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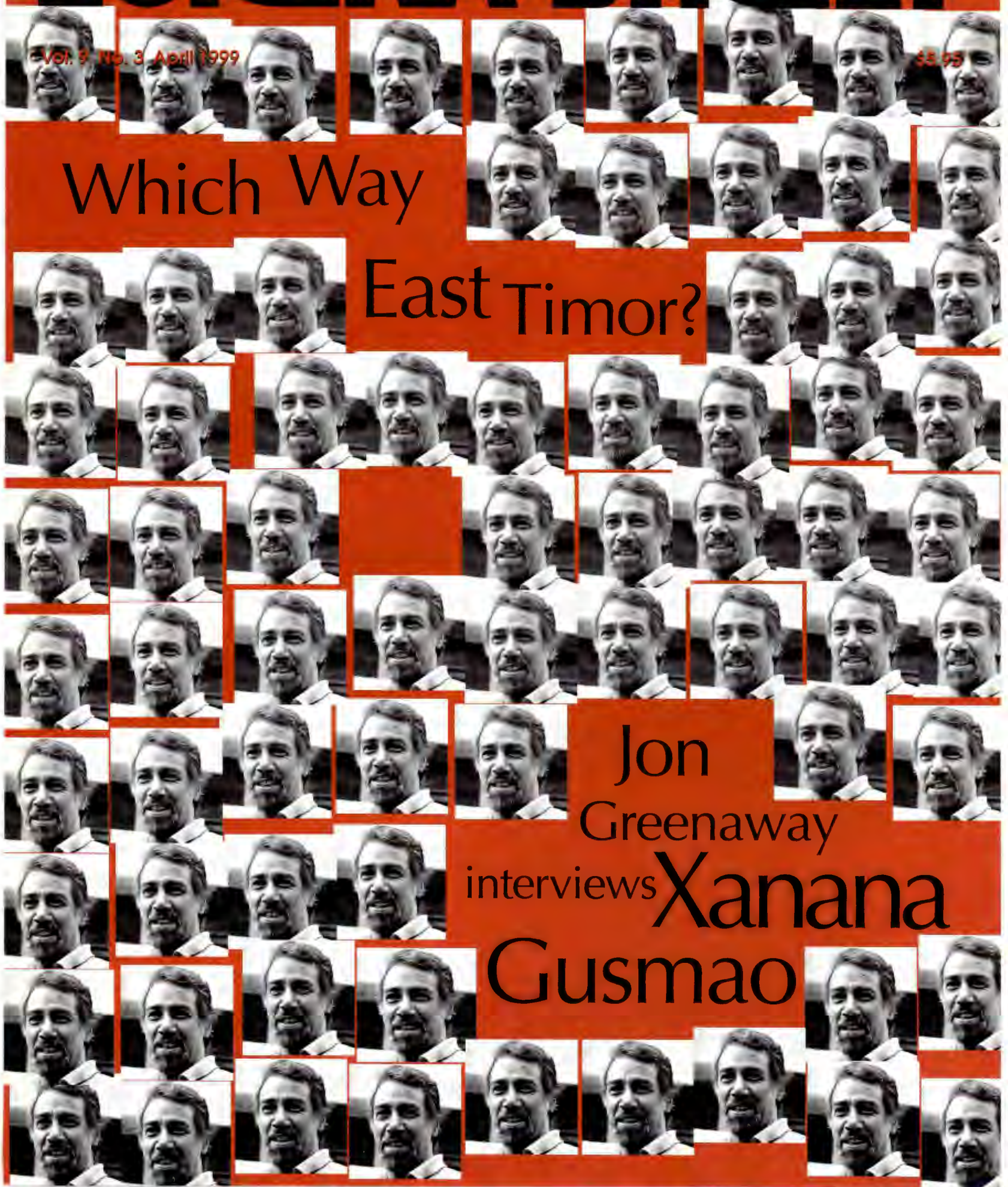

Which Way East Timor?

Jon Greenaway interviews Xanana Gusmao

EUREKA STREET

A magazine of public affairs, the arts and theology

Volume 9 Number 3
April 1999

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COMMENT
FRANK BRENNAN

Humbly relying

GOD'S ENTRY INTO Australian constitutional debate a century ago is instructive.

At the 1897 Convention in Adelaide, delegates were agreed that God be given a miss. There was no need for a vote. Edmund Barton thought it better to keep God out of any such discussions. But then the draft proposals were referred back to the colonies. Every colony reported that God had to be given a guernsey.

Patrick McMahon Glynn then got his opportunity. There was general agreement at the 1898 Melbourne Convention that the mention of God would render the whole constitutional package more acceptable to the voters. So the preamble of the imperial legislation to which the Constitution is an attachment states the people's humble reliance 'on the blessing of Almighty God'. No matter how lofty the sentiment or principled the aspiration, timing and expediency count for much in the art of constitution making.

In 1988, the Constitutional Commission advised that the preamble be left well alone because it 'could be a source of passionate debate which would be a significant distraction from other substantive and more important proposals submitted to the electors'.

Ten years later, that all changed. At the 1998 Convention, there was a working group on the preamble. It divided into subgroups. One subgroup recommended the retention of our reliance on God. Another, chaired by Lowitja O'Donoghue, and including a spectrum of representation from Gatjil Djerrkura to Leonie Kramer, recommended a preamble which recognised the indigenous peoples as the original inhabitants. They resolved 'that this separate referendum question on the Preamble be put to the Australian people at the same time as the referendum on the republic'.

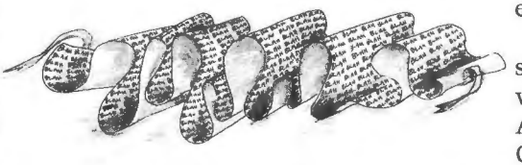
Billboard Billboard Billboard Billboard Billboard

Frank Brennan SJ & **Tim Costello** will discuss 'A Secular Society? Politics and the Church', with **Morag Fraser** in the chair. Tuesday 27 April, 6.30pm, Seymour Centre, Sydney; Wednesday 28 April, 6.30pm, Collins Street Baptist Church, Melbourne. Tickets: Sydney 02 9364 9400, Melbourne 03 9347 6633.

Arena magazine, *Eureka Street* and the Fabian Society are jointly sponsoring a series of evening discussions called 'Regenerating a Social Ethic', beginning Wednesday 14 April, with **Race Mathews** and **Geoff Sharp** on 'Co-operation and Community in an Era of Globalisation', and then 'Democracy, Stakeholding and Government' on Wednesday 28 April, 8pm. Location: 35 Argyle Street, Fitzroy, Melbourne. Enquiries: Wendy Marlowe, 03 9427 7311.

Public Lecture: 'A Letter to the World: Love and Peter Porter', to be given by **Peter Steele** SJ, on Tuesday 25 May, at 6.30pm, in the Sunderland Theatre in the Medical Centre, University of Melbourne. The poet, Peter Porter, will read briefly from his work at the beginning. All are welcome. The lecture is being sponsored jointly by the University of Melbourne and the Europe–Australia Centre at the Victorian University of Technology.

The working groups reported to the convention. Aboriginal atheist, Pat O'Shane, spoke in favour of retaining God in the preamble because, 'This is a statement about who we are and the values we hold dear.' The convention referred the reports to a broadly representative Resolutions Group which, according to Attorney-General Daryl Williams, was 'close to unanimous in its deliberations', including the acknowledgment of the original occupancy and custodianship of the land by Aborigines. The convention, on the motion of Malcolm Turnbull, then overwhelmingly voted that the 'republican model, and other related changes to the Constitution, supported by this Convention, be put to the people in a constitutional referendum.'



Unlike a century ago, there has been no decade-long series of conventions. There has been a one-off convention which is to be followed by this year's referendum, and if there is a transition to a republic, there is to be another convention three to five years after the change. It is not for anyone, including the Prime Minister or the Australian Republican Movement, to tamper with the outcomes of the convention. The preamble question has to be put at the same time as the republic question regardless of speculation about adverse motives of monarchists or the Prime Minister.

If we were starting from scratch, I would happily subscribe to a preamble that omitted God and acknowledged Aboriginal prior ownership of the land. But we are midway through a democratic process which requires a vote on a preamble which acknowledges God, and Aboriginal custodianship. In the spirit of the Convention Communique, our politicians should also try to reach agreement on equality before the law and recognition of Aboriginal rights 'by virtue of their status as Australia's indigenous peoples'.

The nomination procedure and the dismissal procedure set down in the 'Bipartisan Appointment of the President Model' are not perfect. But they are better than the existing arrangement whereby the Prime Minister can act unilaterally, informing Cabinet of his nomination and instructing the Palace to dismiss. I agree with Archbishop Pell who, when putting the wood on Prime Minister Howard to show leadership at the Convention, conceded that the model is 'certainly a compromise—like every decision made in a body of 152 people; like every decision made in a democracy. But must the best, differently understood, be the destructive enemy of the good?'

The preamble question should get up if the formula of words wins the approval of Aboriginal leaders such as O'Donoghue and Djerrkura. The republic question has no chance of getting up unless Peter Costello and Kim Beazley agree. If Costello stands mute beside Howard while Reith trumpets the direct election model, the republic will surely go down.

Costello and Howard together hold the trump cards, given that only eight of the previous 42 referenda have succeeded, all but one having been proposed by non-Labor governments. Each of them will have his own motivations for playing the trump card as he chooses. Once again, timing and expediency will count for much. If Costello has his GST by June, he will hold the trump card and we are more likely to have the republic on time. Should Costello be held up in the Senate, Howard will play the card, and God, Howard and Her Majesty will all retain their places, for the time being. ■

Frank Brennan SJ is Director of Uniya, the Jesuit Social Justice Research Centre.

COMMENT: 2

MICHAEL MCKERNAN

War and remembrance

SOMEONE I KNOW VERY WELL is Australian, born of Ukrainian parents. The parents met in a Displaced Persons camp in Germany after the Second World War; both of them had worked as slave labourers for the Germans during the war. They remained in camp until 1949 when they were accepted for Australia. Both were then factory workers throughout their working lives. Their eldest child, born in Germany, was conscripted to the Vietnam War and, in an armoured personnel carrier on his first few days there, hit a land mine. In a coma for many months, with injuries to his feet, legs, and face, he recovered to be discharged to the care of his parents, he was wheelchair-bound, with little short-term memory and limited ability to communicate. His mother died in the zeal of her care for him.

My friend is an educator, and years ago clashed with a senior RSL official over the appropriate way to involve young Australians in recalling the story of Australia at war. The man was angry—but from the

fastness of his certainty that his war was the only real war, that only he and his mates, among Australians, understood war. He bellowed that she could not possibly know the cost of war to Australian families. My friend did not bother to tell him of the hundreds of hours by her brother's bedside at the repat hospital, or of the decades of patience and denial for her parents, herself and her brothers.

There is something mean, narrow and ungenerous in the thinking of some Australian veterans about other people's wars. Men from the First World War had difficulty accepting the next generation into the fellowship of the RSL, believing that their own experience was unique. Second World War veterans were slow to welcome Vietnam veterans to the same sub-branches from which they had once been excluded. Indeed, the official RSL argued strenuously against the type of claims Vietnam veterans were making against Agent Orange and seemed to resent the pensions and entitlements that flowed from government acceptance that service in Vietnam had caused many veterans the most appalling physical and psychological illnesses.

Roll of Honour for 1939–1945 on the wall of the eastern cloister, Australian War Memorial, 1967. The cloisters now list more than 100,000 names. (From Ken Inglis' Sacred Places, *reviewed at p37.)*

When the Australian War Memorial staged its first ever major international exhibition, 'Children of the Holocaust'—the drawings, poems and letters of the children of Terezin, most of them subsequently murdered—there were veterans who argued that the display was inappropriate. It was not about 'us'. In vain did Memorial staff argue to these men that the display showed what it was, ultimately, that our troops were fighting to defeat. It was as if the story stopped at the perimeter of Tobruk, or on the torture of the Kokoda Track; as if we had no interest in a wider story, a story that was not our own.

THERE WAS A DANGER, in the early years, that Anzac Day would accentuate, indeed perpetuate, the exclusiveness of the Anzac brotherhood. The Dawn Service is a case in point. Established variously around Australia in the 1920s, its origins gave expression to the fact that it was at dawn, at Gallipoli, that the Australians first stormed into battle. Naturally, the Dawn Service had an exclusive Anzac flavour. By the time the Melbourne Shrine was dedicated in 1934 it was accepted there that the Dawn Service was for returned men only. Others would come and stand aside, spectators only, as everywhere in Australia, they were spectators at the march later on in the day. The fellowship of Anzac was not really for them.

But they were grieving parents, sisters and younger brothers, wives whose hurt would never heal. As time wore on they forced themselves into the rituals of Anzac Day, as did schoolchildren and cadets, members of the defence forces, those with a sense of history and those who wanted to know more about Australia. The liturgical regularity of the Day, the unchanging nature of its rituals, the constancy and impact of its story, all worked their way into the Australian way of thinking. Gradually Anzac Day became a day for all of us and the exclusivity of the veterans gave place to their recognition that this was Australia's day. Only the raucous few, the professional veterans, would want to continue to hold the community out, would want to say that a woman with a Ukrainian name could not understand the real meaning of war.

Each nation seems constrained by its own past in different ways. In Britain, for example, Tony Blair has argued that excessive pride in the grandeur of the imperial past has prevented the people from embracing the challenges of the future, the challenges of change. The Australian embrace of the past can be characterised by a failure of imagination and by an assertion of exclusion. Our past, the approved non-'black armband' past, does not include the destruction of Aboriginal society; it did not include, until very recently, non-British migration society, or women. And we are now going to write these things (rather, our Prime Minister is now going to write these things) in our preamble?

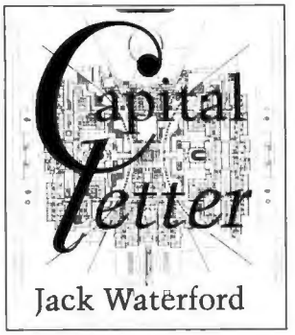
It is a failure of imagination that seems to thwart our understanding of our own past. In our government's refusal to apologise to the 'stolen generations', we have grieved at the hardness of heart, and the dominion of abacus and chequebook, but the root of the problem is a failure of imagination that cannot allow us to include those who challenge our clean and heroic images. We limit ourselves to an approved national story. But from Anzac Day we can learn that we can change, that we can open ourselves to a developing past.

We who were not there do not know Lone Pine, the Nek or Pozières. But we had a Charles Bean and we have a Bill Gammage and those who have followed him to help open our imaginations and to impose reality on our understanding. We might not know war, but we have had generations to absorb and develop the story for us through celebration, commemoration; through books, song and film. By imposing Anzac Day on our calendar, we have given ourselves the space, the room, to read and think about these things, and with a regularity mimicking the liturgical calendar, the repetition has worked on us.

A nation should, perhaps, take its time in developing its unique occasions; then they will come from the people themselves, as we have witnessed in the first century of our story. We might now be able to make a national 'sorry day' work. The story would be told, hesitatingly at first; with more confidence as both the story and ceremony took hold and expanded our imaginations. Then, slowly, we might become more alert to wider aspects of our Australian narrative.

Anzac Day might show us the way to a more whole-hearted understanding of our past. It might open us to ways of thinking about ourselves and about Australia that are inclusive, not timid and repelling. If Anzac Day, and our understanding of its national significance, could offer us a fuller sense of our past, the diggers in whose name it was all done would once again contribute more than they could ever have anticipated to a better, more generous and more imaginative Australia. ■

Michael McKernan is an historian and former deputy director of the Australian War Memorial. *See also* Eureka Street*'s War and Memory Forum, pp30–44.*



Regional realpolitik

EAST TIMOR will almost certainly be a de facto independent state well before any plebiscite. As it becomes more and more clear that East Timorese are almost certain to opt for complete separation from Indonesia, it becomes less and less likely that Indonesia will play any active role in its affairs, even before independence is a fait accompli. It may be that its own demands for statesmanship stop it doing what Portugal did so precipitately 25 years ago—walk out, leaving everything in chaos. But it is also hard to imagine that a cash-strapped Indonesia will continue with the $50 million or so annual subsidy that its disastrous adventure has involved, or that the civilian and administrative infrastructure will hang around for any retributions.

And as in Timor 25 years ago, it is by no means certain as yet that the various East Timorese political leaderships are ready to resolve differences, or that the extra bitternesses and animosities between different groups created by the Indonesian occupation will be put aside, even for a time. Those with most stake in an independent nation have been speaking the language of moderation and reconciliation now for some time. But that so many of them would clearly prefer an interregnum, even one with a continuing Indonesian presence, before the formal establishment of a new nation, shows just what uncertainties exist.

And even among those who rejoice that the people will be free to choose their own destiny, there must be some pessimism about the future. East Timor is desperately poor, and scarcely able to feed itself. There may be some long-term prospect of sharing oil revenues with Australia, but they are far off and, on the prospectings so far, cannot sustain the state.

As a province of Indonesia, it received from Jakarta about $50 million a year more than came out, but, even then, its average per capita income was in the lower third of any of the Indonesian provinces. Indonesia's colonial predecessor, Portugal, treated East Timor disgracefully even by its own standards. So, even if there were an effective reconciliation of grievances between groups, East Timor lacks almost all of the social and physical capital necessary to keep its head above water. Direct financial aid, practical assistance in improving agriculture and communications infrastructure, and an attempt to build up an income base may provide some flotation for so long as it is sustained. But it will be many years before there will be anything like self-sufficiency, from economic activity yet to be imagined. In this sense, an independent East Timor will not be in the position, say, of a Papua New Guinea, which has a wealth of resources and which was left, at independence, with arguably too much government infrastructure: it will be having to build up its institutions from scratch, without itself having the money to pay for it.

So far, the international gestures of goodwill are encouraging. Australia, with a twin moral debt to the country, will play a lead role. Other countries are also making promises. But it is not hard to imagine some of them getting impatient within a few years even if there is a relatively smooth transition. And that could be so even if the leaders of the country show some skill in settling things down.

Indonesia has a stronger interest in a smooth transition than might immediately appear, but, once the agony and the humiliation are over for it, it is difficult to see it being of much practical assistance. Still less would it want an East Timorese success to be taken as the spur for other groups in the diverse nation to strike out alone. Indonesia has been forced—by the Asian economic collapse and the pressure imposed by the international rescue of its economy—to be realistic. Occupation has had high social and economic costs, and has infected its relations with most other nations of the world.

Yet some of the ambivalences of letting go are bound to strike in its domestic politics. A weakened army whose systems and personnel still make up much of the infrastructure of central administration has had much prestige and blood tied up in its little Vietnam. The army is in any event stretched for resources, and fearful about its capacity to cope with simultaneous crises in Sumatra, the Moluccas and the Celebes, let alone Irian Jaya, or law and order in the capital. Two elections are pending and, though it appears there is a consensus of sorts about letting East Timor go, there is no guessing how one populist or another might use the events to stir up indignation, or to direct anger to external forces, away from domestic corruptions or incapacities.

SOME OF THE PERMANENT REALITIES MATTER. Australia may make a virtue of helping Timor as much as it can. But it is difficult to imagine that this will be at the expense of its far more significant relationship with Indonesia. If Timor ceases to be an irritant in Australian–Indonesian relations, there will be those who will be seeking to make the relationship even closer. And, in the medium term at least, the reconstruction of the Indonesian economy is as pressing a task as the construction of an East Timorese one. It is not in Australia's, or the region's interest, to have a Balkanised Indonesia, least of all one inspired by communal grievances and drastic economic depression, rather than a natural development of just claims for more civil, political and economic rights inspired by growth.

Back in Canberra, the cynic might think that the primary importance of developments in East Timor lies in their capacity to cause past politicians, particularly Whitlam, embarrassment over their complicity in the Indonesian take-over, or in creating leadership pressures inside the Labor party.

This is a bit unfair. Alexander Downer and, to a lesser extent John Howard, deserve credit for the way they have played Australia's hand—and the fact that Australian fingernails were dirtier than most has been a factor pushing Indonesia along. They have been pretty realistic about East Timor's prospects, and resisted some impulses, which might have won them local praise, to push for an immediate Indonesian abandonment.

And Laurie Brereton has exercised skill in anticipating events, and in re-fashioning Labor policy to suit. He may also have played a role in persuading at least some in the Labor Party that not all of its policy contradictions can be swept under the carpet. ■

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*. See also Jon Greenaway, 'East Timor on the Move', p23.

