon flood through the Faraday St gate that Burstall had to open up, light the fire and brew the coffee on Saturday nights as well. By the beginning of 1969, two-and three-night stands had grown to four-week seasons, playing Wednesdays to Sundays and often with several shows running back-to-back on the same night.

WRITING IN 1969, Burstall explained her objectives thus: 'La Mama is essentially a playwrights' theatre; a place where new ideas, new ways of expression can be tried out, a place where you can see and hear what people are thinking and feeling.' David Williamson (one of many writers whose earliest exposure was achieved at La Mama) echoed this in 1974 when he observed that 'Writers don't pop up overnight. In the case of drama, there needs to be a demand situation operating, at least in the sense of some entrepreneurial force which actively searches for writing potential, gives it an airing, and lets that potential develop. For dramatists the emergence of the fringe theatres provided such an opportunity. Indeed, the resurgence in Australian dramatic writing owes a lot to the purely structural fact that small theatres arose in both Melbourne and Sydney committed to actively searching out and promoting Australian dramatic material.'

The resurgence of which Williamson spoke was certainly clearly visible by 1974. By that stage, he had had six plays premièred at La Mama (plus *Don's Party* around the corner at the Pram Factory) and had already moved into the mainstream with plays for the MTC, the Old Tote and the South Australian Theatre Company. In fact, by the early 1970s, contemporary Australian drama had become an indispensable component in the repertoires of practically every professional theatre company in the country.

In the meantime, La Mama's first playwright, Jack Hibberd, had become its most prolific and he too had moved on (with John Romeril, another of the writers to get his start at La Mama) to co-found the Australian Performing Group at the Pram Factory.

Part of the problem for the growing group of actors and playwrights who were associated with La Mama's earliest days lay in its popularity and its size. By the end of 1969, a loose association of professional and semi-professional theatre-workers, calling itself the La Mama Group, had grown in number to upwards of forty and they were generating more material than could be programmed in the tiny space at Faraday St. At the same time, there were many other groups using La Mama, like Doug Anders' Tribe and groups surrounding writers like Frank Bren, Kris Hemensley and Syd

Clayton; the traffic was intense. Furthermore, the vision of the founding writers—especially Hibberd and Romeril—was growing wider and cried out for a larger space. Plays like *Dimboola* and *The Man from Chicago* were vastly too big in scope for La Mama. How on earth we managed to squeeze them (and an audience) into La Mama I cannot exactly recall, but it can't have been legal! Thus the original La Mama Group became the APG and found much bigger premises at the old Pram Factory in Drummond St for its exclusive use.

NOWADAYS THE TRAFFIC AT La Mama is still as intense. The standard programming scheme involves three shows a night (typically a 6pm, an 8pm main show and a 10pm late show) for a 3-week season. At least half a dozen times a year, the Faraday Street menu is enlarged to include La Mama productions (usually of larger-scale or longer plays) at other venues, such as the Napier Street Theatre in South Melbourne and the Carlton Courthouse Theatre (next door to where the old Pram Factory stood and where more than once La Mama actors and directors were tried for such misdemeanours as uttering obscene words in a public space!).

At 28 feet by 30 feet (it doesn't feel right to give the dimensions in metric scale), La Mama is not a big shop window for the display of writing potential, but it has showcased some remarkable goods over its 30 years. It has also been the creative home for extraordinary talent. In addition to the now-famous playwrights mentioned already (among the new-wave canon of Australian drama, with Louis Nowra as another to add to that list of playwrights to get a start there) there have been a large number of other, comparatively lesser, lights which have shone at La Mama for spells of different length at different times. These include Roger Pulvers, Valerie Kirwan, Max Richards, Ian Scott, Tes Lyssiotis, Barry Dickins, Daniel Keene, Graeme Henderson and numerous others, including the performance artists Stelarc and Lloyd Jones. More recently, names like Sam Sejavka, Daniel Lillford, Raimondo Cortese and the directors Suzanne Chaundy and Wendy Joseph have been regularly associated with this little hothouse, while the veteran Frank Bren has been a constant presence since 1969.