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 email, a contact phone number is essential. Address: eureka@jespub.jesuit.org.au

Long division

From Marie Louise Uhr

The effects of the Oceania Synod will not be known for some time. In the meantime, we have the document released immediately after the Synod. Entitled 'Statement of Conclusions', it is a report of the Interdicasterial Meeting with a Representation of the Australian Bishops and the Roman Curia, a meeting which immediately preceded the Oceania Synod. It is this document which has, rightly, caused quite a stir; rightly, because it seems to declare the bishops' interventions null and void: all was decided in advance and in Rome.

While it may well have far less effect than it first threatens, it is worth examining for several reasons.

The Introduction clearly states that the deliberations were not intended to deal 'with every aspect and dimension of the life of the Church in Australia'. Well and good, but the items selected for deliberation are noteworthy because they are so clerical: the ordinary everyday life of Australian Catholics, with their happiness and sorrow, struggles and hopes, pain and joy are ignored. They get no pastoral help here. Instead the emphasis is on what separates the ordained from the rest of us.

The document concentrates on setting up and reinforcing boundaries, on demarcating and separating what the Vatican sees as essential boundaries between the Church and the world; the ordained and the lay; the sacred and the secular. The Vatican defines and patrols the boundaries; the local bishops are enrolled as subsidiary guards.

The document calls for a return to structures and practices which distinguish Catholics from the rest of the world. The refusal of this magisterium to consider the ordination of women is highlighted again. The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life is concerned to ensure that consecrated religious, in particular, 'assent to the Magisterium regarding such areas as the non-ordination of women to the priesthood. This commitment to women's 'non-ordination' is, I believe, part of this same process of upholding a boundary between the Church and the world.

We seem to be revisiting the anti-modernist battles of the 19th century. If battles over the separation of Church and state and Darwinian evolutionary theory are lost, a new stand is being made on the issue of gender equality. The Catholic Church is demonstrably separating itself from the world and from many other Christian denominations by insisting that women may be in the image of God but cannot be, sacramentally, in the image of Christ. They are equal in dignity, as

the Pope is fond of saying, but not equal in the Church. In thus upholding gender inequality the Vatican continues its work of marking the boundaries between what it sees as the sacred Church and the dangerous secular society.

This document reinforces these divisions. And again women are portrayed as a danger. Feminist theologians are accused of challenging traditional Christology and anthropology; and the astounding claim is then made that such theology leads to an indifference to the poor. Presumably Australian women theologians are targets here, although they are unnamed. The boundaries are drawn to exclude and silence women, who are seen as out of their convents, out of control. Women are again (or still) the tempters. Now the temptations to lead others astray are theological rather than sexual—Eve is a feminist theologian.

For the Australian bishops who spoke out at the Oceania Synod about what they saw as critical issues in the Australian Church, including the place and purpose of women, reading this document must be a painful experience. While the Vatican wants them to maintain 'continual vigilance' to preserve the 'integrity of the Faith', our pastoral bishops will no doubt continue to try to weave their way around Vatican regulations in order to seek out the lost and the hurt to try to bring them something of the comfort that only God can give.

Marie Louise Uhr
Cook, ACT

Potted history

From David Morgan

According to Juliette Hughes (*Eureka Street*, January–February 1999), 'Nearly everything [Dennis] Potter wrote was accompanied by storms of criticism and controversy'. I was living in London at the time *Blackeyes* was being shown in 1989, and the criticism it received wasn't exactly scathing. Nor, for that matter, did it all come from the usual suspects in the Tory press—the Kipper Williams cartoon 'The Lady and the Wimp' in *Time Out* featured 'the Wimp', Spreckley, furtively watching *Blackeyes* for the nudity.

Most of Dennis Potter's later works were about Dennis Potter: an interesting subject, but not *that* interesting. His self-obsession continued in his last two plays, *Karaoke* and *Cold Lazarus*, where we follow Daniel Field ('Potter's Field'—get it?) before and after death. In *Karaoke*'s film-within-a-film, Ian McDiarmid is even made up to look like Potter. Yet not all of Potter's plays are like this. At the end of his interview with Melvyn Bragg, we saw a list of his works. I only remember one from the period before *Pennies From Heaven*, a play called *Schmoedipus* (c.1976): it was gripping, gruesomely funny, ultimately heartbreaking, and gave a woman the central role. I'd had no idea it was a Dennis Potter play.

Part of the reason for Tory enmity to Potter was the cosy treatment he got from Britain's broadcasting establishment: what other writer has had two channels co-operating to show his work, as BBC-2 and Channel 4 did with his last two plays? In 1989 on the BBC-2 arts program *The Late Show*, *Blackeyes* was respectfully discussed while Kenneth Branagh was ridiculed for coming up with the much more popular *Henry V*.

His extraordinarily snobbish attack on the *Sun* and its editor, Kelvin Mackenzie, was not surprising. Yes, the *Sun* is often appalling, but it has one redeeming feature—it takes no-one seriously. Compare it with the *Daily Mail*: the voice of middle England, and a paper with no sense of humour whatever. Terry the Minder would read the *Sun*; Basil Fawlty would read the *Mail*. Neither would like most of Potter's work, but, while Basil would be angry about it, Terry would just laugh at it. The *Sun* is one of the few British papers not to have a weekly version printed in Australia—no doubt the Barmy Army get theirs air-delivered.

Sun readers of the 23rd century are Potter's real target in *Cold Lazarus*, where a crass media magnate exclaims, 'Nice tits!' while watching Field's memories. One can just imagine the lads from *Men Behaving Badly* saying the same thing as they watch *Cold Lazarus*. I have no idea who writes *Men Behaving Badly*, but I think that when people in the 23rd century want to know what life in Britain was actually like in the 1990s, they will turn to it before they turn to Dennis Potter.

David Morgan
Summer Hill, NSW

Going deeper

From Sandy Ross

Roger Mauldon's response (*Eureka Street*, March 1999) to John Honner ('Contesting Welfare', *Eureka Street*, December 1998) focuses on Honner's apparent use of two simple dualities. Firstly the 'atomist, individualistic, analytic, materialistic, controlled' world view opposed to the 'organic, holistic, spiritual, vulnerable' world view. Secondly, competition (favoured by the first world view) opposed to co-operation (favoured by the latter).

I agree with the need to engage in a richer, more complex analysis than those categories (stereotypes?) can offer. However, Mauldon persisted in a refusal to engage with Honner's arguments at a deeper level. I take issue here with two aspects of Mauldon's arguments.

First, Mauldon defends competition as more complex than he alleges Honner's article allows, although in fairness to Honner I read his conclusion that 'competition cannot create community' as implicitly saying 'competition *alone* cannot create community'. Mauldon argues that competition is not antithetical to community, rather:

> [its] multifarious activities are far more about co-operation and developing good relationships than about 'dog-eat-dog'. Networking, strategic alliancing, putting consortia together and sub-contracting to or from a prime contractor all build relationships which are part and parcel of community.

These are good points, but Mauldon appears to be talking here about markets rather than competition (or community). What Mauldon implicitly refers to is the fact that in some situations markets can involve co-operation as well as competition. However, the implication that community welfare can/should be seen solely in terms of the market is part of the very problem to which Honner alludes. The issue is not whether competition and co-operation are intertwined within a market (they are, of course), but whether a market is the best or only model for how we see our community and its welfare services.

Moreover, Mauldon's argument appears disingenuous to me as it ignores an important ideological element of competition-style reforms—that 'co-operation' is dangerous because it leads to capture, abuse of process and misuse of public moneys. The reforms would be seen as failing in their own terms if they did not engender at least a little 'dog-eat-dog' behaviour in order to generate both accountability and greater efficiency; ultimately it is the reforms themselves which are based on a competition/co-operation divide.

Second, Mauldon displays the same refusal to engage with practical concerns about the reform agenda that drives many of us (like Honner) to the feeling that there are irreconcilably different world views in operation here. Mauldon acknowledges the validity of Honner's concerns about the effects of service quality and continuity of competition reforms, and concedes that 'many of these issues have not been fully resolved or tested'. Amazingly he then truncates this important area of concern with the airy statement that 'the issues themselves have been well rehearsed in the various reports which Honner cites'. Honner's point was precisely that in spite of this 'rehearsing' there is still no attempt to change direction to take account of these issues, but there is no sign here that Mauldon credits that this is an issue. It seems to me that those engaged in reform have an obligation to do more than say 'oh, we know about that' when significant problems are raised with their approach.

Of course it would be putting the cart before the horse to suggest genuine contestability of reform ideas should occur before reforms are put in place, wouldn't it?

Sandy Ross
Northcote, VIC

Energetic arguments

From Ian Hore-Lacy, General Manager, Uranium Information Centre Ltd

I have just been given a copy of your September 1998 edition with a usefully provocative article by Frank Fisher. However, in one important respect the article is seriously flawed.

His comments on nuclear energy are unsubstantiated, and could hardly be further from the facts of the matter. The main one is quite extraordinary for an academic at a reputable institution, asserting that 'we could probably find that more energy is required by the nuclear power system itself than it yields in electricity'. (His view that 'nuclear power is probably an oxymoron' would seem to arise from this!)

Leaving aside the obvious economic absurdity, I would challenge Mr Fisher to produce clear evidence of energy usage in the nuclear fuel cycle greater than about 5 per cent of the electrical output, or perhaps 10 per cent if capital costs are factored in (though these are comparable with alternatives). Even the 5 per cent requires a worst case scenario.

Incidentally, on a purely commonsense level, why would utilities in 32 countries use 430 nuclear reactors to supply 17 per cent of the world's electricity if there were no substantial gain in usable energy? Does he seriously suggest that another 17 per cent of the world's output is devoted to energy subsidies?

It seems to me that we need some fresh thinking about energy, and especially electricity, options in a greenhouse-conscious age. It would be nice to think that universities might help with that, transcending mere prejudices. And madam, what price the Jesuit heritage of meticulous clear thinking?

Ian Hore-Lacy
Melbourne, VIC

Associate Professor Frank Fisher, Director, Graduate School of Environmental Science, Monash University, replies:

Electricity is indeed our most useful energy source. But the fact that we cannot store it and that the only primary energy sources that provide for both storage and future demand are thermal—fossil and fissile—means massive, long-term energy outlays.

So yes, I agree with Ian Hore-Lacy that energy/electricity needs a great deal of fresh thinking. Indeed, society's sheer ignorance about such complex issues is dangerous to the heritage of the whole society, not just the Jesuits. (This was the point of my second piece, 'Not forgetting the gas', two issues later [November 1998] than the article to which Ian Hore-Lacy responds.)

I also agree that the devil we know—coal/oil/gas-based electricity—is every bit as problematic (although gas emits fewer toxins).

However, I do not resile from the comment. For a start, two parts of the fossil/fissile energy is unavoidably thrown away (as heat, to the atmosphere!) at the power station just to deliver one part of electricity. There are all the direct and indirect costs associated with development and construction of the infrastructure associated with getting electricity to us: power stations, fuels, transmission, safety, anti-pollution, diplomacy, defence operations, decommissioning and, in the case of nuclear waste, safe storage. B. Kümmel, S. Krüger Nielsen and B. Sorensen have begun to put quantities to such energy sinks in *Life-cycle Analysis of Energy Systems*, Roskilde University Press, 1997.

Finally, there is the presently ignored energy cost of repairing ecosystems damaged as they adjust to the imposition of our huge localised energy demands to the heat, gases, dust, radiation, soil and water disturbance, etc. So yes, I do think that the energy subsidies to our energy industries are indeed very large but then my definition of subsidy will differ from Ian's.

The not-too-distant future for fossil fuels looks brighter, temporarily. Fuel cells will enable us to save throwing one of those two initial thirds away. Nuclear offers similar leaps, but further into the future. However, as demands continues to rise, the victory will be pyrrhic. So my point stands: we must find another way of constructing our thinking and therefore our lives.

DAN MADIGAN

When in Rome

WHEN AN ARCHBISHOP uses words like 'hurt', 'distress', 'shock', 'anger', 'depression' and 'disillusionment' in the press and even on national television, he is not usually talking about a papal letter and a document from the Roman Curia. Yet this rather arresting choice of words by Archbishop John Bathersby of Brisbane reflected the sentiments of some at least of his brothers in the episcopacy, as well as those of many other Catholics, in reaction to the statements emerging from the Australian bishops' meetings in Rome late last year.

The role of the bishop was left unexamined by the somewhat hastily concluded First Vatican Council ... The Second sought to remedy this by insisting on the importance of the local bishop, and of the college of bishops with the Bishop of Rome not as their 'boss' but as the enabler of their unity and its focus. Rome may have learned to talk the talk, but the bishops seem to be telling it that it has more to learn before it can walk the walk.

The bishops had tried to convey a realistic picture of the Church here during their meeting with curial officials—not by any means glossing over its weaknesses or the difficulties it faces. Overall, they said, their assessment was positive and optimistic. 'Nevertheless,' Bathersby told *The Catholic Weekly*, 'the resolutions of the meeting and the Pope's instruction did not reflect our optimism.' Another bishop, who was among those who had been invited to the meeting, said that the presentations made by the curial officials 'seemed to come from another world'. He was left with the impression that the officials 'had not listened' to the bishops' descriptions of their own churches. When the bishops asked for some changes to be made in the statement of conclusions, most were not made.

If it is true that the Vatican is not listening to the bishops, then who does have the ear of Rome? Who could be thought to have a more authoritative understanding of the state of the Australian Church than those who have pastoral oversight of it? Many of the bishops present were left with the impression that the mountain of mail arriving in Rome from conservative groups had made a far deeper impression on an already conservative curia than anything they themselves could present. This is the most troubling issue raised by the statement from Rome: not so much its rather jaundiced view of the Australian Catholic community—which by now has been rehearsed often enough in the media—but the fact that its view seems so far removed from our own bishops' perceptions.

The visit they make every five years *ad limina Apostolorum* ('to the doorsteps of the Apostles') is not that of branch managers rendering an account of their stewardship to head office. It is intended to be an act of collegiality in which those who exercise the office of Peter in the local churches express their communion with the Bishop of Rome, who fulfils that office for the universal Church. There is something profoundly amiss when bishops come from such a meeting in Rome feeling 'bruised' and with a sense of having been 'ambushed'.

Yet there has been a steadily mounting chorus of bishops, archbishops and cardinals complaining about the treatment they themselves and those whose work they admire receive at the hands of the Roman curia. The New Zealand bishops, who were in Rome at the same time as the Australians, put this to the Pope quite squarely:

> In your encyclical letter *Ut Unum Sint* you courageously invited other Christian leaders to make suggestions about how the Petrine ministry might be exercised. Yet within the household of the Church, the dicasteries of the Holy See occasionally make norms which impinge on the ministry of bishops with little or no consultation of the episcopate as such. This seems inconsistent.

They criticised 'mechanisms of control and dominance' and warned of how 'the credibility of the Church's claims is compromised by perceptions of inconsistency'. In this they echoed the very forthright criticism that the retired Archbishop John R. Quinn of San Francisco made in a speech in Oxford in 1996. In recent weeks Franz Cardinal König from Cologne, one of the most senior churchmen in Europe, was roundly critical of the methods of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its recent move against the theologian Jacques Dupuis. Even in the apparently straightforward matter of liturgical translations, the combined expertise and experience commanded by all the bishops' conferences of the English-speaking world is being regularly and peremptorily set aside by a Roman bureaucracy that can muster little of its own competence in the matter.

WE COULD JUST treat all this as the age-old struggle of an ultramontane curia against the gallican claims of local bishops and national churches, were it not for the fact that the language that Rome uses to bolster its more absolutist claims is precisely that of collegiality and communion. For example, the curial attempt to define as infallible the papal teaching on the inadmissibility of women to the presbyterate was couched not in the terms of *papal* infallibility, but of the infallibility of the 'ordinary magisterium'—that is, when all the bishops in communion with the Bishop of Rome have consistently taught something as being true. What substance can

there be to claims of this kind if the bishops are not allowed to voice their considered opinion? What kind of collegiality and communion consists in allowing only those voices to be heard that conform to a position already settled without reference to the worldwide episcopacy? The Pope's July 1998 letter on the theological and juridical status of episcopal conferences makes clear how Rome understands the limits of collegiality.

Sometimes bishops do speak candidly in synods and courageously question the presently accepted disciplines. But then every attempt is made to keep those interventions from the public forum. The bishops at the Synod for Oceania were told that their own speeches were not to be distributed because they became the property of the Synod. The only authoritative statement to emerge from a synod is the papal document produced sometimes more than a year later when the issues raised in the meeting are safely out of the news and a bland exhortation will pass unnoticed.

The role of the bishop was left unexamined by the somewhat hastily concluded First Vatican Council, so there was little in its teaching to balance the absolute centrality it gave to the papacy. The Second sought to remedy this by insisting on the importance of the local bishop, and of the college of bishops with the Bishop of Rome not as their 'boss' but as the enabler of their unity and its focus. Rome may have learned to talk the talk, but the bishops seem to be telling it that it has more to learn before it can walk the walk. ■

Dan Madigan SJ is *Eureka Street*'s publisher.

THE CHURCH: 2

ANDREW HAMILTON

The spy who didn't love me

IN DISCUSSING John Le Carré's latest novel, some reviewers lamented that the golden age of spies is over. But as if to show that all is not lost, ABC TV's *Four Corners* ran a piece on 'spies' in the Catholic Church.

These spies are people who travel round parishes, noting if anything done there is not in accordance with law, and reporting the matter to the Bishop or to Rome. This practice has been criticised for being divisive, crossing territorial boundaries, and for being un-Australian. It is a little disconcerting, however, that a more jarring inconsistency with the Catholic spirit has received no attention.

The practice of vigilante groups visiting churches to demand proper observance is not new. In 19th-century England, for example, Evangelical Anglicans would often visit Anglo-Catholic churches to ensure that all accorded with the Book of Common Prayer. A touch of lace or an overly altar-like communion table would see the rector reported.

Historically, spies have been found more commonly among people who emphasise God's activity in the preaching of the Word of God, and regard the sacramental as incidental. For them it is important only that ceremonies be performed in accordance with church law. The agents of totalitarian governments—who have been the most common spies in Catholic churches—share this preoccupation with the word. They usually leave after the sermon, judging what follows to be irrelevant.

Catholics however, emphasise the sacramental. We respect the way in which God acts through things like oil, bread, water, marriages, meetings and celebrations. When we gather for prayer, God unites us. When we gather to ask for forgiveness, God acts forgivingly; when the Word of God is preached, God teaches. The seven sacraments are special instances, guaranteed by the Church, of this principle. But in any prayerful gathering, God works through what we do.

Now if God acts in our gatherings, we would place ourselves outside God's presence and work if we attended as spectators or critics. We would be saying that our gatherings are no more than human events, and that God is not at work here. The incongruous position of even the sympathetic spectator underlay the early Christian practice in which those not yet baptised were led out of the church after the Gospel and before the Communion.

In services of reconciliation we would act even more grotesquely if we came as spectators or investigators. We would say that we do not need to repent, and would close ourselves to God's offer of forgiveness. Such an attitude finds a clear and devastating precedent in the pharisee who thanked God that he was not like others, and particularly not like the tax-collectors and sinners gathered near him.

We should insist on the Catholic truth that services of reconciliation are not merely a human ritual. They are publicly ordered only because God is present and acts in them. The presence of God demands a proper reverence with which spying is incompatible.

The appropriate response to spies at local celebrations of reconciliation should be inclusive and welcoming. We should pray that we shall all be open to God's offer of forgiveness. In discussion, we should insist on the Catholic truth that services of reconciliation are not merely a human ritual. They are publicly ordered only because God is present and acts in them. The presence of God demands a proper reverence with which spying is incompatible. ■

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The Month's Traffic



Dial tone

CHOOKS KEPT in cramped conditions tend to moult and go off their feed. It's not so very different for the self-styled battery hens at Centrelink call centres.

Claimants might get frustrated waiting to deal with a disembodied voice, but for the workers on the other end of the line, every shift is hour upon hour of concentrated stress.

'I believe there's a short-term lifespan in call centres—two years on average. That's the same productive life as the battery hen,' said 'John', a Community and Public Sector Union delegate.