In many ways Burstall and Williamson are right: this *is* very much a place whose writers' names are the most often remembered among the many personnel who have worked there. But it is also true that actors and directors (and even some designers) from every walk of theatrical life have appeared there, many of them frequently. It's not just a writers' theatre. One of my most vivid memories of the place, for example, dates from June 1987, when we routinely assembled for the usual Wednesday night opening, not knowing what to expect except that the actor-audience configuration and the wall-and floor-paint job would probably be different from what we had seen three weeks earlier. The piece was a monodrama entitled *The Serpent's Fall*, written and devised by Sarah Cathcart and Andrea Lemon and performed by Cathcart in a striking set designed by

Trina Parker (with three different layers of sand on the floor and fleecy white clouds on the sky blue walls). Within minutes, we felt that we were in the presence of a masterpiece and we were not wrong. The play went on to tour nationally and internationally for some years and it spawned two follow-up pieces, *Walking on Sticks* and *Tiger Country*, the latter having its première at the Melbourne International Festival in 1995. Such has been the nurturing nature of La Mama from day one.

Liz Jones (artistic director since 1977) and her staff are planning a mammoth 30th birthday party in the last week of July and the first week of August. Celebrations will include a nostalgic walk through an exhibition of theatre posters representing many of the countless productions the theatre has presented over the years, a performance marathon and a monster party hosted by comedienne Judith Lucy, who was employed on the theatre staff for a time and who has performed there on many occasions. Currency Press are also publishing a collection of plays by some of the playwrights who have been more recently associated with La Mama; these include Raimondo Cortese's *Inconsolable*, Ross Mueller's *No Man's Island*, Julie Goodall's *Texas, Qld*, Elizabeth Coleman's *It's My Party* and plays by regulars like Sam Sejavka and Daniel Lillford.

But the celebrations have actually been running all year; selected productions of plays by long-time denizens of the place have already been staged, and they will continue right through until the end of the year. Some of the earlier birthday productions this year have included *7 Brides for 7 Brothers in 7 Scenes for 7 Audience*, by Lloyd Jones (whose performance pieces have graced the theatre and its environs—upstairs, downstairs and out in the carpark and even the streets of Carlton—since 1973) and Tim Robertson's *Mary Shelley and the Monsters* (directed at the Carlton Courthouse Theatre by James Clayden, who's also been working at La Mama since 1973). At the end of the year, a new play by Daniel Keene (who had a group called Skelta at La Mama in the early 1980s) will close out the proceedings.

For a final word on the impact of La Mama, here is Daryl Wilkinson's comment in the 21st birthday book, *La Mama: The Story of a Theatre*: 'Much will be said of La Mama's role in developing a new generation of Australian writing. However, one should not forget the nature of the space and its impact in making possible performances that would be lost in a large theatre. It gave performances the intimacy of the cinema close-up with the exciting immediacy of the live theatre and the warmth of the coffee lounge.'

Happy birthday and many happy returns! ■

Geoffrey Milne is head of theatre and drama at La Trobe University.

Genuine article

Liar, Liar dir. Tom Shadyac (Hoyts, Greater Union, Village). Well, Jim Carrey may not be everyone's cup of tea, but he certainly had me shrieking with laughter in his latest. I've never agreed with people who dismiss Carrey as the new Jerry Lewis, because Lewis was never funny and never intelligent: Carrey's physical control matches anything Marceau could do, and he crackles with energy Marceau never had, while his insights keep you happily shocked. He is not yet predictable, and if he can keep the script-tweakers under control, he should keep us laughing a long time.

The script-tweakers are responsible for the only fault in *Liar, Liar*: the occasional smear of mushiness as the cute li'l boy who plays his son gets far too much screen time to say cute childish things and look bereft every time his dad lets him down. When that happens, the film wobbles far too close to *Mrs Doubtfire*, (that vomitous apologia for misogyny and dreadful fathers) for comfort. But that doesn't happen often enough to stop the flow of the humour, thank goodness.