'You've got the call board showing how many calls are waiting. It's unrelenting, it doesn't stop. They have spot checkers to see why you're not on [a call].

'It isn't a spiritually emancipating experience! It's spiritually desiccating.'

If that's the sense of desperation in a unionised, public sector environment, the life of phone workers elsewhere is predictably even worse.

Most of us are now familiar with the phone industry as consumers. If you're not, you soon will be. The call centre industry is growing at 25 per cent per year. One quarter of all staff at Optus are employed to take phone enquiries. Car hire company Avis manages its entire booking service out of one Sydney call centre.

For the consumer it means one phone number to remember and a guarantee of velvety tones—once you finally get through to a human. For the workers, that velvety tone has to be maintained call in, call out with the same monotonous attention to repetitive detail needed by blue-collar workers on a production line.

At one Melbourne telemarketing firm, the employment contract specifies that responding to a client 'in a negative manner at any time' is a dismissable offence. The contract continues, 'The script you have been given must be followed ... you must not deviate from it.'

'Susan' works at a Melbourne market research centre that employs more than 200 casual phone workers, mostly students desperate enough to take evening and weekend shifts without penalty rates.

'We're down in a basement with 100 or more in this room. If there was a fire I don't know how we'd all get out. You have to log off on the computer every time you go to the toilet. It's like factory work, clocking off and on.'

In practice, management can monitor any call. The workers even worry that conversations between themselves could be listened in to through their head sets. If there are privacy laws, the staff aren't sure what they are.

The culture of privacy is much stronger in the public sector. But Centrelink workers may concede what is known as 'blind monitoring' in their next enterprise agreement, if management gets its way. John and fellow delegates carried out an anonymous survey of their colleagues' views on blind monitoring. The bitterness and fear in some of the comments is remarkable: 'We are intelligent human beings, not automatons ... What is this, a jail or a workplace? Soon they'll have cameras in the toilet ... "Spying" would just add to stress ... Will cause paranoia ... Read George Orwell's *1984*.'

Pat Woods

Monitoring is not the only option the use of computerisation gives management. Every element of the job can be sub-divided and evaluated.

'In all these call centres they've managed to break down the job into what they call its essential elements,' says Pat Woods (pictured above), an industrial officer with the Victorian telecom branch of the Communications Electrical Plumbing Union.

'Every bit of equipment can measure what you've been doing and how long you've been away from the machine. People are terribly, terribly stressed as a result of that. They feel mistrustful.

'There are no carrots in the workplace any more. It's all sticks. They used to talk about making a workplace warm and congenial. They might not have been crash hot on the wages, but they don't even pretend any more. Telstra measures down to within 30 seconds on a 013 call.'

These human battery hens also have to live with the risk that their callers will turn on them. 'Face to face a client is more pleasant and restrained,' says John. 'People will vent their anger on the phone—it's phone rage.'

Women phone workers can face the additional problem of sexual harassment. 'Andrea' has worked for both a phone sex firm and a mainstream company doing 'cold calling' (ringing clients at random to drum up business). Both forms of work depressed her—but it was the 'respectable' work that posed the greatest hazards.

The phone sex work paid considerably more—$90 per hour spent on line—but importantly it gave Andrea a degree of autonomy. Not only could she log and off entirely at will, she could hang up on the weirdos without fear of being disciplined.

'It was very sleazy. I hated it. You feel violated. A lot [of callers] wanted to meet up with you. You get a lot of crank calls. I only did it for a month. But it was easier than when I was working doing cold calling. With the sex work you don't have to approach anyone and grovel.

'One of the reasons I resigned was that a lot of the time I'd be ringing male employers who'd say they'd be happy to do business—so long as you do dinner and breakfast the next day. I had to smile [down the phone] and be pleasant. The anonymous, faceless aspect means men can get flirtatious or aggressive.'

The call centres have all the makings of white-collar sweatshops. Technological advance has abolished the typing pool with its regimentation and isolation and replaced it with an even more tyrannical regime.

Employers save on the cost of buildings. Staff (especially in new, commercial call centres) tend to be casual or part-time and therefore more likely to be cowed, compliant and flexible. The financial gains for managers are obvious. The flipside is widespread dissatisfaction among staff. Many workers vote with their feet. Turnover across the industry is running at 20 per cent annually. Other workers prefer to get even. Like workers in the blue-collar sweatshops before them, they want the protection of unionisation.

Susan and a few workmates are trying to sign up colleagues into the National Union of Workers. 'There are people just waiting for the forms. I haven't spoken to anyone who doesn't want to join.'

Compared with established industries, their demands are very modest—fortnightly pay rather than monthly, penalty rates, clarification of entitlement to breaks and a clear policy on the monitoring of calls. But even modest gains are likely to be difficult to get. Pat Woods, who specialises in union recruitment at call centres, knows how tough it can be.

'When Optus was setting up it approached the union and had an award. Twelve months later, before the unions had time to organise properly, they offered their new employees a [non-union] employment flexibility agreement.'

Outside the major corporate sector it's even more difficult. The union mobilised outside one workplace in central Melbourne after a few workers rang in to complain about pay, breaks (an absence of them) and an employment contract in which workers signed away WorkCover entitlements.

Woods and her fellow officials handed out information about workers' rights and urged staff to ring for membership. 'Because they're all casual they're shit-scared to say anything,' she said. A few responses came in nonetheless, but staff turnover wiped out most of the gains in short order.

One of the CEPU's most rewarding successes was in a Melbourne call centre. About 40, mostly women, workers approached the union after they were forced to sign individual contracts, giving up rights in the process.

Woods had the contracts struck out in the Industrial Relations Commission and then sat down with the women to draw up a log of claims.

Thanks to the women's determination and their industrial leverage—they had specific skills the employer could not easily replace—they won a union agreement including pay rises and penalties worth up to $30 a week and the right to negotiate permanency.

Perhaps most importantly, 'they got dignity,' said Woods. 'They know their rights. They have processes to resolve disputes.'

That's where the battery hen analogy breaks down. Unlike our feathered friends, today's white-collar production workers can dream of life beyond the bars. They have the potential to win the right to range free.

—David Glanz

SUMMA theologiae

Mannix, Pinochet and justice

IN THE EARLY 1960s, Fr Noel Ryan used to go each morning to Raheen where he celebrated Mass for the aged Dr Mannix. One day, he told us that he found Dr Mannix already vested and ready to celebrate. The Archbishop explained that this was the opening day of the Second Vatican Council, and that he believed in Councils. Behind the gesture was a long tradition of French and Irish theology and a lifetime of pastoral practice. Both theology and practice are illuminated by Jeffrey Murphy in the *Australasian Catholic Record* (January 1999). Murphy reproduces and comments on Mannix's remarks, sent to Cardinal Suenens, about the draft document on the Church for the Vatican Council.

Mannix rejected the document, claiming that it was authoritarian, and sounded more like 'a legal document than a spiritual proclamation of religious faith, and still less like an evangelical one'. In a month, too, when it has been reported that the Vatican has appealed to Great Britain for Pinochet's release on the grounds of a doctrine of national sovereignty, Mannix's comment on justice within the Church remains pertinent: 'It would be a grave scandal if the observance of justice were seen to be inferior in the Church than in secular tribunals'. A good inscription for a new statue?

The same journal also contains sobering comments on the contemporary Church by Genevieve Carroll and Michael Mason. They reflect on the initial results of a recent survey of regular Catholic church-attenders. These amount to about 18 per cent of all Catholics. Since only one quarter of this number is aged between 15 and 40, the percentage can be expected to fall. The report generally reveals a reasonable knowledge of the central doctrines of faith, but the younger respondents are more attracted to experiential rather than dogmatic ways of describing God. The results suggest that we may expect that Catholics of the future will display a looser sense of Catholic identity.

One of the ways of addressing Catholic identity is through religious education. In a fresh and stimulating article, also in *ACR*, Richard Rymarz reflects on the experience of those educated as Catholics in the 1970s in order to comment on religious education. Whereas in the 1950s, young Catholics developed a Catholic identity through belonging to a network of Catholic institutions, those who remained Catholic in the 1970s did so by personal decision, often in the face of peer-group opposition. In contrast to those of an earlier generation, memories of childhood include little reference to religious teaching. Rymarz ascribes this in part to the lack of hard content in religious teaching. He suggests that in secondary schools, a more rigorous program of religious education, which is not primarily catechetical in focus, may be helpful. His suggestion has great merit, for it looks to welfare of the 80 per cent of students whose association with the Church will remain loose, as well as to the minority who will be 'practising Catholics'.

This suggestion, of course, will have to meet the difficulties facing any classroom curriculum which lacks accreditation for VCE. But in Victoria, at least, it could build on the admirable curriculum developed in the VCE subject, 'Texts and Traditions'. This has the virtues which Rymarz praises, for it is open and intellectually rigorous. It has also been immensely significant in the faith development of many reflective young people.

When reflecting on Australian Catholic identity, we can learn much from the long and serious exchanges in the United States. In *Horizons* (Fall 1998), Peter Phan discusses the relationship between Catholic identity and Catholic education. He remarks that when we discuss this issue, we often proceed wrongly by asking first what distinguishes Catholicism from other belief-systems, and then by assuming Catholic education should focus on these distinctive beliefs. Phan claims that Catholic identity is complex and intuitive. It is best developed through a cultivated imagination and through a developed historical narrative, as well as through argument. For that reason, Catholic education needs not only to be intellectually rigorous, but spiritually and imaginatively rich.

The success of the 'Texts and Traditions' curriculum may bear reflection in this respect. It may be that it is successful precisely because it touches the imagination. It enables young people to enter the imaginative world of texts in a way that allows open play to their desire for meaning, for story and for argument. ■

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Things of stone and wood

THE BEGGAR WRAPPED in a yellow blanket on the steps of London's Westminster Cathedral was different from any I had seen before—he was young, clean-shaven and his jacket, visible at the shoulder, carried the *Puma Sports* label. He held out a McDonalds cup for alms, his breakfast in McDonalds packets beside him.

It was one of several differences I noticed about the cathedral I had attended regularly when working as a Fleet Street journalist 30 years ago. Then, like so many Catholic churches in Britain, it was hidden in a side street, a short walk from Victoria Station. Another difference was the prominent notice at the entrance to the cathedral, a reflection of life in the 1990s. It warned that 'pickpockets operate in this cathedral'.

I walked from the station unerringly to the cathedral—and was stunned. Instead of rounding the corner of the side street I found myself in the middle of a wide, open square. The square, a priest told me, had just been completed by Westminster Council.

It was like a welcome back for my wife and I, who were married in London 30 years ago. We noted the item in the cathedral bulletin which said '30 years of London dirt, dust and pollution' had been removed from the Blessed Sacrament Chapel's mosaic and metalwork on 11 December—our marriage date.

We observed another profound difference: 30 years ago the crowds at Mass were thinner, but now there was barely a vacant seat ... Asian, African and European, fur coats and parkas, young and old.

Westminster Cathedral, built on the site of a prison less than 100 years ago, was one of several pilgrimages we made to churches in Britain. The most nostalgic was to Our Lady of Dolours, the Servite Fathers church off the Fulham Road at the top of Chelsea, which was our parish church. Like the Westminster Cathedral we had known, it was—and is still—tucked obscurely among other buildings, a haven of peace in a heavily trafficked area. Little had changed in this cathedral-like church with its long entrance way, its huge, overhanging cross with red background in front of the altar and three beautiful stained glass windows above the altar.

There was nostalgia, too, in revisiting St Clement Danes, the 'oranges and lemons' church opposite Australia House at the top of Fleet Street. The church dates to the ninth century and was rebuilt by William the Conqueror and again by Christopher Wren in 1682. It was virtually destroyed by German bombers in 1941 and restored by the RAF and reconsecrated 30 years ago as the RAF's central London church. A statue in front of the church commemorates Arthur Harris, Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command, and the more than 55,000 air crew members who died in World War II. Their names are inscribed in books of remembrance around the walls of the church.

The notice at the entrance to St Clement Danes points out that it is part of the Church of England which 'teaches and practises the Catholic faith brought to this land by St Augustine and his predecessors'. It also explains that St Clement Danes, dedicated to St Clement, Bishop of Rome and Martyr for the faith, proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the sacraments 'of the one, holy and apostolic church are celebrated according to the custom of the Church of England'.

Westminster Cathedral, by night.

On a wet, misty morning we walked down the steep flagstone steps to Wales' finest church—St David's Cathedral named for the patron saint of Wales. It was here that bishops were slaughtered by the Vikings and where building of the present cathedral began in the 12th century.

The cathedral was damaged by an earthquake in 1248 and there was further damage—and restoration—across the centuries, with major restoration last century and early this century. It remains today the parish church of St David's, Wales' smallest city, and that became patently obvious to us.

A funeral was about to begin and although we had come 20,000km we were refused admission by the church warden.

In 'Braveheart' territory, near the English–Scottish border, we found another ancient church which also proudly proclaims itself 'a living church': Lanercost Priory. It is in the wooded valley of the River Irthing and was founded for the Augustinian Canons around 1166. The stone came from nearby Hadrian's Wall, built to delineate and fortify the northernmost outreach of the Roman Empire. Following Henry VIII's Dissolution of the monasteries in 1536, part of the monastic buildings were converted into a house and much of the priory fell into decay. Restoration was undertaken in the 18th century and major structural works are continuing. The priory today serves some 600 parishioners scattered over a wide rural area.

At the border town of Brampton, we were warmly welcomed at Sunday Mass by a tall, ageing Benedictine, Fr Edmund. We joined a handful of parishioners in a chapel in a block of units owned and rented out by the Church.

It was a vibrant, guitar-strumming Mass marking National Youth Sunday in Britain, and youth among the tiny community were the major participants. The parish bulletin noted that the weekend marked the date when the pre-Reformation Benedictine Congregation had its continuity guaranteed by the vesting of two secular priests in 1609.

We left with a feeling of optimism about the future of an ancient Church in Britain.

—John Coleman

Left at the altar

St Peter's Basilica and the Vatican Museums, housing the Sistine Chapel, are hidden behind a patchwork of scaffolding as Rome prepares to welcome 25 million visitors and celebrate the millennium.

They were part of our pilgrimage to churches on a European tour which also included Florence and Paris.

Days—rather than the brief hours that were available to us—are necessary to absorb the splendour of the churches and the works of art ... like Michelangelo's ceiling in the Sistine Chapel, gleaming in restored brilliance.

I left St Peter's with two simple images: long shafts of sunlight flooding the centre and the shape of the toe on the long, straight-backed statue of St Peter obliterated by the touch of millions of hands across the ages.

In Florence, the traders gathered in the piazza and at the bottom of the steps of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, as they have done for centuries, flogging garishly painted pictures. As the carabinieri patrols hove into sight, the sellers packed up and melted away, to reappear seconds after the police drove off. The piazza has been the centre of Florence's religious life for 1600 years. It was here in 429AD that, legend has it, a dead elm flowered in winter when the remains of St Zenobius were being transferred to a new cathedral. The present cathedral dates to the 13th century and the baptistery, to centuries earlier. The baptistery is famous for its three sets of bronze doors depicting biblical themes, including what Michelangelo called 'The Gates of Paradise' with scenes from the Old Testament originally modelled and cast by Lorenzo Ghiberti between 1425–1450.

Nearer our hotel was the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, in white and green marble, dating to 1279. With works by the greatest artists of the 15th century, Michelangelo called the church 'my bride'.

On Sundays, Paris takes to the streets in gleaming new cars that have replaced the old hunchbacked Citroëns in the new affluence of the European Union. Families drool in front of shop windows at exotic pastries, crowd sidewalk cafes, and lounge on the mountain of steps leading to the Church of the Madeleine.

It is still the focal point, the dominant feature, of that area of Paris—the massive, columned Church of the Madeleine.

Apparently that's as far as it goes: we attended a 9.30am Sunday Mass in the church and there were fewer than 70 people in that vast interior, mostly elderly. Only the odd family.

The church was sorely in need of a good wash, the dust of the ages gathering on the columns and statues.

It was, sadly, a reflection of the times: of affluence and materialism.

—John Coleman

The Church of the Madeleine

Hoarse whisperer

Could there have been a more perfect afternoon at Caulfield, Melbourne's most pleasant and enticing racetrack?

On Oakleigh Plate day it was 29°C. The program was of high quality. The monocultural pall of the Australian Rules season, long as a Canadian winter, had barely begun its descent on Melbourne. The racebook ($2.50) was so classy that it came with two bookmarks. Even catering had improved. There was decent, cheap food and red wine by the glass. Sadly, typically, Abbotsford Invalid Stout provided the beer drinkers's only refuge from the grim choice of other CUB products.

So where was the crowd? Perhaps those who might have been at the Heath had gone to the Avalon air show. Or are large attendances only to be expected at the track in spring time?

With a rare and not yet desperate unity, the three Victorian racing clubs have combined this autumn to stage a double triple crown series, one each for three-year-old colts and fillies. The first leg for males—the Alister Clark Stakes at Moonee Valley—had already been run and won narrowly by the awkwardly named Dignity Dancer, a top draw gelding by Zabeel. He had survived a protest from Mossman. Now the two met again—in a disappointingly small field of five. The fillies' triple crown began this day with the Angus Armanasco Stakes, named for the near-nonagenarian former trainer. From New Zealand, this race had attracted Sunline, unbeaten in her eight starts. And there was more—the Group Two Carlyon Cup and the 115th renewal of one of the most famous sprint races on the Australian calendar—the Group One Oakleigh Plate over 1100 metres. 'Going like an Oakleigh Plater'—a synonym for break-neck speed—has escaped from the track into the vernacular, at least for those of us in middle age with their memories intact.

This, then, was a reconfigured program. An ancient race (in Australian terms) survived, together with new, more valuable confections. The 'triple crown' concept is borrowed, of course, from the United States, where it refers to the classic trio of the Kentucky Derby, Preakness and Belmont Stakes. Dignity Dancer is aimed for its final leg, the Australian Guineas at Flemington, and for the Australian Derby at Randwick.

BUSH LAWYER

SÉAMUS O'SHAUGHNESSY

Baby, don't you drive my car

I TRAVEL ABOUT 1000 KILOMETRES A WEEK to and from and around my circuit in my car. Because I spend so much time in it, the car is almost a mobile study in which I keep tapes, sunglasses, a small law library, swimming gear, a camera tripod, a panama hat. Recently the car was stolen, stripped and burned, and all my stuff was destroyed or pilfered.

Perhaps it is salutary for magistrates occasionally to have the experience of being a victim of crime. It puts us in touch with the anguish of those who suffer the consequences of criminal activity. The inconvenience and sense of violation and loss made me burn with anger and resentment for days after my car was stolen. I kept thinking of things that I had had in it, some of which were irreplaceable, and almost none of which were insured.

But these encounters are a test of the principles and philosophy of sentencing offenders. Without principles and a just philosophy of punishment, sentencing would degenerate into arbitrary vigilantism. Sentencing is aimed at the protection of the community and the upholding of community values and standards. But what does this mean?

According to traditional legal theory, sentencing is designed to deter offenders and potential offenders, denounce anti-social conduct, exact retribution from and rehabilitate people who have broken the law. Which factor will predominate depends on the given circumstances of individual cases.

There are few guidelines or binding precedents for magistrates or judges to follow. We have no sentencing abacus. But neither is sentencing an arbitrary stab in the dark. Of course, a magistrate must explain why the particular penalty is imposed. The offender and the community are entitled to know what the court took into account, but it is impossible in practice to provide an arithmetical formula for the calculation of all the relevant factors. It is largely done by trained intuition. Let me illustrate.

A few days after my car was discovered burned out, I had the difficult exercise of sentencing an 18-year-old woman for car stealing. A friend of hers had knocked the car off and invited her to come for a drive. She ended up driving the vehicle, knowing it to have been stolen. The car was recovered.

Car theft is a very prevalent crime and is very expensive for insurers and their customers. Because of its prevalence and the forensic difficulties, police investigations are usually perfunctory. Unless someone is actually found in possession of a stolen car, there is little hope of a successful prosecution. The penalties are severe. Lawyers call these 'the objective features' of the case.

On the other hand, while she demonstrated some anti-authoritarian tendencies in court (not necessarily a bad thing generally but decidedly unpragmatic in the circumstances), this young woman had played a minor role in the car theft and had no criminal history. Her plea of guilty indicated contrition or at least honesty (she could have pretended that she had not known the car to be stolen).

Because she seemed to have so little idea of how much trouble she was potentially in (possibly two years in prison), I thought she was both immature and rather innocent. She was also obviously humiliated by the whole affair, which is no bad thing if she draws the appropriate lesson. These were the 'subjective features'.

Despite the dim view I take of car thieves, there are strong pragmatic reasons for being lenient with this woman. If a person is rehabilitated and reintegrated into our community, he or she is one less problem for law enforcement authorities to worry about and one more citizen trying to make a civil society. On the other hand, cast young people out, and they will come back to create more and larger problems. Heavy punishment should be reserved for heavy crimes.

I have offered her the opportunity to do some community service work. If she does the work well, she could go free without a criminal conviction. On the other hand, if she chooses not do to the work, she will suffer the stigma of having a record for dishonesty. It's now her choice ... ■

Séamus O'Shaughnessy is a country magistrate.

So too is Arena, the Victoria Derby winner who today lined up at Warwick Farm in a venerable race—the Hobartville Stakes.

We slipped into reserved seats opposite the winning post, ushered there by attendants whose courtesy belonged to the age of their own youth. They turned their backs on the tilt-walker; shook their heads when a bugler welcomed the field on to the track by sounding the charge. This 'F Troop' flourish done, the two-year-olds lined up for the Veuve Clicquot Stakes. The winner was the oddly spelled Redoute's Choice, first of three winners for the ubiquitous sire Danehill this day, and for jockey Jim Cassidy. At his first start, the colt overcame all the trouble that he had made for himself. Watch for him in the spring.*

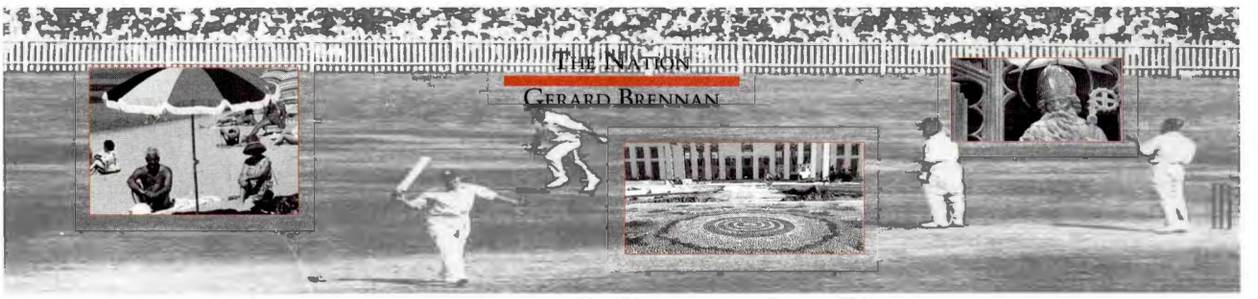
Call the Cops carried our money at Eagle Farm, but was knocked over at the furlong. In the next at Caulfield we took a bashful quinella in a bad mare's race but were tipped out by Darren Gauci on Danson D'Or. Soon enough it was Dignity Dancer's turn. Although Cassidy lost an iron in the straight, the gelding ran a tick outside the course record held by Vo Rogue and Waikikamukau, and won with authority. Twenty minutes later, so did Arena in Sydney. This is a high class three-year-old crop, with plenty of scope when they turn four to challenge Might and Power.

ABC adaptation buffs, savouring *Vanity Fair* on television, had the omen bet in the Carlyon Cup, which Gauci won on Thackeray. In the Oakleigh Plate, one grey narrowly edged out another, Dantelah beating Paint by a nose. It was the latter's first real glimpse of form since he'd won the Blue Diamond here two years ago. The Armanasco was next: Sunline sprinted effortlessly at the top of the straight but was a sitting shot for the Danehill filly Rose O'War. These are top horses. One looks forward to their next encounter with as much relish as the clash of the colts. It's a pity that they will perform to half-empty stands and in near silence.

**Redoute's Choice went straight into the $1,000,000 Blue Diamond the following week, drew the outside gate, but still won brilliantly.*

—Peter Pierce

This month's contributors: **David Glanz** is a freelance journalist; **John Coleman** has worked as a journalist in Australia, Britain and the United States. He was editor of *The Catholic Leader*, Brisbane, from 1981–94; **Peter Pierce** is *Eureka Street*'s turf correspondent.



The defining qualities

The former Chief Justice of the High Court offers his views on the values that shape Australia.

VALUES ARE BROAD ARTICLES OF FAITH, of belief in what is good or useful*. Some of our individual values come from, or are verified by, practical experience; some come from beliefs we have taken from others and, with or without qualifications, have made our own. As the good and the useful can depend on circumstances, no value can be stated in terms that are universal and absolute. Liberty and equality are estimable values, but absolute liberty can be the enemy of equality and absolute equality would demand the curtailing of liberty.

Values are expressed in broad terms, without the qualifications necessary to define the precise moral or legal precepts which they indicate. Although their content is imprecise, they are powerful influences on thought and conduct. Values continually contribute to the formation of our attitudes to specific issues or problems. We may not always form our attitudes or act in harmony with our values, but we assume that they tell us what is good or useful. Values give us our character, affect our conduct, inform our relationships, and mould our future. They define our identities.

So it is with a society whose members generally embrace a set of values. Values give a society its character, they determine (mediately or immediately) its laws and institutions, they inform the society's relationships with other societies and—significantly—they are the charter of the society's future. National values define the identity of the people. National values are derived from the religious and philosophical beliefs of the people, from their history and from the physical environment. It may not be possible to list exhaustively the values of a society or to express them in terms susceptible of application to provide the solution to specific cases. As values are expressed in broad terms and are derived from sources having a diverse impact on individuals, they have a greater currency in flowery political rhetoric than they do in deductive or legal reasoning. However, there can be no doubt about the close relationship and the need for accord between a society's values and its laws and institutions. The invocation of values in rhetoric demonstrates their talismanic power.

* 'Useful' relates only to beliefs about matters that are otherwise morally neutral—prudence in commerce, for example.

In speaking of Australian values, we are speaking of the values of a pluralist and ethnically diverse nation. So the question must be asked whether there *is* a set of Australian values. To answer the question, we must start at the beginning with the aboriginal inhabitants of this country.

Professor Stanner, that sensitive observer of the Aboriginal peoples, noted that their societies were immensely old, virtually completely isolated, and existed in a fairly constant environment with an unprogressive material culture. Unchanging order, enduring through a continuing present, was at the heart of Aboriginal values. Theirs was a self-regulating society, dependent on the complementary functions of clans and moieties. 'There [were] no great conflicts over power, no great contests for place or office'. They were nomads, for whom possessions would have been an encumbrance and for whom the significance of their country and everything that was in it was spiritual rather than material. To the Aborigine, land meant '*hearth, home, the source and locus of life, and everlastingness of spirit*'. The Aborigine belonged to the land; it was not an item in the market economy. 'The things of the Market', says Stanner, 'money, prices, exchange values, saving, the maintenance and building of capital—which so sharply characterise our civilisation, are precisely those which the Aborigines are least able to grasp and handle.' Aboriginal society had 'a general design or plan of life at the opposite pole to our own'. (See W.E.H. Stanner, *White Man Got No Dreaming*, 1979.)

By contrast, we Australians of European ancestry placed our trust in continual change to improve our way of life; we placed reliance on possessions and the market economy. We may have cherished the land we owned, but we did not belong to it or take our identity from it. David Malouf has noted (in *The Age*, Bicentenary Edition, 23 January 1988) that:

> We came as immigrants and brought our culture with us—not just a language and the many forms of social organisation, but the crops and animals we needed to feed us and from which, through effort and industry, our economy has grown ...
>
> So there ... is, at the centre of our lives here, a deep irony: that the very industry that gives us a hold on

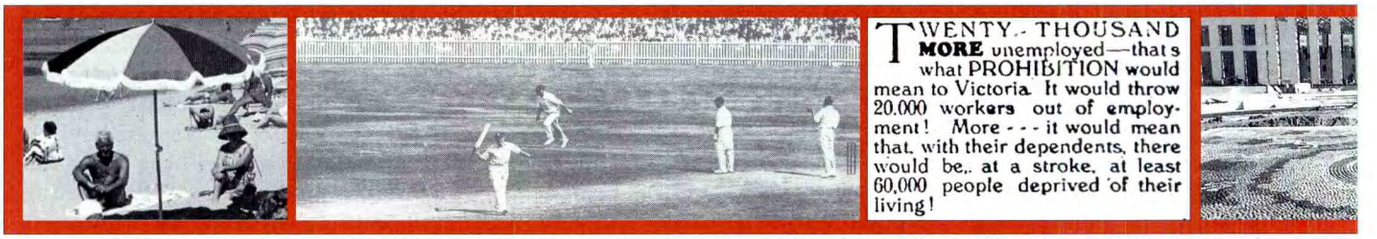
Egalitarianism, tolerance, and freedom in combination can be identified as the most fundamental and characteristic Australian values. These are the values which have facilitated the development, and are now necessary to the maintenance, of a multicultural society. They are values which encourage initiatives unfettered by history or class or ethnic origin. They are values which foster and are fostered by a vigorous democracy.

Is faith the product of submission under coercion? Or is it the acceptance of a Divine gift by an informed and reflective mind? Is truth so fragile that it cannot be openly examined and debated? Fear of dissent, fear of disobedience, fear of loss of control are self-fulfilling fears for they mistake the authority of the Church to teach for a power to compel belief.

the earth has no roots in the land itself, no history, no past.

We maintained order by the exercise of hierarchies of power and we were familiar with competitions to acquire power. We emphasised individual rights and responsibilities, rather than the rights of groups. Our relationships with people outside our nuclear families seldom involved greater responsibilities than the avoiding of harm. Our society embraced Christian values but they took root only in the shallow soil of a society marked by materialism and antipathies between the different Christian affiliations.

Immigration from non-European sources introduced further variations in the patterns of life of the Australian community. Value systems based in non-Christian religions accompanied an increasing diversity in the ethnic composition of the Australian community. We became more familiar with the cultures of Asia and the Middle East, we observed stronger ties among extended families and groups than were customary in Euro-Australian society, and we witnessed that intense industriousness and passion for education which are characteristic of every wave of migrants.



Of course, the strands of Australian society have been interwoven and each set of values has affected the values of other sets. But, because of the comparative numerical, political and economic strength of Euro-Australians, their values have had the greatest influence on the values of the Australian nation.

OUR HISTORY AND TOPOGRAPHY have shaped the pre-eminent Australian value: egalitarianism. Aboriginal society knew no kings or chiefs; mutual reliance, especially in ceremony, was a feature of nomadic life. Among early European settlers, the shared hardships of the bush did not eliminate class distinction but they made it suspect; the waves of immigrants from non-British countries denied the prospect of an Australian Ascendancy; and a proposal for a Bunyip aristocracy was quickly scotched. The shared hardship of diggers, first in the mining boom, later in the trenches, created a tradition of mateship which crossed every line of social demarcation. The universal suffrage (though completed only in 1967) was both the product of and the producer of an egalitarian ethos.

Egalitarianism must cope with differences: differences in colour and ethnic origin, in religion and culture, in natural gifts and acquired characteristics or incidents. Egalitarianism bespeaks tolerance and it must be sustained by tolerance. Without tolerance, differences would produce divisions that would tear the social fabric. In Australia, tolerance is expressed by the aspiration of a 'fair go' for everyone. Although Australia has known sectarian bitterness, no Australian colony was settled as the fiefdom of a religious group. We have had no established religion and ideologies have excited few passions. Australians are less morally judgmental than Americans, perhaps because convicts were more disposed to tolerance than Puritans. Tolerance was not strained in earlier times by gross disparities in material wealth and, when the economy was in reasonable repair, there was enough to go around. A relaxed lifestyle was generally enjoyed and Jack's opinions were as good as his master's. Tolerance attributed an equal dignity to all, to the weak as well as the powerful, the poor as well as the rich, the fringe-dwellers as well as the mainstream. It is an enduring Australian value that entitles each of us to equal respect in our personal relations and to equality of opportunity to attain our own potential and to share in society's benefits.

Egalitarianism and tolerance underwrite the peace and order of a pluralist, multicultural society. Of course, peace and order can be enhanced by laws that prohibit unjustified discrimination, but laws do not automatically create values nor can laws command obedience if they are opposed to the enduring values of a society. Legal coercion is always a remedy of last resort. Despite the convict beginnings of European settlement in Australia, its mainstream society developed in times and in places where the law's writ did not always run. There is a larrikin streak in the Australian character that dislikes the exercise of authority by one person over another, although the law itself is seen as a necessary safeguard of peace and order. When something bad happens, it is agreed that 'there should be a law against it'. But Law is one thing; uncontrolled power is another. Both Aboriginal and Euro-Australian societies exist under a system of 'government of laws and not by men'. In an egalitarian and tolerant society, only minimal legal coercion is needed to maintain social cohesion, peace and order. Australians do not support laws or powers that unnecessarily interfere with the freedom to do, to be and to think whatever the individual chooses to do, to be or to think—especially to think, for that is the paradigm freedom. This country has been and is a haven of freedom for all who come to its shores.

Egalitarianism, tolerance, and freedom in combination can be identified as the most fundamental and characteristic Australian values. These are the values which have facilitated the development, and are now necessary to the maintenance, of a multicultural society. They are values which encourage initiatives unfettered by history or class or ethnic origin. They are values which foster and are fostered by a vigorous democracy.

But there is a downside. Whom do the egalitarian Australians treat as equals? Geography and history made us remote from other places and peoples, and our immigration laws were designed to maintain an Anglo-Celtic enclave in the South Pacific. For generations, mainstream Australians did not admit Aborigines to their hallowed circle, nor did first generation migrants easily achieve that status. Egalitarianism assumed a sameness of ethnic and social structure. Indeed, the White Australia policy was justified by the view that it was the necessary protection of equality in working conditions. Egalitarianism, confined by fear, promoted intolerance. It can still do so, if differences that ought not give rise to distinctions are permitted to do so. Fortunately, for most Australians, ethnic differences now have significance only if the ethnic group isolates itself from intercourse with the general community. We have become a more confident nation. Of course, there are still some Australians who feel secure only in a homogeneous society, isolated from the rest of the world and separate from those people who are seen as different. For them, equality, tolerance and freedom stop where their fear begins.

A confident society is imperilled by fear. Fear turns us inwards, away from our fellow men and women; fear destroys the confidence that a nation must have in itself if it is to prosper and play its part in the community of nations.

Paradoxically, economic freedom risks another fear. It is a fear that grows from the disparity in wealth between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. The 'haves' fear a loss of possessions; the 'have-nots' fear oppression and exploitation. Many 'haves' resent interference with economic power; many 'have-nots' retreat into alienation and antipathy to social order. Generally speaking, State power has been exercised in Australia to foster equality, not to perpetuate privilege. Perhaps the pendulum has swung too far in deregulating some elements of the economy if equality is now at risk. The Governor-General, Sir William Deane, in his 1999 address to the Australia Day Council of NSW, has testified to experience that 'the gap between the haves and the 'have-nots' in our affluent Australia is actually widening'. Whatever economic rationalists may proclaim in defence of economic freedom, great disparity in wealth erodes and ultimately undermines a society.

I HAVE SPOKEN thus far about Australia as a pluralist, multicultural society. The absence of an established religion in any of the Australian colonies, the easy-going, materialist lifestyle that has been possible for many and the inability of most of the principal Churches to inspire their congregations, have blunted the interest of many Australians in the spiritual life. We are a secular society, albeit religious belief is respected and, in a rather vague way, Christian values are esteemed.

The preamble to our Constitution declares that the people of the Colonies relied 'on the blessing of Almighty God', and that relationship of the people with their Creator affords a transcendental justification for—indeed, it gives a transcendental meaning to—the three values we have been discussing: egalitarianism, tolerance and freedom. Speaking of human rights, the Pope said recently, in his message for World Peace Day, 1999:

> Every person, created in the image and likeness of God and therefore radically oriented towards the Creator, is constantly in relationship with those possessed of the same dignity.

Scripture assures us that we have the dignity of children of God, each equally precious in His eyes: egalitarianism. We are bound to one another by an obligation of mutual love; none is to be judgmental of another: tolerance. And all are blessed with that freedom without which virtue would be impossible. If we have lost that understanding of ourselves and our values, we do not fully celebrate our own humanity and the lodestar of our future is dimmed. But let those values be infused by the spirit of the Gospels and they become the dynamic to produce a vibrant, inclusive and confident people.

The working document for the 1998 Oceania Synod declared that witnessing to Christianity 'is inspired by charity and justice, by solidarity with the poor, the marginalised, the oppressed, in short, the less fortunate of this world.'

If this were the way in which we understood egalitarianism and tolerance, our society would be marked by social justice, cohesiveness and peace. We

Arguably, the Church in Australia has been too insistent on the incidents of hierarchical authority, too concerned with the fabric and conduct of our institutions, too timid in challenging us, the laity, with the radical requirements of the Gospel. And we, the laity, anxious not to be distinguished from our fellows, fearful of the loss of status or possessions, have found the Church a safe haven for our complacency.

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would lose the fears, and the antipathy, that gross disparity in wealth engenders; we would be a stronger and more confident member of the family of nations.

The freedom, especially the freedom of conscience, that we enjoy in Australia facilitates obedience to Divine Law. It was Newman who defined conscience as the law of God, 'as apprehended in the minds of individual men'—which 'though it may suffer refraction in passing into the intellectual medium of each ... is not therefore so affected as to lose its character of being the Divine Law, but still has, as such, the prerogative of commanding obedience'.

Pope John Paul, again in his World Peace Day 1999 address, and following Vatican II, asserted the importance of freedom of conscience:

> Religious freedom ... constitutes the very heart of human rights ... People are obliged to follow their conscience in all circumstances and cannot be forced to act against it.'

In the light of this clear statement of principle, it is sad to note the different tone and message in the report of the 'Statement of Conclusions' of the meeting between some Australian Bishops and the Roman Curia before the Oceania Synod. The prelates are troubled by:

> a concept of conscience that elevates the individual conscience to the level of an absolute, thus raising the subjective criterion above all objective factors and having no point of reference beyond itself.

The prelates are concerned that:

> The tolerance characteristic of Australian society naturally affects the Church also. While it has many positive elements, tolerance of and openness to all opinions and perspectives on the truth can lead to indifference, to the acceptance of any opinion or activity as long as it does not impact adversely on other people.

But an honestly formed conscience is surely absolute for the individual and, as Newman points out, 'conscience is not a judgment upon ... any abstract doctrine ... but bears immediately on something to be done or not done'.

No doubt the prelates are seeking to confirm the teaching authority of the Church as a repository of spiritual truth which is not to be discounted by merely private reflection. And, as Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki has pointed out (in 'Authority and Freedom Can Coexist', *The Australian*, 28 December 1998), freedom of conscience is consistent with the acceptance of the 'defined and narrow' authority of popes and bishops which has 'authenticity only with respect to its proper and central objects: faith and morals'. But the Statement uses the language of command, ecclesiastical government and discipline. *The Tablet* (2 January 1999) says the Statement is intended to guide the Australian Bishops so that they may 'affirm, admonish and correct' their people.

Is faith the product of submission under coercion? Or is it the acceptance of a Divine gift by an informed and reflective mind? Is truth so fragile that it cannot be openly examined and debated? Fear of dissent, fear of disobedience, fear of loss of control are self-fulfilling fears for they mistake the authority of the Church to teach for a power to compel belief. There need be no concern about the acceptance of truth in the minds and hearts of men and women of goodwill provided the truth is clearly, rationally and fearlessly proclaimed—a proviso which raises a substantial question for the Australian Church today. It would be a mistake to think that, in today's Australia, an episcopal *ipse dixit* is sufficient by itself to produce that assent of the mind and will from which a steadfast faith will grow.

Arguably, the Church in Australia has been too insistent on the incidents of hierarchical authority, too concerned with the fabric and conduct of our institutions, too timid in challenging us, the laity, with the radical requirements of the Gospel. And we, the laity, anxious not to be distinguished from our fellows, fearful of the loss of status or possessions, have found the Church a safe haven for our complacency.