The plotline is quite simple: Fletcher Reede, a hotshot lawyer, long-since divorced for rampant infidelity by his long-suffering wife (Maura Tierney), keeps breaking promises and telling whoppers to cover his tracks. When he fails to show up for his son's 5th birthday party, the child's wish as he blows out the candles leaves his father unable to lie for the next 24 hours.

Fletcher's madness in the straitjacket of truth is the best comedy I've seen in ages: the spectacle of a man possessed by an imp of inconvenient frankness. Chaos reigns for all too short a time as he tries to circumvent his own candour and fails hilariously.

I hope that in the future Carrey doesn't let the script-doctors turn him into a Nice Guy: you know, as Robin Williams and Steve Martin have become—a bit of a funny fella who gives you a Message about Humanity with a wholesome chuckle in it—horrible thought.

Just tell your asthmatic friends to have a good puff of Ventolin before they see *Liar, Liar*, because that hasn't happened to Jim Carrey yet—he's still dangerously funny.

—Juliette Hughes

***Eureka Street* Film Competition**

With the 20th anniversary of his death on August 16 and Lisa Marie threatening to close Gracelands to the general public when she becomes executor of his estate, we thought it time to honour the King. If you can name the 1969 film this still is taken from, you could win the $30 *Eureka Street* cinema sweepstakes.

The winner of the May competition was C. Bell of Brunswick, VIC, who correctly named 1977 as the year *Annie Hall* won the Oscar for best picture.

Recreating

The Eighth Day dir. Jaco Van Dormael (independent). The key to this film is in its title. If the physical world was created in six days then the province of the metaphysical, the magical and the unencumbered spirit must lie with the eighth day—the day that most of us will never see.

Harry (Daniel Auteuil) is a successful businessman who sells a highly regimented sales strategy. However the chaos of his personal life belies the discipline and order Harry brings to his profession: the love of his wife and the eldest of his two girls are casualties of his relentless pursuit of success. While driving around in a funk he comes upon Georges (Pascal Duquenne), a young man with Down Syndrome and a suitcase, standing in the pouring rain. Having run over his dog, Harry feels obliged to drive him home. Eventually they both go home but not before Harry becomes a tree, Georges makes love, and a minibus is driven through a showroom window.

Harry's initial reaction to Georges is annoyance at the imposition. He suffers until he cracks and throws him out of the car in the middle of nowhere. But he goes back and from that point on Georges teaches him how to feel the joy of life and to realise how fortunate he is because he has a friend. Auteil and Duquenne have a wonderful *rapport* and the magic realism that Dormael weaves into the narrative is neither gratuitous nor irrelevant but a lot of fun. The enthusiastic reception of this film at Cannes seems deserved.

—Jon Greenaway

Soft touch

Touch dir. Paul Schrader (independent). This is one of those films that tries so hard to present religion in an unconventional light that it becomes quite predictable.

First, you need a couple of stereotypical pillars of the church. In this case, you have Bill Hill (Christopher Walken), who once ran a successful franchise for some kind of pentecostal group but now trades in recreational vehicles. At the other extreme, you have August Murray (Tom Arnold), a Catholic conservative who wears a grey paramilitary uniform and has vowed to restore correct religious worship. Next, find a religious innocent and throw him to the fanatics. Juvenal (Skeet Ulrich) was a Franciscan missionary in South America before volunteering to help in an alcoholic rehabilitation centre in Los Angeles. He is young, good looking and a stigmatic. With a single touch, he can make the blind see and relieve children of their cancer. Juvenal becomes the rope in an unholy tug of war between Hill and Murray. Voracious and unscrupulous media personnel also become interested. Finally, demonstrate that

Juvenal has more authenticity than any of the others and is more than deserving of the attention of the beautiful music promoter, Lynn Faulkner (Bridget Fonda). Juvenal falls in love with Faulkner, much to the horror of his die-hard mentors. Nastiness wears the uniform of good and the virtuous are always unkempt.

If it wasn't for Elmore Leonard's even-handed disdain for human pretension and his belief that anybody worth worrying about should either need a bath or a holiday, this would be a dreary movie indeed. But there is good reason why few authors have had as many of their books filmed as Leonard: the neuroses of his bit-players make even stigmata look dull.

—Michael McGirr SJ

Genderonimo!

Sexing the Label dir. Anne Broinowski (independent). This film begins with the same visual shocks found in *The Crying Game* or *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. And indeed there is much in *Sexing the Label* that locates the film as a voyeur's paradise, illustrating all kinds of configurations of sex and gender, with a series of bodies.

Sexing the Label, however, does not just capitalise on a feast of visual confrontations. In fact, this film is much more interested in confronting its viewers intellectually than it is confronting them visually or voyeuristically. What begins as completely compelling in the film, the altered bodies and the description of desires, quickly becomes subsumed under the weight of what the mind does as opposed to the body. Straining to see if it really is a penis in those pants or not becomes silly in the context of this film, because it argues the mind is gendered, not genital space.

This notion of the mind versus the body is played out through expected scenarios: biological males living as women, biological women living as men and so on.

Less obvious is the explicit gendering through sexual preference. Thus a sex worker who engages in heterosexual behaviour with clients, but enjoys lesbian relationships outside work, changes her gendered framework. At work, she wears a long wig and glamorous dresses, in her private life she has short hair, wears singlets, the whole dyke thing. These changes affect her representation in culture even though, essentially, her sex has not changed. Similarly, a transvestite can confess that he is dressed in 'dyke' gear. Gender is constructed as much more fluid than masculine (aligned with males) or feminine (aligned with women). Gender becomes specific to the individual and individual desires.

I found this film a real education. It tore down the assumptions about the value of conforming to prescribed gender behaviours—be beautiful, thin, well dressed and so on—to be a good woman. *Sexing the Label* tells a story about the good women and men who live outside these prescribed gendered behaviours.

—Annelise Balsamo

High and mighty

Prisoner of the Mountains dir. Sergei Bodrov (independent). If you were making a human drama last year it's hard to think of a better backdrop than the war in Chechnya.

Sergei Bodrov has taken the Tolstoy story *Prisoner of the Caucasus* and adapted its themes to the current turmoil, and there is a sense in this film of the power human contact has to jump the hurdles put up by politics and circumstance. It is a busy film as Bodrov takes on as much as he can in his hour and a half but more often than not the story remains bound to his central theme.

Two Russian soldiers are taken prisoner as a gambit by a village headman who wants to retrieve his son from a local Russian prison. The more experienced and war-weary Sacha is tossed together with Vania, a new recruit. Their captor intends to hold them for only a short time but when the Russian army deceives him at the arranged swap, he decides not to execute them but keep them so their mothers can come and plead for their release. Chained at the leg, Sacha and Vania develop an understanding born of necessity, despite their differences. Vania's delicate nature also endears him to Dina, his captor's daughter, and eventually to the old man himself.

Prisoner of the Mountains is a very hopeful film, but it does not avoid the ugliness of humanity, particularly in the chain of events which lead to one of the villagers shooting his own son in the local town. The point of this film is to show how men and women can manage to respect life, and its simple pleasures, while their world is in chaos. It takes us through many poignant moments, so many in fact that the characters are not as fleshed as they could be (particularly Vania), but it is beautifully shot and worth a look.

—Jon Greenaway

In the outer

No Way Home dir. Buddy Giovinazzo (independent). Writer and director Buddy Giovinazzo has created a small gem of a film, with Tim Roth's performance a masterpiece of sensitive understatement.

Joey (Roth) has just been released on parole after serving six years in Sing Sing for a robbery/murder to which he pleaded guilty. He returns to his old family home on Staten Island looking for his older brother, Tommy (James Russo), with whom he has had little or no contact while in prison. He finds hid brother has married and is living with his wife Lorrain (Deborah Unger) in the family home.