The Australian Church is our Church, our responsibility, our beloved home. In that context, egalitarianism means that, while Bishops, Priests and People have different functions to perform, each has an equal responsibility for, and an equal right to, performance of those functions. Tolerance requires that we understand that the Church, Divine in origin, depends on humans to perform their several functions and we must accept the failures and the shortcomings of ourselves and others, keeping our minds and hearts on Him who is our end and purpose. And freedom empowers us to follow our conscience and, hopefully, to choose to bear the burdens of the Christian life and to rejoice in the love, divine and human, which they bring.

Australian values pose no threat to the Christian life, but neither do they absolve us from the burdens of following in the way of the Cross. Therein lies our greatest challenge: Are we, am I, ready to abandon the prayer of St Augustine—'Not yet, O Lord, not yet'?■

The Hon Sir Gerard Brennan AC KBE is former Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia.

This is a transcript of a talk given for the Jesuit Lenten Seminar Series, *Discerning the Australian Social Conscience*. The book from the series, including this talk with additional footnotes, will be available mid July ($24.95 plus postage and handling)—call the Jesuit Bookshop, ph 03 9427 7311, for advance orders.

Community law

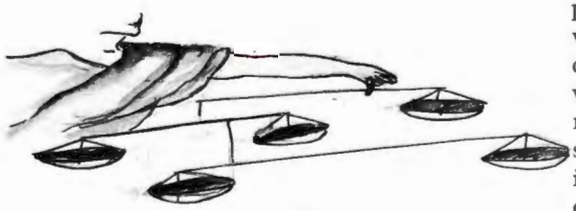
A Victorian government review of community legal centres should be carefully watched. Its recommendations have been met with alarm. Victoria may be the stalking horse for a national turn-back of the movement.

Government funding of legal services is quite recent. When I started my articles in 1970, in Perth, there was no 'legal aid', but there was a scheme run by the local Law Society. Members were referred 'deserving' clients and asked to take them on. (This was not necessarily a free service: I was shocked to find, two years later, that my Principal had taken the whole of the $10 weekly maintenance I extracted for my penniless client's 'illegitimate' baby, as her charge for my 'free' services.) To get even this service, a would-be client had to find the Officer who sat at a desk inside the Supreme Court library. Unsurprisingly, few children, mental patients, people with disabilities, Aborigines, migrants or battered women got in there.

During the 1970s other services—free, community-based legal services—flourished in response to real need. The first was for Aboriginal people in Redfern: the Fitzroy Legal Service adopted the model. They were collectives, shop-fronts, free, and integrated into other community services and welfare networks. Community empowerment was their fundamental principle. Hundreds of lawyers, activists, students and charity-workers gave their most precious commodity: time. They ran cases, gave advice, mounted campaigns about law reform, civil rights, and poverty; operating out of kitchens, spare rooms and dusty cupboards beneath town halls, in squats and vacant houses and church out-buildings.

The community centres survived the introduction of the Commonwealth's Australian Legal Aid Office (ALAO) in the mid 1970s. The professional schemes, such as WA's Legal Assistance scheme, didn't. Many lawyers opted out when the government opted in. They stayed out, when the States set up their own legal aid bodies, and the ALAO was dismantled. But they kept working in community centres, which also survived, then argued for and won, government funding.

Today there are about 150 community legal centres (CLCs) around Australia. Most are largely dependent on government money. They run law reform campaigns; they spotlight abuses in prisons, police shootings and domestic violence; they develop special expertise (for example, in social security); they do case work and individual advocacy. The Victorian review unfortunately tends to dismiss the former activities as work of inconclusive or 'anecdotal' value. Since 1996, CLCs have increasingly taken on extra work, as legal aid dried up. They have advised and represented former legal aid clients whose



'cap' has been reached—people who have complex family law problems and other urgent and complex needs.

To an administrator, CLCs may seem unpredictable, activist, volunteerist, lively, often messy, and by a manager's definition, inefficient. They are difficult to categorise, and hard to control—if you wanted to, and it seems the government does want to. It wants more bang for its buck.

The Victorian review, conducted for the government by Impact Consulting Group, suggests that CLCs should become a government-managed business—with rational management structures, a uniform administrative regime, planned and monitored service-delivery, standardised client services and more formal ties with regional structures, Victorian Legal Aid, and universities.

It is impossible to do justice to the review in a short article: it is a curate's egg: good in parts, which doesn't make it any easier to swallow. It is not yet, however, government policy, and the purpose of this article is to identify matters of public concern.

The consultants' premise was business-oriented. The review cites national 'competition' principles and focuses on customers exercising market choices. CLCs' premise is citizenship, community development and empowerment (none of the review team possessed community development expertise). 'Purchasers' of CLC services have no market leverage and little choice. There are not enough community legal services, and inadequate data about CLC efficiency. The review proposes a full-scale administrative remedy for these two fundamental problems; money and community development spring to mind as alternatives.

The review makes a number of recommendations in keeping with this business focus. For example, it proposes a reconsideration of the key CLC policy of providing free services—the changes would include asking for donations, charging for photocopying, and providing fee-for-service. It also recommends targeting the provision of CLC services according to objective indicators, such as Health Care Card entitlement.

Another review proposal is to restructure the delivery of community legal services. This includes forced amalgamations and regionalisation. It would see 19 centres collapsed into nine regional centres, using the model of centralisation of public hospitals. Funds would be frozen in areas where 'needs' are not apparent, in order to free resources for new, planned services in rural and remote areas presently 'unserviced'. The proposed nine regional centres would provide core services, with outposts and outreach services, according to the boundaries of the Victorian Department of Human Services. They would continue to rely on volunteers (who may or may not stay on) though there would be a formalising of the relationship between the regional centre and Victorian Legal Aid.

The review also recommended restructuring the Federation of Community Legal Centres Inc., the CLC's peak body. It proposes separating out, and resourcing, its secretariat. The secretariat would 'manage' and plan for the Centres; set policy directions for the Federation; liaise with VLA and the two funding governments; plan and implement the review recommendations; set accountability protocols and benchmarks; establish a grievance procedure for 'customers' and a case review panel to hear

reviews against refusal of assistance; and make and review decisions to mount resource-intensive cases. One of its more extraordinary recommendations is that the secretariat should ensure all staff and +volunteers undergo mandatory integrity checks to ensure the security of the customers. (Why?)

The secretariat should, the review recommends, make improving client service delivery its priority, rather than, as is historically the case, legal and social reform.

The Federation of Community Legal Centres has said that, in its view, amalgamations would be a 'recipe for disaster'. CLC workers have written to the Law Institute Journal, pointing out the review's failure to take into account the loss of trust and social capital associated with the loss of small centres in poor neighbourhoods. One worker claimed that the review was 'a blueprint for corporatisation' of a community movement, taking away yet more political control from their constituencies. Another pointed out that amalgamation and regionalisation would necessarily lead to 'conflicts of interest' and more 'customers' who could not be helped. The Chief Justice said, on ABC radio, that he feared the loss of volunteer lawyers. Law Institute President, Andrew Scott, wrote in *The Age* that lawyers would be unlikely to remain attached to the proposed mega-legal-centres or enthused by the prospect of 'mandatory security checks'. The State Attorney-General accused the profession of being 'afraid of change'.

They are afraid, but not necessarily of change. The profession, and the volunteers, are afraid of being pruned to death. And it does seem that a remarkably heroic 'remedy' is being proposed for what is, on a balanced view, not a major ill.

Victorian CLCs received, in 1996–1997, about $5 million in government funds. Over that time they saw about 70,000 people and advised or represented about 45,000 of them. This was with just 120 full-time staff and more than 700 volunteers (estimated as equivalent to the equivalent of 62 full-time staff). CLCs are, on the crudest figures, cost-effective: each client was 'managed' for less than $115 per head, total, which is less than most lawyers' would charge for a *single hour* of legal work. The hundreds of lawyers, and others, who volunteer their time, are foregoing (if they charged their professional time at a nominal fee) about $16 million every year.

Are community legal centres 'efficient'? Probably not, if they are judged as though they were legal firms, but then, democracy isn't tidy, either, but necessary. CLCs are, however, very cheap. Their major problem is the overwhelming pressure to meet unexpressed and unpredictable needs, as legal aid dries up and small, suburban firms can no longer service low-paying clients, and gradually disappear.

Are there enough CLCs? No. Do they meet every need? No. CLCs are still where, historically, they sprang up. But to adopt a planning approach, instead of community development, and to require an 'equitable' spread, means that government must fund according to need, and support community development. No-one can make a volunteer, volunteer. No-one can have a community legal centre, without a community behind it.

The writers of the report feel (on anecdotal evidence) that regionalisation will not affect the supply of volunteers. As one myself, I can only say that I would be unlikely to choose to work for free in a for-fee environment; or in a bureaucracy; or if I were to be 'vetted' or my performance 'managed' from afar. Informality and consultative, collaborative decision-making process may be frustrating, but central to the ethos of CLCs. I am unlikely to be much interested in working outside 'my' community. I would not be interested in being a lowly number in a hierarchy run according to a government regime.

CLCs were never 'planned': they grew where there was a need identified by ordinary citizens, community groups, and local lawyers who decided it was in their interests to give their energy to it. Lawyers, like cats, cannot be herded.

Daryl Williams, a former Perth QC, now the Commonwealth Attorney-General responsible for Commonwealth legal aid funding, has never made a secret of his belief that lawyers should continue to give their services to the deserving poor. But ad hoc charity, and high-profile pro bono cases, are no substitute for access to justice for the most wretched of people. Community legal centres are fragile and sprawling. If we tidy them up too much they may wither on their espaliers. ■

Moira Rayner is a lawyer and freelance journalist.

JON GREENAWAY

East Timor on the move

East Timor, 7am, ferry bound for Surabaya.

REFUGEES FROM East Timor's violence like to talk of miracles. 'Eli', from the village of Salele near the Timor Gap town of Suai, says he doesn't know how he survived the attack of machete-wielding thugs from the pro-integration militia group Besi-Meraputi (Indonesian Flag). He says he can only comprehend it by believing God saved him.

'They slashed me all over and attacked my wife and six others including a trainee priest, but none of us died. "Do you think you are protected by something special?" they said to us.'

Jaimitu de Jesus is amazed he was not killed in a shooting attack by youths loyal to Mahidi (Life or Death Integration with Indonesia) outside a church in the inland town of Ainaro.

'I stopped in front of the chapel to say hello to some people as is our custom, but instead of shaking hands they started shooting. They shot me three times—two of the bullets pierced my clothing only, but one was fired at my chest yet I received no wound.'

Perhaps it is the absence of any other protection against the militia, particularly the lack of any concrete measures by security forces to control them, that leads the victims to fall back on their devout faith. 'I believe God protects those who are honest and good,' Jaimitu explains as he comforts his wife inside the house in Dili where they are hiding. Their three-year-old son was kidnapped at the end of February by Mahidi. They have also burnt his family's home, probably because they discovered that he provided food, money and information to guerrillas in the area.

Jaimitu is careful not to draw attention to himself and goes disguised when he leaves the house—he feels that members of two other militia, Nagemera and the extreme Aitarak group, are looking for him.

These men, 'Eli' and Jaimitu, come from two areas that have witnessed some of the worst fighting between the militia and pro-independence sympathisers. The militia groups have mushroomed in the troubled districts of the Western areas of East Timor, and over the last three months they have changed the political landscape. Before, it was the Indonesian military (ABRI) against Falintil (Fretilin's band of guerrillas) in armed struggle, but the militia now demand to be included in negotiations over the territory's future.

Observers inside East Timor talk of the guiding hand of the military in the emergence of these groups and in their extreme rhetoric. They say that the military's involvement initially followed the October theft, by a band of guerrillas, of 40 automatic rifles from a remote military base in the south. According to these observers, fears of a surging resistance and louder calls for independence led the army to create the militia to keep opposition to their presence in check. However, ABRI's chief in East Timor, Tono Suratman, denies the claim.

'I think some people have confused our support for the civil guard [for which they recruited 1000 youths at the start of February] to help maintain law and order,' he said. 'We do not support these militia.' He was speaking from his Dili home, prior to meeting with ABRI commander, General Wiranto, who quietly slipped into East Timor in the first week of March.

But few believe him. Jesuit Father Karim Albrecht, who provides aid to refugees dotted around East Timor, believes that there is some involvement of the military.

'One gets the impression things are being manipulated,' he says. 'The military

Right: The Dili Post Office.

Above: The free-speaking Gil da Costa Alves, Chairman of KOTBD (Association of East Timorese for Peace).

Below: Armindo Mariano, head of the East Timorese provincial assembly.

commander wanted a bargaining tool when it came to sitting down with Fretilin and talking about disarmament. He must have been aware of the implications—if he was not he is stupid.'

The parish priest at Suai on the southern coast of East Timor claims that the militia and the local military collaborated on a 27 February attack on the house of a suspected pro-independence sympathiser. The attack resulted in eight people receiving machete wounds and 1000 people fleeing to Suai. Even the region's Governor himself, Abilio Soares, concedes that military personnel have become involved.

Even if this is not a plan hatched from on high, it seems there are rogue elements within the military who are aiding and abetting the militia groups.

Gil da Costa Alves, leader of the Association of East Timorese for Peace, a dialogue group bringing together political opponents, was blunt in his response to Suratman's claim that the military is not behind these groups. 'Bullshit,' was his reply

AT THE LATEST ROUND of UN-sponsored talks between Indonesia and Portugal in New York, held in the first week of March, Indonesian foreign minister Ali Alatas said that the finalising of the autonomy proposal his Government will put to the East Timorese people would be delayed until the end of this month. The alternative offered by Indonesia is Habibie's hastily made offer of independence and his pledge that East Timor will not be left in the lurch.

Many fear that when the autonomy proposal is presented to the people there will be an escalation of violence. Settlers native to other islands have been leaving in their thousands, in trucks stacked high with furniture, by the crumbling road to Atambua and Khupang in West Timor and by boats leaving Dili for Surabaya. The government has kept no record of the exodus, but business people estimate that the slide in their profits indicates that well over half of the 200,000 settlers have returned home since the end of last year.

Johannes Jukam, a biology teacher from the nearby island of Flores, stands in Dili's Post Office flanked by parcelled furniture, beds stacked up to the roof. He tells of his fear that the release of the autonomy proposal will lead to fighting.

'Others think that too, that's why you see this,' he says pointing to the stack. 'I know many teachers who are giving up and going home because students feel free now to attack them because the discipline is gone. They don't want to be here when there is civil war.'

To illustrate his point, Johannes introduced me to a colleague from Java who still bore the scars from a beating he received at the hands of a student disgruntled by his poor grades.

During the one-week school break at the start of March, teachers from around East Timor protested to the Department of Education as part of their demand for better security or a transfer out of East Timor. If they were to leave en masse, the education system in East Timor would completely break down. While Timorese make up near to 50 per cent of the teachers at primary school level, they are less than ten per cent of the total in the province's high schools.

Doctors make similar complaints about difficult working conditions. Again, the Indonesians outnumber local medicos by nine to one. If they were to join businessmen and administrators in leaving the island, as some suggest could happen, then East Timor would cease to function. Talking to the traders who make up the Batara Indra group which controls about three quarters of the trade in and out of East Timor, you get the impression that they are preparing themselves to leave at a moment's notice.

'About 80 per cent of the outsiders have already left and that means there are no buyers left in East Timor anymore, because the outsiders were the ones with the money,' says Junawan Sudipya, head of the group. 'Compared with last year there has been a 75 per cent drop in profits.'

Sudipya is also worried that increased expense of scarce supplies will add another dimension to the unrest in East Timor.

'Rising costs have led to personal threats and the targeting of businesses as well. The rice stock is depleted and soon will be finished. We are very worried that soon there will be riots here.'

The limited supply of rice in East Timor has seen prices soar. A 50kg bag of rice in West Timor is selling at about US$13. Currently in Dili it costs almost double that amount. The turbulence in food-growing areas is also jeopardising the local

(continued p27 ...)

JON GREENAWAY

Xanana

He counts Nelson Mandela, murderers and thieves among his friends, likes Celine Dion and Mariah Carey, has a manner about him that would charm a platoon of Gurkhas, and could very well be the President of an independent East Timor.

IN CAPTIVITY inside Jakarta's maximum security Cipinang prison, José Alexandre 'Xanana' Gusmao was an internationally recognised symbol of the East Timorese resistance to Indonesian rule. Now he is making a rapid metamorphosis from guerrilla leader to statesman. Even before he was moved to house arrest in early February he was visited by national leaders and international dignitaries who recognise that he will play a pivotal role in East Timor's future.

Yet this is also a man who likes to laugh long and hard to give back the minutes to his life that smoking takes away, and who misses his fellow inmates from his time at Cipinang.

'They had so many nicknames for me—Commander, Commandant. I would talk with them and they would visit me and complain about this and that. We used to play soccer together also. I spent more than five years there and on my first night in this house I was so lonely.'

Many see him as an obvious choice to become leader if East Timor goes its own way. The comparison with Nelson Mandela, who asked to meet with him when he visited Indonesia, has been made more than once. He is, however, quick to downplay the suggestion that he might head a free East Timor.

'No, I do not want to become President, because if you look at almost every revolutionary struggle, the leaders who are there while in opposition become leaders of a new nation and they have nothing more to give,' he observes.

'When I was fighting, I saw the enemy and I shot him ... it was not so complicated,' he adds with a wry laugh. 'But good government demands more capable people.'

I suggest to him that he and Nelson Mandela fill the same place in the history of their respective countries. 'It was a great pleasure to meet him because he was an example to me,' he responds. 'But I think it is just the coincidence of our situations, both being in jail, that makes people put us on the same level, but I cannot accept being elevated like that.'

Despite his insistence that he cannot lead his country into peace and development, he is being credited for having kept East Timor from descending into civil war—so far. The armed pro-integration militia that have multiplied since the beginning of the year are reported to be responsible for scores of violent incidents. In late February, Gusmao sent word that resistance groups should stay calm. Anger is high as clashes have continued, but as yet there has been no response from the organised resistance.

By his own admission, Gusmao was a reluctant freedom fighter as a young man. Local elites began taking over when Portugal rushed to decolonise in 1974 and, appalled by their incompetence, Gusmao planned to leave for Australia to find work. He stayed at the insistence of friends and workmates, but tried to remain apart from the internecine squabbling that racked East Timor before its occupation.

His desire to be involved got the better of his misgivings about Fretilin's leadership; he joined in May 1975. 'This really was not what I had wanted. UDT (Timorese Democratic Union) parents, Apodeti uncles, Fretilin children. What contemptible freedom this was,' he wrote in his prison journal, published in 1995.

Then followed a coup, scattered skirmishes and Timorese interrogating Timorese as the politically conservative and Portuguese-sympathising UDT wrestled Fretilin for control. Fretilin prevailed. Even though he was now one of their number, he was disgusted by the corruption and indolence of some of its leaders. That reverie was upset by the Indonesian invasion of December. Xanana took to the steepling hills of East Timor's hinterland with the rest of the resistance.

He rose through the ranks quickly to become a senior commander in Fretilin's armed wing, Falintil. The resistance was totally outmatched by the Indonesian military and had all supply lines cut off. While in the jungle the resistance adopted Maoism (with which it had flirted previously) as its guiding philosophy, and the theory buttressed Gusmao's militancy.

With the death of their commander, Nicolau Lobato, in a battle on New Year's Eve in 1978, the resistance was scattered. A year later it reformed, to design a plan of guerrilla warfare based on mobility and the covert assistance of villagers. Xanana Gusmao became its commander and remained so until captured while hiding in the basement of a house in Dili in 1992.

After such a history, it is hard not to be incredulous when Xanana Gusmao talks about forgiveness, yet he stresses the point.

'All representatives of the East Timorese people have to sit together and make political compromise. This is the right time to forgive all the past, to work together for change and to accept whatever can happen.'

No-one need apologise to another, because in those morally compromised times everyone made mistakes.'

He hints also that being unable, physically, to resist Indonesian occupation of East Timor after his capture forced him into playing the role of conscience to the international community. It is a role to which he has become accustomed.

'If I was free now I would be on the next plane home, but I am not thinking about my release. I am happy that in the past weeks I have been able to meet people and push things in the direction of a good resolution for East Timor.'

Perhaps his mellowing while behind bars helped foster the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM) which incorporated groups opposed to Indonesian rule, bringing old UDT and Fretilin foes together. In 1992, international spokesman José Ramos-Horta presented their model of a phased withdrawal of Indonesian rule to the United Nations. Since then, diplomacy

has overtaken war as their main method of undermining Indonesian rule.

Gusmao is convinced there is enough good will in East Timor to bring about peaceful change, but he says this spirit is being undermined by the burgeoning pro-integration militia that intimidate those who do not openly reject independence.

'I think this kind of violence is criminal violence, not political violence,' he says in reference to scattered incidents in Dili and in the countryside. 'We have asked the Indonesian military ABRI to dismantle [the pro-integration militia] Mahidi and Meraputi and to disarm these groups.' The emergence of the militia was confirmed, however, when Gusmao agreed to meet with long-time opponent and leader of Mahidi, Joao Tavares, in mid-March.

After meeting Xanana Gusmao in early March, East Timor's military commander Tono Suratman denied that ABRI was arming and supplying the militia.

'Some of these people are using the name of ABRI loosely,' he said at his home in Dili. 'Yesterday some youths stole some rice from the government stock and said "ABRI told us to take the rice." Everyone is saying, "You better be careful because I have a gun", but it is just talk.'

Tono Suratman took over from his predecessor after he was killed in a helicopter crash along with the Eastern Regional commander and ten others. Falintil's field commander, Taur Matan Ruak, all but admitted Falintil was responsible, in an interview published in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* last year.

As Indonesia and Portugal continue to negotiate the terms and conditions for deciding its future, East Timor is very tense. The streets in Dili are deserted at night. People stay indoors to avoid roaming bands of youths. The quiet is periodically interrupted by the sound of gunfire, which fuels debate the following morning: was it police trying to disperse a crowd of pro-independence youth throwing stones, or the more sinister work of the militia? During one night in the first week of March, there was a shooting and a machete attack, and a young woman, badly beaten, was dumped outside the Governor's Office on the foreshore.

Elsewhere, towns and villages in the Liquica, Bobonaru and Ainaro districts near the border with West Timor are being terrorised by the militia groups.

Gusmao recognises that in such an environment a referendum on autonomy or independence is out of the question. In his meetings with diplomats and government representatives, he has been pitching them a plan of complete disarmament, under the watch of a UN peace-keeping force, prior to holding a plebiscite. Publicly, he is more accommodating of the Habibie Government's opposition to a vote in East Timor.

'We cannot force the situation; we have to be flexible. Other mechanisms could be adopted if they are democratic and representative. We could accept another way of consulting the East Timorese people if it is democratic and representative.

'But if we had such a consultation and I saw that it was unfair, I would be so unhappy. I think only a way agreed to by everybody is acceptable.' In March, the UN secured an in-principle agreement from the Indonesians for the holding of a referendum.

INDONESIA'S Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, stated in February that if Xanana Gusmao accepts a final decision on the future of East Timor he will be released, which could mean that he would return to his troubled homeland a free man as early as August. Gusmao says that if he is freed he will not take the opportunity to settle old scores with integrationists but try to bring groups on either side of the independence issue together in dialogue.

On the question of Gusmao returning to East Timor, military chief Tono Suratman said he believed it would help. He believes the resistance leader is genuinely committed to peace, but warned that, 'some Timoreans don't agree with Xanana'.

Indeed, talking with some community leaders in East Timor itself, I got the impression that Gusmao's goal will not be easily achieved. Armindo Mariano, the head of the East Timorese provincial assembly, thinks that Gusmao, if and when he returns to East Timor, will be more likely to advance the interests of Fretilin and Falintil than try to bring about consensus.

'Maybe if Xanana is released he will only talk to his own group,' said Mariano, who is openly committed to keeping East Timor part of Indonesia. 'Falintil must surrender their arms first, because for 20 years they are the ones who have been doing the robbing and the killing.'

'Xanana is not the only leader in East Timor,' he added. 'He is a big man now because all his expenses are paid by the government, but when he returns he will just be like the rest of us.'

East Timor's Governor, Abilio Soares, blames a lot of the unrest since the end of January on pro-independence students who demand Gusmao's release. They are destabilising the tentative moves towards dialogue and consensus, he argues.

'They cause trouble wherever they go but they are like empty drums—they sound off big but there is nothing behind it. If Xanana returned to East Timor, I don't know if he could control them.'

Xanana Gusmao admits the difficulty in bringing groups together, because he has been so long away from the coal face of East Timor politics.

'It is hard to know who is around now. So many people who are active I don't know, and they are so much younger than me. It is not only the five years in prison but the 18 years before that in the jungle.'

If the principals in the power play in East Timor are from what Gusmao describes as the 'transitional generation—we grew up after Japanese occupation during the war which altered the nature of Portuguese rule', then their extras are the young. Poor rural youth attracted to the opportunity of asserting their machismo with the militia; students drawing on their support network overseas to agitate for change. To fill the hole left by Indonesian doctors, teachers and businessman in an independent East Timor, the country would have to find the next generation of professionals and community leaders among the Timorese themselves, according to Gusmao.

'The young people in East Timor lack so much self-confidence,' he says. 'There is so much hate—they are so ... fragmented. If we do not help them they will feel left out. Usually people want to participate and currently they do not know how to contribute.'

One person who wants to see Xanana Gusmao return is Gil Alves, Chairman of KOTBD (Association of East Timorese for Peace). A foe of Gusmao before 1975, he is now trying to bring Timorese of different political colour together to establish a framework for dialogue. Just to get bitter enemies over the last two decades in the one room together in mid-February took one month of intensive dialogue. Governor Soares attended and Xanana Gusmao is one of the Association's patrons.

'One thing they [the Indonesian Government] should do is release Xanana, because he is intimately experienced in the problems of East Timor and he has to help solve them,' Alves says.

On the evening of this meeting, two youths were shot and killed near a bus station in Becora in Dili's outskirts. ■

—Jon Greenaway

Refugees from the mountain village of Turiscai, 40kms south-east of Dili; parish priest Fr Minuto stands in the middle. Photographed at Motu Ulan, on the outskirts of Dili.

(... continued from p24)

harvest, which usually provides 40 per cent of East Timor's needs. All imported foodstuffs, including such basic necessities as cooking oil, have increased in price because ships have stayed away or have charged extra for their cargo.

'We want to stay as long as we can, depending on whether we feel secure,' says another trader, Phing An. 'At the moment we are unsure and it is difficult to replenish our stocks. We'll just let them run out and then we will go.'

ALTHOUGH INDONESIA does not have its elections until June and the official campaign is a short one, beginning on 18 May, the major parties have already begun jockeying for position. On the first weekend of March, PDI, the party of Sukarno's daughter Megawati Sukarnoputri, held a rally in the West Timor border town of Atambua. Megawati has criticised the idea of Indonesia's severing its links with East Timor, while speaking at length about the need to bring unity to the Republic.

In an article published in the *Jakarta Post* in February, Megawati's close adviser, Kwik Kian Gie, argued that there will be many unforeseen consequences for East Timor if it is given independence. He worried aloud about the fate of Indonesian settlers. He also noted that '[Habibie] would like to submit a proposal regarding the solution of the East Timor problem to the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) ... But which MPR? The new MPR which is to be instituted through the general election in June?'

Gil Alves, from East Timorese for Peace, senses there could be a shift in Jakarta's position after the elections. 'Independence is a long way off. First it would have to go through the national assembly, and I think that is quite difficult. That is the point that any East Timor leader should think about,' he says.

'There is a campaign of disinformation about independence going on in Jakarta, along with smaller parties talking of defending the unity of the Republic of Indonesia. That is the problem we face.'

Not only are there the three main parties (headed by Megawati, Amien Rais and Gus Dur) contending with the once pre-eminent Golkar party; there are also nearly 100 more parties and alliances, many with a chance of snaring enough seats to influence the appointment of a new President in December. Some of these have quite radical platforms; the Coalition of Islam Parties recently adorned mosques in Jakarta with banners shouting 'Allah's armies are going to Ambon'.

Political scientist, Dr Indria Samego, from the Institute of Sciences in Jakarta, doubts that Megawati or any other President would reverse a process of Indonesian withdrawal from East Timor. He argues that the withdrawal is too important for Indonesia internationally, even though it is not a domestic vote winner.

'Megawati is trying to cast herself in the mould of opposition parties in other countries—always criticising what the government does, in order to draw attention to oneself,' he says.

'It is very difficult for Indonesia to defend the integration of East Timor on the world

stage, and in current circumstances the good will of the international community is very important for Indonesia.'

But Dr Samego suggests there will be little pressure on an outgoing Habibie Government to manage a withdrawal process carefully, because the only Indonesians concerned about the situation in East Timor are a small number of academics and activists interested in self-determination and human rights.

Dili. 'Merdeka' is Indonesian for 'independence'.

The haphazard manner in which President Habibie is responding to calls for self-determination—not only in Timor but Aceh, Irian Jaya and Sulawesi—does not augur well for careful treatment of East Timor. After a late-February meeting with a delegation of pro-independence community leaders from Irian Jaya, he asked that they be patient as he had a lot on his mind and this was the first time he had heard of support for separation from Indonesia in West Papua.

East Timor's leaders all expect East Timor to be volatile in the coming months, but they differ in their views on how best to handle it. Xanana Gusmao *(see accompanying story)* believes firmly that there must be disarmament, an international police force present, and dialogue between opposing groups.

'It is very important that the international community accepts that there is no need for us to be part of Indonesia anymore,' he says 'They need to supervise a period of transition which would last as long as it would take us to get the basic level of state infrastructure.

'That will not be so long if, with a new attitude, we can achieve good understanding among the people of East Timor.'

East Timor's Governor, Abilio Soares, believes in dialogue, but he also wishes to see out the remaining three years of his term. An integrationist (naturally enough), he does not think there is any need for the UN to be physically involved in East Timor.

'There is no need for outsiders, as the local military is capable of handling security in East Timor,' he said while taking time off from talks with local Fretilin representatives in his Dili home.

'We can leave discussion about the options for East Timor to the United Nations dialogue in New York and we can just concentrate on having meetings to stop the violence.'

The refugees from this violence do not themselves share the Governor's faith in ABRI. A group of 300 farmers from the mountain village of Turiscai, 40 kilometres to the south-east of Dili *(see photo, previous page)*, have not heeded the request, made by ABRI commander Tono Suratman, that they return to their homes—they cannot see any change to the cause of their fear. They left in November last year after the death of three villagers during ABRI's search for stolen weapons. They say they will not go back until they are convinced that four civilians prominent in the district administration are relieved of the guns they have somehow managed to obtain. Tono Suratman says that the four have been disarmed, but the parish priest from Turiscai confirmed when visiting the refugees at the beginning of March that they still have the guns.

While the public agenda of the pro-Indonesian militia seems obvious enough, there are suggestions that the adoption of the integration cause by district heads and officials is more likely a pitch for power and leverage in a rapidly changing political environment. These men came to their positions of influence in an atmosphere of tight military control and economic dependence and they lean towards Jakarta now because that is all they know.

MAUBARA, one hour's drive on the road leading west along the coast from Dili, is a centre for the Besi-Meraputi militia. Driving a truck loaded with rice, we speed up when passing by their bands. We don't want to be stopped to give them a ride—and maybe lose our load. The militia's strength there, according to Gil Alves, is due to the district head's bringing them in to avoid being voted out in upcoming elections.

'The incumbent was put down the list of candidates for the elections and top of the list was someone with links to Fretilin,' he explains. 'So he got angry and started the militia up in Maubara.'

Governor Abilio Soares agrees with Alves that this individual in Maubara is a problem, along with the local military commander. 'The civil administration is part of the problem,' he says. 'I am going to replace the district chief and have the military commander replaced in Maubara, because opposing groups have agreed to reconciliation if they are removed.'

Three hundred and twenty refugees sheltering in an old Portuguese fort in Maubara town aren't saying who is causing the violence and why. They just know that there was enough trouble in their nearby village of Guico three days before for them to feel they had to leave their farms. Only one old man was bold enough to say that they were too afraid to talk. As they were being registered for assistance by

nuns from a convent in Liquica, two youths from Besi-Meraputi turned up and stood by proprietorially as rice was distributed.

Even if East Timor manages to overcome political manoeuvrings, social upheaval and unscrupulous ambition, it still faces the hurdle of the radically diverging views held by those who will be prominent during East Timor's period of transition.

Head of East Timor's Assembly, Armindo Mariano, believes that autonomy is the best solution for East Timor. 'If we go independent then there is a 70 per cent chance of war,' he says. 'If we choose autonomy then there is a better chance for unity I think. It is better that we are part of Indonesia, because in our history they are the only ones who brought us together. Before we were split by the Dutch and the Portuguese.'

At the same time, Xanana Gusmao is already thinking about how an independent East Timor will support itself, and will look to renegotiate the Timor Gap oil field treaty signed by Australia and Indonesia. 'I remember one Australian who told me not to worry about the treaty, let them develop your oil fields for you and then later on ... (laughs) ... When you get your independence you get your oil.'

Establishing consensus on matters of process while maintaining different opinions is the publicly pledged goal of many. Timorese recognise that they do not boast a history of peaceful co-operation. And at the moment it seems East Timor is in the middle of a cruel experiment: a country divided by sporadic warfare and the military control of another nation over two decades, now suddenly faced with a decision about self-rule while the citizenry is subject to intimidation and attack.

Many, such as teacher Beatrix Andradu, who has a Timorese father and Javanese mother, believe that before things improve in East Timor they are going to get worse.

'They have not prepared anything for independence,' she says. I think it would be good if Indonesia gave East Timor—like Bishop Belo says—16 years to become independent. But if East Timor does not become independent then it will be dangerous here because the people who are pro-independence will fight.

'If we stay with Indonesia we will have fighting, but if we leave we will have fighting too.' ■

Jon Greenaway is *Eureka Street*'s South East Asia correspondent.

Ashes to flashes

Just like any other human activity, scientific thought inevitably becomes trapped in ruts of convention. So the 'great leaps forward' in science often start with a nice piece of lateral thinking, something which jolts the mind out of a well-trodden path.

At the University of Melbourne School of Forestry in Creswick near Ballarat, Dr Branko Hermescec has been doing some lateral thinking of a practical kind. When someone mentions 'wood', most of us think of three things—a source of energy, a source of paper, or a useful structural material. Not Branko. He thinks 'chemicals'.

Actually, the link between wood and chemicals is ancient. But you just need to be a lateral thinker to see it. The connection begins with the recognition that wood is an infantile version of oil, the backbone of today's petrochemical industry. Oil is the result of millions of years of heat and pressure on decomposed organisms, plants and animals. In fact, the groups of compounds present in oil—carbon-based 'organic' compounds—are the same as those comprising all organisms, including trees.

What Hermescec has understood is that by decomposing wood carefully (or 'unstacking' it, as he puts it), we can collect the organic compounds it contains. In this way, wood becomes a cheap, renewable source of useful chemicals. Further, he's developed a process to do the job, and he calls it fast pyrolysis.

If you throw a log of wood on a fire, you end up with worthless ash. If, instead, you heat the wood to more than 500°C without oxygen, you can produce charcoal, a convenient energy source worth about $100 a tonne. But by using fast pyrolysis, Hermescec and his team can break wood down into a series of chemicals, each worth more than $1500 a tonne.

It can all be done at low cost and at little risk to the environment, using sawdust or forestry waste or almost any other plant material. Up to 70 per cent of the wood mass is converted into chemicals, says Hermescec, the other 30 per cent into energy. And that means you don't even need to add energy to power the process.

'In the past,' says Hermescec, 'people only looked at pyrolysis (decomposition by heat) of wood as a process for producing energy. That's because traditional pyrolysis is like driving a bulldozer into a wall—all the chemical compounds in the wood are smashed at random, resulting in a huge number of compounds in low concentrations.'

The secret of fast pyrolysis is carefully controlling temperatures and conditions to ensure that the wood is taken apart without smashing up its chemical structure. Even a degree or two can make a difference to the products derived. But the chemical products must be kept apart, to ensure they do not react or inter-react further. The trick is to end up with a small number of compounds at high concentration, instead of a little of everything.

The three important chemicals which are produced are furfuryl alcohol, a group of phenols, and cellulose. The alcohol can be used in many industrial applications, especially to make polymers which are resistant to heat and corrosion. Almost all furfuryl alcohol used in Australia at present is imported from the US or China.

The phenols can be used to make adhesives, explosives, plastics, medicines and food additives. At present, phenols are mostly derived from petroleum and the global market is worth about $20 billion. The cellulose is relatively pure, and can be used for making rayon, plastics and possibly even paper. The world market for cellulose is around $200 billion. Australia imports more than one million tonnes of cellulose and paper products a year. Branko Hermescec thinks fast pyrolysis could even solve the problem of the disposal of black liquor, a notorious effluent from the paper industry that has proved very hard to deal with.

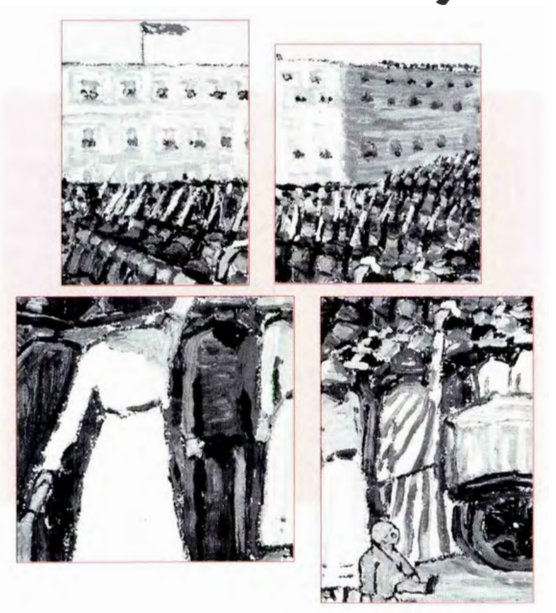
It just goes to show that there is life after oil. And all it takes is a little lateral thinking. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

Correction: Archimedes, March 1999—'about as much as we spend on CSIRO and university research combined at present' should have read 'about as much as we spend on CSIRO at present'.

HUGH DILLON

Uncle Hughie and Private Ryan



IN A DRAWER IN MY DESK I have a few relics of my great-uncle Hugh: a photograph of him wearing his Gordon Highlanders bonnet, his medals (awarded posthumously to his parents), a 1915 leather pocket diary, and a bronze plaque inscribed 'Hugh Dillon: He Died for Freedom and Honour'.

Although the family originally came from Counties Cavan and Monaghan, like many Irish families they crossed the water to Scotland. Uncle Hugh's portion of the family gravitated to Motherwell, near Glasgow. He joined the Gordon Highlanders in September 1914, about four weeks after the war began. His diary provides no direct clue as to what drew him to the army.

His notes evidence an interest in the day-to-day events only. Even when something exciting happens to him, he does not reveal his thoughts or feelings about the incident. We get a laconic summary only. For example, on 4 July 1915 he records, 'Got word to prepare for the front. Busy getting kit ready ... Splendid weather.' His battalion sailed for France on 7 July at night. On 20 July, two companies of the battalion went into the trenches for the first time. He records this then notes: 'The colonel killed, RIP. Paid 5 francs.' On 22 July he went into the trenches himself. What does he say about this momentous event? 'Artillery bombardment on our right.' On 7 August he recorded that a man had been killed that night, that the weather was dull and that he had received a letter. The next day he inscribed: 'First man buried at night.'

On 17 August, he left for Mazingarbe (a mining village between Lens and Béthune, about 25 kilometres from Arras). It is heart-wrenching to read this: he had now reached the place where he was to die and be buried, yet the event is recorded with the same tone of unconcern and mild interest in which everything else is registered. By this time, the British Commander-in-Chief, General French, had decided to launch a major attack towards the mining village of Loos, a few kilometres from Mazingarbe, in September.

Parts of the diary are bitterly ironical. On 24 August Hugh wrote: 'Went to see the grave yard behind the wall.' On 19 September, four days before he was killed by a shell, he jots: 'Getting ready for trenches. Left about 5.30pm. Long trail with ammunition case. Lay at Quality St.' 'Quality Street' was the name given by British troops to a major trench system near Mazingarbe. The sting in this entry is that Hugh now lies with another 127 soldiers in a tiny British Commonwealth war cemetery called 'Fosse 7 (Quality Street)'.