Lorrain is as unwelcoming as the neighbourhood in which Joey grew up and left six years before. Revisiting memories, Joey finds that his old girlfriend has married and that the neighbourhood tough guys, who equate a murderer on parole with hardness, are determined to test him out.

Joey becomes aware of Tommy's drug dealings and the financial pressures being put on him by the Mob. The physical volatility of the relationship between Tommy and Lorrain engulfs Joey and an intense sexual tension develops between the three of them.

Running 90 minutes, the film is sometimes bloody, but that violence is subservient to a splendid performance by Roth. As the taciturn, expressionless, slightly slow Joey, Roth allows his eyes, gestures and posture to tell it all as inevitably he shares his secret with us.

As the drug-dealing, violent brother, Russo is acceptable but his performance is made to look pedestrian beside Roth's finesse.

The surprise packet is Unger as Lorrain. Best known for her readiness to take off her clothes in movies and still recovering from a ludicrous role she accepted in *Crash*, she makes her growing rapport with Joey quite believable.

The film avoids a clichéd solution, and produces an ending that is not only beautiful to look at, but in its way, quite perfect.

—Gordon Lewis

Hole in the ground

The Well dir. Samantha Lang (Independent). Elizabeth Jolley's novel about a wealthy spinster whose life on a rural property is released from a stranglehold by the arrival of a young woman from 'a home' is alleviated by Jolley's inimitable sly wit. It's hard to know whether or not Jolley is being malicious, but she is savagely funny: 'At the convent, Katherine told Miss Harper, there was a one-armed woman who did the ironing...and this woman had a boyfriend who, one night in a fit of pique, cut off the other arm—it seemed because of her having only one arm—making her less attractive than ever.'

Samantha Lang's film version of *The Well* is beautifully photographed, the bald, stony landscape around Cooma looking like the outskirts of solitude. The dominant colour is blue: interiors and exteriors are tinged in the same hue and this gives the production an appealing visual unity. It is also impeccably acted. Miss Hester (Pamela Rabe) is emotionally pot-bound; Katherine (Miranda Otto) offers her the kind of intimacy for which she is desperate enough to take unconscionable risks. Their personalities complement each other for a while but eventually collide. When they are involved in an accident on the way home from a party to celebrate the sale of Miss Hester's old homestead, Miss Hester wants to hide the body down their well while Katherine's instincts are more adventurous. Nevertheless, neither of them responds in a way which shows much ability to relate to the wider world.

For all that, *The Well* is a more bleak experience than Jolley's edgy prose. In a way, it suffers in the same way as John Ruane's film version of *That Eye, The Sky*. It shows the grim side of the story on which it is based. It gags on the humour.

—Michael McGirr SJ

What's the catch?

I HAVE ONE SUGGESTION after watching the ABC's documentary *Inside Story: Hospital: An Unhealthy Business*: a referendum proposal to forbid private health care to elected politicians and heads of government departments.Wouldn't we have world's best practice in public health care then!

Filmed late last year at Melbourne's St Vincent's Hospital, *Inside Story* shows how lethal is the cocktail of casemix and low funding. It begins by recalling how, like many of the great hospitals established in the last century, St Vincent's had firm commitment to the well-being of the patients. Now, we are told, the hospital is a business, where turnover is paramount, and all costs are seen as loss and therefore up for grabs. A thirty per cent increase in 'throughput' has just been decreed, but no further staff or resources are to be made available.

A nurse, clearly exasperated, shows a store room packed with slender boxes. Each one contains a stent—a life-saving device for keeping heart arteries open. But they cost $1800 a pop, and so the head bean-counter carpets the head of cardiology to tell him that he must reduce the surgeons' use of them: use cheaper balloon catheters which may not be so good for the patients, but actually good for the hospital in more ways than the one-time cost-saving.