Nowhere in his diary is there any direct evidence that he was fearful. Indeed, he often seems to have enjoyed the experience. On 26 August he recorded, 'No fighting but plenty of shouting going on. Up against the Prussian Guard.' The next day, 'German trenches get it hot. The usual shouting going on.' Which all sounds quite jolly. The next day the Prussian Guard were relieved and Hugh records with apparent disappointment, 'No answer to our shouting at all.' On 30 August he had 'a bit of a duel' with one of these taciturn Germans, but does not record a result or his feelings about shooting at and being shot at by another human being.

Even when he narrowly missed being killed, he records only the bare fact. On 11 August he noted: 'Had a narrow shave.

Weather dull.' On 12 September he jotted: 'Our position under heavy fire at night. Had a very narrow shave.' No details are given of these experiences, which I assume he would have remembered for the rest of his life had he lived to old age. Perhaps he merely regarded the diary (which it was illegal for him to keep in the trenches) as an aide-memoire. But for two surviving letters one could be forgiven for thinking that he was either very inarticulate or somewhat insensitive. He was neither, as the letters show, but it is frustrating, as I search for his essence, to know that most of his thoughts and memories have gone with him.

HUGH CERTAINLY was an innocent. He wrote to nuns and his diary records that he regularly attended mass and confession while he was in the army. He kept a photograph of his mother and sister in his diary. In a letter he wrote to his parents two hours before he was killed, his anguished love of them and his fear of death is almost palpable:

> I am glad to say that I am still in the pink and hope this will find all at home the same. I may tell you we have been in the trenches since Sunday night and their (sic) has been heavy artillery fire all the time. We have had a hitting up but nothing in comparison with our friends over the way. I wouldn't like to be in their shoes ... Don't worry yourself on my account as I expect to be all right with God's help. Your ever loving son, Hughie xxx.

Two days later a large part of his Division was wiped out in the abortive attack which became known as the Battle of Loos. Had he not died when he did, the odds were that he would have shortly afterwards, as did so many men at Fosse 7 and nearby cemeteries.

I have always struggled to comprehend the experiences of the men in my family who went to war. R.H. Tawney, the great English social historian (who fought as an infantryman on the Somme), once remarked that the first requirement of a good historian was a good pair of boots. With that aphorism in mind, in November 1988, I went to find Uncle Hughie in France.

I caught a train from Paris north to Arras. In Arras it was very cold and light snow fell as I sought a taxi. We drove along a highway for 25 kilometres and every kilometre or so passed a war cemetery. The scale of the fighting started to dawn on me. The taxi driver complimented me on my French but the truth was that my vocabulary was far too inadequate to express the lowering sense of sadness and desolation which came over me.

Mazingarbe is an ugly village joined at the hip to another larger (and equally ugly) village called Vermelles. The surrounding farmland seems almost dead flat for miles, except for massive slagheaps which punctuate the skyline together with striped industrial smokestacks and gigantic, angular electricity pylons. It is easy to see how exposed infantry were out of their trenches. Mining has ceased in the area, and the slagheaps are now covered by grass. The huge double-towered pithead, called 'Tower Bridge' by the British troops, which had dominated the area in 1915, has disappeared. So have all the other pitheads, and with them many of the people who had once lived there.

Frost-crusted puddles lay everywhere. Beside the railway lines were stacked piles of harvested corn. Cabbages grew in the tiny front gardens of the miners' cottages (those few still occupied) and chooks wandered randomly in the bleak, bare fields searching for food.

The taxi driver dropped me in the main street of Mazingarbe and I stopped for a coffee at a bar which was a snug fit for the three people in it. The old woman who served me was so sullen that I thought better of my plan to ask her for directions to the *cimitière de guerre anglais*, but outside a thickset man with a beard and sad eyes (reminding me uncannily of my father) took me gently by the shoulder and walked me to the main road and pointed out the way.

I walked briskly up the main road, massive trucks buffeting past me until I reached a small, green, arrowed sign with white lettering on it: 'Tombes de Guerre du Commonwealth—Fosse 7 Military Cemetery (Quality Street)'. My heart began to pound. I slowed my pace. I was approaching sacred ground. You don't race into a cathedral. It is not just a matter of respect or ritual; you need to attune yourself to the spirit of the place.

Hugh now lies in a row with seven other Gordon Highlanders and another 120 soldiers under immaculately kept lawns. At the foot of each white headstone are planted roses and other British plants. In little bronze cupboards set in the gates is a visitors' book and a booklet from the War Graves Commission indexing the graves. It provides brief biographical details of the dead soldiers.

Sir Edward Lutyens, who designed the Cenotaph in London and the Australian War Memorial in Villers-Brettoneux, visited France in 1917 and wrote to his wife:

> The graveyards, haphazard from the needs of much to do and little time for thought. And then a ribbon of isolated graves like a milky way across miles of country where men were tucked in where they fell. Ribbons of little crosses each touching each other across a cemetery, set in a wilderness of annuals and where one sort of flower is grown the effect is charming, easy and oh so pathetic. One thinks for the moment no other memorial is needed.

But it was, of course, not enough and permanent memorials were required. Dominating each Commonwealth war cemetery is Lutyens' Cross of Remembrance, on the face of which is set a bronze sword. While the iconography of the cross is obvious, the sword is an ambiguous symbol. It is emblematic of soldiers, but it also unintentionally recalls Wilfred Owen's 'The Parable of the Old Men and the Young' in which Owen has Abraham not only slaughter the innocent Isaac 'but half the seed of Europe, one by one.'

Among the graves, I saw a gardener. In this quiet place I couldn't help but think of Mary Magdalene's surprising encounter with the 'gardener' at Jesus' empty tomb on Easter Day (cf. John 20:15-16). A small contingent of British gardeners manage teams of Frenchmen in the Commonwealth war graves in France. Terry Smithies, a Manchester man, supervised 21 cemeteries in the Lens area, tending thousands of graves. He told me that during the war men were buried sometimes in blankets, but often not. Everything depended on the urgency with which the task had to be carried out and the danger the burial parties were subjected to. Officers, especially aristocrats or those highly respected by their troops, were often buried separately rather than in communal graves.

AFTER THE WAR, the Imperial War Graves Commission tidied up the cemeteries and marked the graves of their dead with plain white stone tablets, inscribed with the soldier's regimental badge, his number, rank, name and regiment, the date of his death and his age, in that order. Below these identifying details is inscribed a religious symbol (a cross, a Star of David, etc.) and then a short epitaph usually provided by the family. On Hugh's headstone we find the details: 3/6864 Private Hugh Dillon Gordon Highlanders 23rd September 1915 Age 23.

His pious Catholic family took solace from prayer. On his headstone they had had inscribed: 'Sweetest Heart of Jesus/ Have Mercy on Him/ May He Rest in Peace/ Amen.' Some families were stoical, hoping that their young man's death had been meaningful. Second Lieutenant K.R.B. Kershaw's kin tried to persuade themselves that 'He who dies for King and Country leaves nought undone that man can do.' Other families let their grief flow more openly in poetry. Someone who loved

19-year-old Private A.T. Maclean wrote: 'His echoes roll from soul to soul.' But the most poignant and moving of all the graves at Fosse 7 was that of 29-year-old Lance-Corporal Maclean of the Seaforth Highlanders whose young wife mourned him in utter desolation: 'I have lost my soul's companion, a life linked with my own.'

I sat by Hugh's grave and tried to hear his voice. Through our common names, I had a strong sense of connection but, as Geoff Dyer remarked in his superb extended essay, *The Missing of the Somme*, 'it has become impossible to see the war except through the words of Owen and Sassoon'. So familiar are their poems and images that they mediate and filter virtually all our attempts to come to grips with the actual experiences of the men who fought and died in the Great War. I felt frustrated because the understanding and insight I had hoped for by presenting myself at Hugh's graveside had not crystallised.

I wandered among the graves, loath to leave. Having seen Hugh, I became fascinated by all the others lying with him, and their stories. For the next three days, I walked for miles around Arras visiting war cemeteries, reading the visitors' books and the epitaphs on the headstones. In one cemetery near the Canadian War Memorial Park at Vimy Ridge, I found three graves together: an unknown German soldier was buried between two unknown Canadians.

The received view of our dead soldiers, especially of the Great War, is that they were passive victims. No-one has expressed this conception of them more elegantly and compassionately than Wilfred Owen himself in a letter to Osbert Sitwell in July 1918:

> For 14 hours yesterday I was at work—teaching Christ to lift his cross by numbers, and how to adjust his Crown; and not to imagine he thirst until after the last halt; I attended his Supper to see that there were no complaints; and inspected his feet to see that they should be worthy of the nails. I see to it that he is dumb and stands to attention before his accusers. With a piece of silver I buy him every day, and with maps I make him familiar with the topography of Golgotha.

And Sassoon, writing in his diary of 17 January 1917, somewhat snobbishly analysed the fatalism of the troops he saw on the ship returning from England to France after leave:

> [B]ecoming a military serf or trench galley-slave is a very easy way out of the difficulties of life ... They are like cabbages going to Covent Garden or beasts driven to market. Hence their happiness. They have no worries, because they have no future; they are only alive through an oversight—of the enemy. They are not 'going out' to *do* things, but to have things *done* to them.

But these literary views are not the whole story. Sassoon was known by his own battalion as 'Mad Jack'—he was not at all a passive victim, but a reckless fighter. The gentle Owen wrote to his mother a month before he was killed:

> I have been in action for some days. I can find no word to qualify my experiences except the word SHEER ... It passed the limits of my Abhorrence. I lost all my earthly faculties, and fought like an angel ... I captured a German Machine Gun and scores of prisoners ... I shot only one man with my revolver; the rest I took with a smile ... I came out in order to help these boys—directly by leading them as well as an officer can; indirectly by watching their sufferings that I may speak of them as well as a pleader can.

In *Wartime*, his study of 'understanding and behaviour in the Second World War', Paul Fussell claimed that 'the real war [fear, mutilation, agonising death] was tragic and ironic, beyond the power of any literary or philosophical analysis to suggest, but in unbombed America especially, the meaning of the war seemed inaccessible. As experience, thus, the suffering was wasted.'

Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* unlocks the grip of the writers on our imaginations. Indeed, the power of the film comes from the fact that Spielberg leaves no room for the use of our imaginations. If Omaha Beach (and the Somme and Passchendaele and Mazingarbe) were abattoirs, Spielberg is the first populist filmmaker to show us the slaughter, to make the war 'accessible' to a mass international audience.

Spielberg has said that he wanted to make the audience feel that they are on Omaha beach. He succeeds masterfully. The constant shell and machine-gun fire, the cries of frightened and wounded men have the urgency of a powerful engine screaming out of control at a higher and higher pitch. Your heart races. The film makes you want to run, to hide, to *shoot* those Germans who are shooting at *you* so relentlessly, if only you can survive to do so.

When the Americans are shown shooting down Germans running out of bunkers, perhaps to surrender, you find that you want to shoot them too because they have been trying to *kill* you. You are angry about that and the fear of your own immediate extinction absolutely eradicates any fellow feeling for the Germans. You do not care whether they want to surrender or fight on; the answer is the same. It is only when the Germans are all killed that sanity and any feeling for these human beings returns. One American hops into the trench and takes a Hitler Youth knife from a body. You suddenly realise that it was a 16-year-old boy whom you have just mentally executed. As we saw in the case of Wilfred Owen, there is a primitive killer in the guts of the gentlest of men.

Saving Private Ryan is not 'vulgar patriotism', as one critic has suggested, nor, as another has suggested, is it 'a Fifties war movie with a Nineties budget'. Notwithstanding its occasional flaws, I suggest that this movie may be as close as we shall get to a modern day *Iliad* or Goya's *Peninsular War* series of etchings. It is not simply tragic—we have been taught by Owen to see all war art as tragic—it is profoundly and deliberately shocking. I am

conscious that the general reader knows that the *Iliad* is a great work but may not have read it. To understand the comparison let us see a fragment of Homer's appallingly clinical description of the killing of Hector by Achilles:

> [Hector's] flesh showed where the collar-bones hold the join of the neck and shoulders at the gullet, where a man's life is most quickly destroyed. Godlike Achilles drove in there as Hector charged him, and the point went right through his soft neck: but the ash spear with its weight of bronze did not cut the windpipe, so that Hector could still speak and answer Achilles. He crashed in the dust and godlike Achilles triumphed over him ...

Hector, confronted by Achilles, had sought a 'gentlemen's agreement' that the man who was triumphant in their duel would honour the body of the other. Achilles, filled with anger at the death of his friends and consumed by bloodlust, refuses. He is intent on the destruction of his enemy who has been killing Greeks with little effective opposition. See the similarity with Americans at the Omaha bunkers? Both Homer and Spielberg show us 'the real war'.

Saving Private Ryan is morally and psychologically complex, as is a battlefield. For example, in the second act, Captain Miller (Tom Hanks) and his squad move out to save Private Ryan. In the course of their meanderings around the countryside, they attack a German machine-gun post. Naturally enough, the Germans defend themselves and one American soldier is mortally wounded. The one surviving German surrenders. The Americans decide to execute him.

While he is digging his own grave, the German desperately seeks to befriend the nerdish non-combatant Corporal Upham who has been brought along as translator. The corporal begs for the German's life and, after some rumination, Captain Miller decides to let him live. Miller, having ordered his squad, against their wishes, to attack the machine-gun nest feels guilty about the medic being killed and is obviously tempted to 'atone' by allowing his angry soldiers to revenge themselves on the hapless German. Hanks may be the Jimmy Stewart of our day, but Jimmy Stewart would never have been portrayed thinking about murdering a prisoner.

Spielberg draws together a number of threads I had hoped to tie for myself at Mazingarbe, but could not. First, he exposes us to, and forces us to undergo, in an auditory and visual sense at least, the experience of combat, 'the real war' as Fussell puts it. He seeks to understand something which has always been beyond those of us who have not been through it, and demands that we understand. We learn by doing, so to speak. Second, while I think that he wants us to know Everyman at war, his more refined purpose is to memorialise the deaths of those young men by finding their meaning. But the meaning cannot be understood in isolation from 'the real war' they underwent.

The scene in which Private Ryan's mother is visited by a priest and an army officer to announce the deaths of her three sons has been ridiculed by some Australian critics. The wide shot of a large white country house set amid fields abundant with crops jarred those critics who thought they saw Spielberg romanticising America in an almost reflex fashion. Spielberg's purpose, however, is not romantic. It is to show domestic America's 'unbombed innocence' and to contrast that bucolic ignorance with 'the real war'.

Spielberg's 'sappy ending' (as the *New Yorker* critic put it), in which we see the veteran collapse in tears in a Normandy war cemetery, does not diminish the force of the points he makes. His Stars and Stripes flapping in silhouette over the cemetery are backlit and colourless. This is no *Red, White and Blue* jingoism but a stark, black-and-white reckoning of the cost paid in blood and anguish to win Europe back from Nazism.

Fussell, an American, describes in his war memoir, *Doing Battle: the Making of a Skeptic*, having been 'ill-used by members of the Wehrmacht [the German Army] who have not been brought to justice'. Although he argues that the front-line troops had no war aims but survival, and were loyal only to their buddies, even he would not deny that the Nazis and their followers had to be defeated. The deaths, even the deaths of the Germans, were not meaningless—Nazism was consumed in the funeral pyre.

Saving Private Ryan is Spielberg's sad psalm of thanks to Fussell and all those like him. But it is also the battle experience of Everyman. The German machine-gunners at Omaha killed large numbers of Americans, but were themselves heavily outnumbered and were, of course, also killed in large numbers. *Private Ryan* helps us comprehend Gallipoli, the Somme and Passchendaele. And, perhaps, Milne Bay, Stalingrad, Long Tan, Iraq, Bosnia and Kosovo. After I saw it, I had nightmares for three days and a new understanding of Uncle Hugh. ■

Hugh Dillon comes from a long line of sailors and soldiers.

ROSS MCMULLIN

'Fini retreat Madame'

In the extensive media focus last year on the 80th anniversary of the end of the Great War—lift-out supplements in the broadsheets, a *Four Corners* reassessment, feature articles and analysis—there was a discernible attempt, particularly by some British historians, to 'set the record straight' about the contribution made by the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). In their sights were extravagant claims like the one published last November in *The Sunday Age*, alongside a photo of Sir John Monash and headlined 'How this Man (and 333,000 Other Australians) Won World War I'.

Neither British revisionists nor Australian big-noters should undermine the real achievements of the AIF at the Western Front, argues **Ross McMullin**, who has been researching its crucial role in the desperate defence of March/April 1918.

'Welcome back to the Somme', Will Dyson

ON 21 MARCH 1918, the Germans launched an awesome assault on a 50-mile frontage north and south of the Somme involving 750,000 men, 6,600 guns and 3,500 mortars. During that first day they captured 21,000 prisoners and advanced four-and-a-half miles—as far as the British had advanced in four-and-a-half months during the infamous 1916 Somme offensive.

The following days brought more bad news. The crucial city of Amiens, more than 40 miles west of the pre-assault front line, seemed under threat. A special order from the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Douglas Haig, described the situation as 'a crisis'. For civilians like Vera Brittain, this emergency was even worse than the terrible days of the Somme and Passchendaele, because the previously unthinkable now had to be faced: 'into our minds had crept for the first time the secret, incredible fear that we might lose the war'.

The Australians, up north in Flanders 60 miles away, followed these developments with increasing concern. With no evidence that the sector they were holding was an immediate priority for the Germans, they waited impatiently to be transferred to where the decisive action was. The five AIF divisions had already established themselves as among the most formidable formations in the British forces, and they were sure they could make a difference.

Their morale was high and their sense that this crisis would be the climax of the war was an additional spur. Having acquired experience and tactical proficiency to supplement the dash they had shown since April 1915, they were confident they would be more than a match for their opponents on the battlefield. Since the Gallipoli landing, the AIF had been involved in numerous attacks that had been ill-conceived and costly in casualties (fiascos like Krithia, Fromelles and Bullecourt spring to mind), but the primary objective now—preventing the Germans from rampaging across Europe—was precisely why many of the Australians had enlisted in the first place.

They did not have to wait long for the expected summons. On 23 March, the 15th Brigade of the Fifth AIF Division was warned to be ready to move at short notice: 'We are in for exciting times,' predicted the brigade commander Harold 'Pompey' Elliott, a 39-year-old solicitor and one of the AIF's most famous leaders. He was right. In fact his own involvement practically guaranteed it. Elliott was vigorous, volatile and controversial—probably the most renowned character in the whole force. The men he commanded respected his capacity and relished his tempestuousness. They especially admired his exceptional willingness to share the front-line danger.

With other AIF divisions also on the move south, Elliott's men began with a nine-mile march on the 25th. Long-range shelling inflicted 18 casualties. They then endured a lengthy train journey in crowded cattle trucks. The railway had been intermittently bombarded, anti-aircraft guns were mounted on the train, and the situation was so desperate and uncertain that they were warned they might have to detrain suddenly and go straight into action. On the way, one of the trains was hit by a long-range enemy shell, killing 16, including a battalion quartermaster and his staff; the shattered portion of the train was uncoupled, a burial party stayed behind to carry out its grim work, and the rest of the train rumbled on towards the battle zone.

Elliott was instructed to position his brigade in and around the adjacent villages of Lealvillers and Acheux. Away to the left, the 4th AIF Brigade had already encountered the Germans. Nine miles south of Lealvillers, the Australian Third Division under Sir John Monash had arrived to plug an alarming gap on the Somme: a British corps commander had misinterpreted a provisional direction outlining the procedure in the event of withdrawal and taken it as an actual order to retire.

What the Australians encountered was disturbing. 'Found a great many stragglers from British regiments ... who are drinking and looting out of control', Elliott wrote, '... everything is in a dreadful state of confusion.' The Australians realised they had been fortunate to avoid the enemy's initial onslaught, and that the British units in the front line when the Germans unleashed their artillery were understandably shaken and exhausted after their ordeal.

Nevertheless, the scenes witnessed by the arriving Australians led them to the conclusion (confirmed by subsequent research) that the quality of British resistance was decidedly variable. Some units had displayed the utmost valour, but there were also episodes of disintegration and back-pedalling which had a snow-balling effect—neighbouring formations tended to conclude they had to conform or be outflanked and isolated.

As THE AIF FORMATIONS advanced towards the oncoming Germans, they were outnumbered by distraught civilians and soldiers going the other way. Thousands of French women, children and old men were struggling along with the possessions they had hastily gathered after their homes were threatened by the rapid German advance. Moving in the same direction were many dispirited British soldiers, who assured passing AIF inquirers that the Germans were not far away and advancing in overwhelming numbers. The Australians pressed on.