There is a devil's bargain here: the method of assessing hospital funding rewards a hospital for patients who return, because they are treated as a new 'throughput'—the hospital can actually get more money by not fixing up a patient completely.

At this point most of us would be puzzled: surely a hospital is a place where you go to be made better? Not at all, the documentary tells us. If Mick the postman were given a balloon catheter, and were to have what is delicately called 'further problems' with it after discharge, then he'd come back in 'and that'd be good for the hospital'. We're talking dicky tickers here, not ingrowing toenails: the bean-counters seem quite calm about the possible risks to the patient. We are told that people are now employed just to scrutinise files to see if they can squeeze out more money by a nifty re-classification.

The nurse who shows the storeroom says that the people who dictate such policy 'don't have to face the patients'. She hazards that surely there are other places to make cuts than in the cardiology department.

In the end Mick gets his stent, and goes home as a net loss to the hospital. And we thought *Cardiac Arrest* couldn't happen here.

The ABC has been pretty good lately in delivering health matters. The collaboration of John Clarke and Brian Dawe in *The Problem With Men* (part of the new *Quantum* series) has been terrific to watch. Funny and informative, they explore the conundrum of men's refusal to look after themselves properly. They confront men's counter-phobic self-destruction by being counter-phobic themselves: there are jokes galore about rectal examinations and impotency; all the wobbly dangly bits are poked, prodded and scarified. Clarke and Dawe canvass this in a drily funny commentary as the camera follows various intrepid patients into the very jaws of flexible sigmoidoscopy and penile injections. They draw sharp comparisons with the maintenance men give to cars as compared to their bodies. In the end, just in case the male viewer still hasn't got the picture, they condense it to the two most potent pieces of preventative medicine known: cut down on animal fats and stop smoking. Simple, blokey, and a very good way to avoid being the pawn in the casemix game.

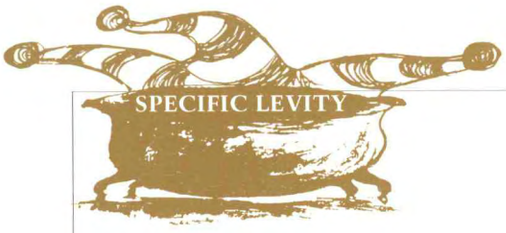
And if all this hard reality stresses you out, you could always go fly-fishing with Rob Sitch and Tom Gleisner. Like *The Trouble With Men*, this new ABC series is certainly blokey, but I found it interesting. Reflections on fishing seem a quintessentially masculine thing: from Izaak Walton to Nino Culotta, to the television fishing programs, it seems the archetypal male escape.

The series, *A River Somewhere*, was recorded on film rather than video, and so there is an unusual depth and richness to the scenery shots. The itinerary is like a wishlist for anglers: Howqua River in Victoria; Scotland; New Zealand; Los Roques, Venezuela; Italy; the Kimberley; with stunning cinematography in beautiful places. They approach the subject as amateurs, and not as a how-to-fish series. It is reminiscent of recent travelogues done by Michael Palin and Billy Connolly, and is none the worse for that. Also, I'm glad to say I never saw either of them inflict a kiss on the fish they catch. They treat their quarries gently: most are put back in the water, after the hook has been carefully removed.

WHEN FISHING THE HOWQUA, they follow a nice Maori custom of reprieving the first fish caught. However, when a suitable candidate for a meal is found, Sitch says 'That looks like an *ingredient* to me', and its fate is sealed. They obviously enjoy the chase, and in Los Roques, they seem to be playing tag with the bonefish, which aren't good eating, but make very good sport; they can clock 30 miles an hour for half a minute, and you have to use a special reel to stop your thumb being broken.

I don't imagine the fish got any fun out of it, but Sitch and Gleisner are never intentionally cruel. They look healthy enough, too. All that walking in the fresh air, all that fish and good wine must have got their cholesterol down to minuscule. Clarke and Dawe would approve—after all they've done the donkey work of telling men what'll happen if they *don't* exercise and stop trying to eat a cow a week. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer and reviewer.



Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 55, July/August 1997

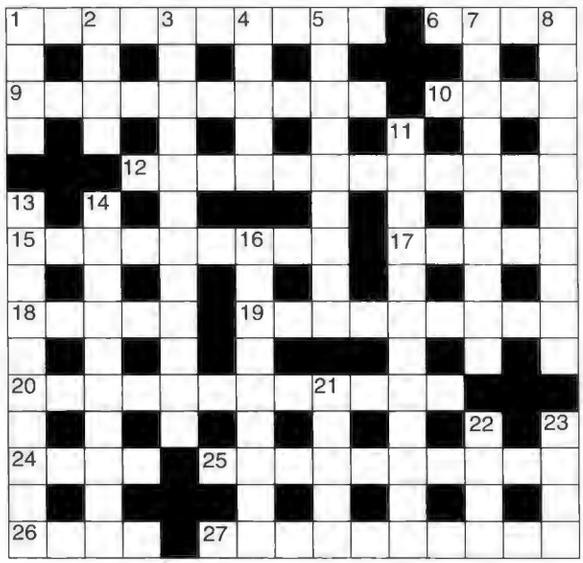
Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM

ACROSS

1. At first sight, to impair face seems wrong. (5,5)
6. The knowing curve? (4)
9. It would be prudent to wear glasses, perhaps. Distant fields look greener? (10)
10. It's mad to go back for the knock-out! (4)
12. A trial in the Upper House? No, at MCC headquarters. (1,4,2,5)
15. Be treated evasively and get the walk-about? Somewhat quicker than that! (9)
17. Jeopardy foreshortened in rage. (5)
18. I s'gest there's a torso in the trunk! (5)
19. Hear the breezes blow on him as he draws up parliamentary legislation, perhaps. (9)
20. Former spouse, possibly, gives a wavering hail to the sailor. How invigorating! (12)
24. Sounds as if I'd watched carefully. (4)
25. 'Not caning!' I perplexedly exclaim. 'A sufficient punishment would be keeping in.' (10)
26. This location has a fine view for the audience. (4)
27. The battle for 4-down continues here, after 12-across. Making a beeline towards Ely, perhaps. (10)

DOWN

1. Such sales-talk is the last gasp! It goes very strongly up. (4)
2. Christian inscription found in the main ritual. (1,1,1,1)
3. A seasonal story featuring Perdita, among other of the Bard's characters. (1,7,4)
4. One of 12-across delighted as he's included in the team seeking this prize. (5)
5. Poetic name for cold country where I can dial Eastern leader by arrangement. (9)
7. Home and away matches. Lose one and hope to do better in the next. (6,4)
8. For employees' PR, mixed gin is important. Show pleasure with this gymnastic feat. (10)
11. What listeners are when they attend with total concentration. (3,9)
13. Sportsmen present at 12- and 27-across are like insects chirping without hesitation. (10)
14. About ten men surround network in this tangled imbroglio. (10)
16. Diplomatically used subdued voice round teen confusion. (9)
21. Carried bag to Edward. (5)
22. Desire to leave property. (4)
23. Unpleasing aspect found in bug lying in the mud. (4)



Solution to Crossword no. 54, June 1997

EUREKA STREET & ABC MUSIC *Special CD Offer*

dust
Neil Murray

Neil Murray is a farmer, novelist, poet and musician. In the mid '80s he formed the trailblazing Warumpi Band and has written and performed with a host of Australia's top musicians, including David Bridie, Archie Roach, Tiddas and Christine Anu, all of whom feature on *Dust*. This, his third solo album, is a touching, powerful and humorous expression of songwriting, one that improves on each hearing.

This month, thanks to ABC Music, we have six copies of *Dust* to give away. Just put your name and address on the back of an envelope and send it to *Eureka Street* July/August CD Offer, PO Box 553, Richmond, 3121.

ISSN 1036-1758 06
9 771036 175017