Their advent transformed the mood of some of the villagers. When they recognised these reinforcements as Australians, women with crying children clinging to their skirts returned to homes they had abandoned. Some, weeping with joy and relief, cried *'Vive l'Australie!'* These scenes, as the AIF was welcomed back to the Somme, are among the finest episodes in Australia's history, summed up in the gruff reassurance one of the rescuers gave to a frightened Frenchwoman—*'Fini* retreat *madame, beaucoup Australiens ici.'*

There were other special moments. *'Pas necessaire maintenant, vous les tiendrez,'* enthused a venerable Frenchman. A nearby Australian asked someone for a translation. Upon being told—'Don't need to leave now, you'll hold them'—he replied laconically: 'We'll have to see the old bloke isn't disappointed.' The Australians' morale, despite the daunting circumstances, was repeatedly noted by observers, including Pompey Elliott: '... the boys ... marched here last night as full of jokes and looking as happy as if they had got leave to Australia'.

Late on 28 March, with the situation still very fluid, Elliott's 15th Brigade was directed to move to the villages of Hédauville and Varennes. They marched through a cold and rainy night and arrived wet and tired. The brigadier placed two of his battalions in Varennes, and proceeded to Hédauville with the other two. Having been assured Hédauville would be vacant, Elliott was surprised to find British soldiers occupying it.

About 9.30am he called at the main château, and found it 'literally packed with officers ... still in bed'. The staff captain in command told Elliott that no orders to vacate had reached him, and there were other buildings in Hédauville Elliott could use as headquarters. Elliott explained that his main priority was not to install himself in the château but to obtain appropriate accommodation for his men, who were waiting in sodden fields under persistent drizzle after marching all night and had been warned to expect only one hour's notice of a possible further move to the very front line.

Elliott agreed to leave his men outside until midday while the British staff captain found out what to do. Meanwhile Elliott's brigade intelligence officer spent the morning reconnoitring in nearby villages. He returned about midday and told the brigadier what he had heard. Pompey decided to force the issue with the staff captain:

> I ... asked him had he received any orders yet. He replied that he had not. I asked why he had not telephoned or gone to Varennes to find out. He replied that he had no telephone. I told him that I had a telephone he could use, and then, being irritated by his listless manner and want of interest, and by the fact that my men were being drenched to wait his convenience, I told him that I had formed a most unfavourable opinion from what I had heard of his division, and that his own want of energy and initiative were strong confirmation of what I had heard, and that unless he got orders and moved his men out of the village immediately, I would assume command and march them out of the village, if necessary, under arrest.

This assertiveness had the desired effect, but as Elliott and his men were settling into their new billets an order arrived directing the brigade to proceed immediately to Corbie, a town in the critical sector near the junction of the Somme and Ancre rivers. Both Corbie and the nearby town of Villers-Bretonneux were ten miles east of Amiens, the vital transport and communications centre which was a primary German goal. 'The covering of Amiens is of first importance,' Haig declared. Preventing the Germans from crossing the bridges across the Somme near Corbie was a top priority. This responsibility, which had been assigned to another AIF brigade now needed for an urgent task elsewhere, was to be taken over by Elliott and his men as soon as they arrived.

It was another all-night march, over 20 miles. The weight of the packs on their backs was 'torture', wrote Walter Downing, who recalled the march vividly:

> We went through towns and villages, over cobble-stones, cart-tracks and high-roads ... shambling along, keeping the step, but with stumbling feet and hanging heads. The desire for sleep was a dull pain; rest seemed the sweetest thing in the world, but we bit our tongues and kept going. We drowsed as we marched, literally walking in our sleep, and in the five-minute halts at the end of every hour we dropped to the ground and slept. Some mechanically kept walking; we called to them to make them stop.

They made it to Corbie, an exceptional feat in the circumstances, as Elliott acknowledged after the war:

> I ... have seen them triumph in battles, and have greeted them beaten, but never disgraced, returning from a stricken field—they were proud moments; but I have never been prouder than when, on one occasion in France, we marched, at night, 26 miles ...

THERE WAS WORK to be done straightaway. Elliott ensured that the vital Somme crossings were secured, but was soon concerned about the front south of the river. Entrusted to hold it was the British 14th Division. Elliott's officers reconnoitring these British positions reported them to be gravely defective.

Another problem was troubling Elliott. Because the French civilians had departed so swiftly, soldiers so inclined could avail themselves of a variety of provisions, notably alcohol; there was plenty of wine and fine champagne. Elliott accepted that a certain amount of petty larceny was inevitable, but systematic looting was another matter altogether. He issued strict orders and installed guards at all the main liquor repositories, but became

increasingly frustrated that his efforts were being undermined by British negligence.

When a British captain was apprehended in Corbie with a mess cart full of looted champagne, Elliott decided that enough was enough. After handing the culprit to the military police, he resolved on his own initiative to issue a notice declaring that the next officer caught looting would be summarily and publicly hanged in the Corbie market square, and his body left swinging there as a deterrent. He had this extraordinary notice displayed prominently in Corbie. Underneath, in a postscript, he admitted the drastic penalty he was threatening was probably illegal, but he was prepared to do whatever was necessary to maintain order; if he ever had to execute his threat, he proposed to rely subsequently on a royal pardon.

Looting ceased immediately. 'None seemed inclined to make of themselves a test case under the circumstances,' Elliott observed. His Corbie ultimatum made one more in an already long list of Pompey anecdotes, and the story soon became famous even beyond the AIF.

On 4 April the Germans launched another imposing assault towards Amiens, and penetrated the 14th Division's front: '... as I expected from the manner in which they were holding the line', Elliott noted, 'they gave way very badly ... and the situation looked disastrous.' He instructed Captain H.D.G. Ferres, his senior custodian of the bridge across the Somme a mile east of Corbie, to 'stop all stragglers and compel them to fight'. Armed with this directive, Ferres instituted wholehearted measures; assisted by detached parties of the legendary British cavalry who were keen to help, he collected about 500 14th Division infantrymen and positioned them in a makeshift defensive line. These remnants, together with the 15th Brigade men Elliott rushed into the breach, halted the enemy; in fact, Elliott claimed proudly, his brigade actually gained ground despite being confronted by Germans in superior numbers. Further south, Villers-Bretonneux was also endangered, but another AIF brigade retrieved the situation there just in time.

'I was never so proud of being an Australian', wrote Elliott. 'The gallant bearing and joyous spirit of the men ... thrills you through and through. You simply cannot despair or be downhearted.'

Later in April another British division was given responsibility for securing Villers-Bretonneux while Elliott's brigade was given a spell. Elliott became convinced this division's defence arrangements were inadequate; when the Germans tried again (as he was sure they would) to reach Amiens, he concluded that the British would be unable to hold the tactically crucial town. In that eventuality, he predicted, his own brigade would be directed to recapture it, so he prepared a plan. Just as Elliott envisaged, the Germans did attack, the British were driven out of Villers-Bretonneux, and the 15th Brigade (together with another AIF brigade) had to carry out a counter-attack along the lines of his plan.

This night enterprise was an astounding success. It ended the German thrust towards Amiens, and was acclaimed by more than one well-credentialled observer as the most brilliant accomplishment of the whole war.

On the scene at the time was Will Dyson, the Australian artist who had volunteered to provide a distinctive illustrated record of the AIF experience. Shortly after the Villers-Bretonneux counter-attack, he wrote to his brother, the writer Edward Dyson:

> the boys are more eager, cheerful, bucked up and full of fight than ever before. Weather is good, food is good and they are at the height of their reputation. What they have done is in so striking a contrast to what the others did not do ... God alone knows what terrible things are coming to them, but whatever they are they will meet them as they have met everything in the past. These bad men, these ruffians, who will make the life of Australian magistrates busy when they return with outrages upon all known municipal bye-laws and other restrictions upon the free life—they are of the stuff of heroes and the most important thing on earth at this blessed moment. ■

Ross McMullin has written a biography of Will Dyson, and the centenary history of the ALP, *The Light on the Hill*. He is currently writing a biography of Pompey Elliott.

PETER COCHRANE

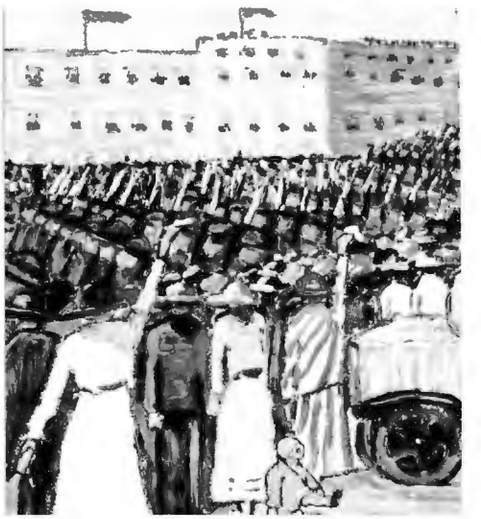
Grief's hard labour

Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape, K.S. Inglis,
The Miegunyah Press (Melbourne University Press), 1998. ISBN 0 522 84752 8, RRP $49.95

BURSTS OF SCHOLARSHIP in the 1980s created a field of war memorial literature where before there was none. Why? Ken Inglis, Australia's pre-eminent historian of meaning, suggests we long to know more as the Great War slips beyond all living memory. We are on the edge of when no-one is left.

Time has disarmed the critics. Anzac Day and Remembrance Day, the two days of the year when Australians honour their war dead, have a new-found pathos. Once-formidable soldiers are now old men, 'unthreateningly mortal'. Respect for their patriotism is uncontroversial. Literally millions of people now claim an ancestor who was *there*. At the archives of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra the word librarians hear most is 'great-uncle'. Curiosity has joined grief as a compelling sentiment. Thus the new history of commemoration comes out of a wider process—a rebirth of popular enthusiasm for the rituals of remembrance which is elaborately fostered by government and media.

Social history has shifted too. Scholarship and the recovery of popular memory have fed off one another. With the end of the Cold War and the demise of intellectual Marxism, the discipline moved away from the study of material circumstances and working lives towards the realm of representations—the language, symbolism and ritual through which people construct their reality. This has been called the linguistic or semiotic turn. The commemoration of war, a topic once vulgar, banal and, for some, 'right wing', became a legitimate site for social historians, a rich source of information on nation, community, sexuality, identity and more.



Remembrance, like the body, was now an academic subject, hardly confined to war, but war was a vital locus for its investigation.

Ken Inglis anticipated the semiotic turn by more than a decade. He was able to extend Australian social history in this direction while not breaking with its foundations in the study of more prosaic patterns of material existence, a duality that many later practitioners could not sustain. His eye for words and ritual, imagery and symbolism, links an unfailing interest in social and political action which extends to national culture and representation. There is no entry for 'language' in his Index because its consideration is *passim*, while 200 illustrations, most of them photographs of memorials or their ceremonies, give the visual dimension of argument the weight it deserves. Some captions run to 150 words including cross-references and quotations.

Inglis steers between a highly relativist ethnographic history which resists study of the national on the one hand, and post-modern accounts of cultural history concerned solely with inscription and narration on the other. He makes unique interventions into Australia's national history. As it happens, the core of his interventions are in the field of the cultural history of war. *Sacred Places* is a landmark in the field.

If family extends to aunts and uncles, then every second Australian family was bereaved by the bloodbath of 1914–18. Three hundred thousand left these shores to fight. Sixty thousand died. One in five. Many who did get back died before their time. Before the war's end, memorials had begun to transform the Australian landscape. All over the country committees took shape to raise a local monument to those who served and those who died. Obelisk, stone soldier, avenue of honour, clock tower, clockless tower, memorial gates and so on. There is nothing quite like war to provoke a people into acts of public art. Contemporaries spoke of a 'war memorial movement', understood as a shared quest to find the right way, materially and spiritually, to honour the soldiers and to deal with grief. 'I do not know where the body of my boy lies,' said one mother standing in an avenue of honour in King's Park, Perth, in 1920, 'but his soul is here.'

Some took comfort in spiritualism which was immensely popular in the aftermath of war. The painter-cum-fiercely patriotic cartoonist, Norman Lindsay, drew solace from a Ouija board which he believed brought him messages from his brother Reg, killed on the Somme in 1917. In another family a grieving sister believed she was in touch, through a medium, with her dead sibling, but she shrank from further

View from the other side

As We Wave You Goodbye: Australian Women and War, Jan Bassett (ed), Oxford University Press, 1998.
ISBN 0195540867, RRP $45

AFTER DEPLORING THE GENDER IMBALANCE in previous Australian anthologies of writing about war, Jan Bassett has produced one in which there are no men. *As We Wave You Goodbye* ranges temporally from the Boer War to the Gulf War. The writers include nurses (one of them killed by the Japanese on Banka Island), resistance fighters (the innocuously styled 'White Mouse', Nancy Wake), mothers, wives and sisters, and—in Ethel Cooper—a possible spy. Besides these amateur, if often highly skilled writers, are arrayed practising poets and novelists, Judith Wright, Mary Grant Bruce, Katharine Prichard among them. Illustrated judiciously by the work of women artists, much of it held in the Australian War Memorial, Bassett's book is variegated and fresh. It is less the record of anguished waiting far from battle than of imaginative engagement both with the cares of the homefront and with the trials of those on active service.

—Peter Pierce

contact: 'Take your dark powers to others, we can wait/To know the whole of what you tell in part,' she wrote. For most people, another way to deal with grief had to be found.

Freud pondered the mourning and concluded that 'the healthy mind, possibly helped by ritual, avoided melancholia by detaching its memories and hopes from the dead'. Inglis is generally sceptical about such generalisations, but he shares with Freud the desire to understand how ritual helped people to transcend the slaughter and get on with their lives.

There are more than 4000 public war memorials in Australia, about a third of which are from the Great War. Every one of these has a history of conflict or accommodation, or both, over form, style, wording, location, violation or renovation and other sensitive issues. The search for an adequate language of loss was a communal activity, entirely voluntary, uniting rich and poor, driven by powerful emotions and underwritten by Australia's unique wartime circumstances—every serviceman had been a volunteer and here war memorials were surrogate graves for bodies that did not come home. 'What most families could not afford, none would be allowed.' Unveilings were a kind of substitute funeral. In that sense, all the dead were missing, and their loved ones were deprived of the traditional mourning rituals of their culture.

At the core of *Sacred Places* is the story of ritual's mediation. Inglis extends the thesis developed by Jay Winter in *Sites of Memory/Sites of Mourning* (CUP, 1996) which argued that traditional forms of expression were recharged by the experience of war and the universality of bereavement. What Winter did with breadth, sweeping over bereavement in three combatant nations with forays into literary, artistic, filmic and architectural themes, Inglis does with depth and intensity. He charts memorialism's history back and forth across the land, in city and country, in foreign fields which are forever Australia, from colonial wars to the world wars, from Korea to Vietnam and on. In a final, important chapter, the book proceeds into the '90s where the Anzac tradition, softened by time and reconfigured by multiculturalism, has made its comeback.

There is a thoroughness here reminiscent of the official war historian C.E.W. Bean's vision for the Australian War Memorial in Canberra—to list on bronze tablets the names of all 60,000 dead. Aided by his assistant Jan Brazier, who is acknowledged on the title page, Inglis has produced a vast review which is an encyclopedic and commemorative act in itself. It is a national inventory and much more—a major contribution to the emotional history of Australia. *Sacred Places* is a history of grief's hard labour.

THE POINT THAT feminists rightly press about memorialism is that it is inscribed within a particularly masculine story of nation-building. Women's contribution to the war effort went mostly unrecognised on war memorials until after World War II; women did more fund-raising than men—it was said they were harder to refuse; they played secondary roles in memorial ceremony, rarely speaking, mostly laying wreaths and until recently they were prevented from marching in Anzac Day parades. Allegorical females on memorials were uncommon enough, but realistic ones signifying women's contribution to the war effort were rare. The Brisbane Women's Club worked their way towards a bronze panel commemorating women at war, but the depression of 1929 blunted both fund-raising and resolve—the design was scuttled in favour of a panel depicting an 'overwhelmingly masculine procession of warriors'.

Inglis understands that the prehistory of a memorial is at least as revealing as the object itself. The emotional story of any monument is as much in its making as in its adoration. But he goes further and in one respect challenges the feminist construction. He shows, convincingly, that the male-centredness of memorialism fulfilled an emotional need among women to mourn lost men. It's one of those obvious points that somehow needs making. Thousands of women worked in the war memorial movement. Thousands more took solace from its achievements. Memorialism's gender bias was fashioned by men and women *unified* by grief's hard labour. To do justice to the text the Index should have an entry for 'mothers' or for 'tears'. The effigy of a simple private, standing passively in a town square, served most women better than any female form could do. Questions about wilful participation are *here*, more revealing than questions about exclusion.

There is one awful episode in *Sacred Places* where the racial dimension of bereaved motherhood is momentarily visible. At the unveiling in the township of Goombungee on Queensland's Darling Downs, Rose Martyn, Aboriginal mother of Charles, killed near Ypres in 1917, stood apart, at the back of a white crowd united

by grief. She was alone and in tears and she was offered comfort by no-one. Inglis devotes a good deal of attention to the recovery of the Aboriginal contribution to Australia's wars, including the 'Black Wars', to the black community's own ways of remembering and related polemics about commemoration.

MODERNISTS CLAIMED the Great War enabled them to expose what Ezra Pound called a 'botched civilisation' with a new, raw language of dislocation, paradox, irony, anger and despair, an expression in poetry, prose and the visual arts which snapped the ties to a discredited heritage. Recharged by the slaughter, their work expressed a rejection of all that had gone before. They claimed the Great War was a great divide. But powerful continuities carried into the peace after 1918. The rupture with traditional ways of seeing and saying was never close to complete. For many, the pursuit of meaning and the need to grieve called for a solace that was both patriotic and sentimental, an idiom archaic and softening, tailored to post-war sensitivities. What Paul Fussell described as the idiom of 'high diction', modernists referred to as lies and propaganda, and platitudes burbled by dignitaries: Pound's 'poppycock', Robert Graves' 'Big Words'.

But the grieving *wanted* Big Words. The urge to find purpose rather than waste in the slaughter was powerful. They found an appropriate language of loss in traditional values, classical, romantic and religious forms which had the power, it seems, to mediate bereavement. They drew on a past that was still available, on a poetic/literary inheritance which linked the King James Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Quiller-Couch's *Oxford Book of English Verse*. In the English-speaking world, Australia in particular, they looked to Kipling and Binyon and to the words of town mayors and vice-regals and patriotic generals.

There were Big Words spoken at Thirroul in 1920 at the unveiling of the town's stone soldier, outside the School of Arts. D.H. Lawrence was briefly at Thirroul in 1922. The stone soldier figured in his novel *Kangaroo* (wherein the town was renamed 'Mullumbimby'). Inglis has made Thirroul, and Lawrence, a recurring point of reference in *Sacred Places*. Lawrence described the stone soldier as 'naive but quite attractive, with the stiff, pallid, delicate fawn-coloured soldier standing forever stiff and pathetic.' He rather liked it. He knew nothing of the distaste, among critics, for this vernacular figure and other simple memorials going up around the country. 'Squat figures on squat pedestals which might have been fashioned by an aboriginal', wrote one. But no-one listened. Memorialists set their course. All over the country they opted for a 'naive' minimalism which kept things simple and secular.

Australians preferred a stick of stone, or the obvious piety of a common soldier, standing passive and pensive, to the more articulate, allegorical monuments going up across Europe. The implication is that a calculating new-world pragmatism, a deliberate rejection of old-world symbols, was as much a force here as artistic naivety.

The argument goes further. There was emotional consolation in both artless

Mrs Margaret ('Granny') Riach, official collector for the Fountain Fund, Thirroul, with Alessandro Casagrande's model. In D.H. Lawrence's account, she becomes Granny Rhys. (From *Sacred Places*.)

simplicity and the art of the sparing epitaph: Kipling's 'Lest We Forget' is 'that conjunction, that pronoun and that verb unbounded by any noun ... a message ideally suited to the contemplation of dead soldiers with unfocussed gravity.' Elsewhere, Inglis writes of the stone soldier and the men in bas-relief bronze: 'The simpler the form requiring no artistic quality beyond verisimilitude, the more readily could viewers project on to it their own unprompted thoughts and feelings.' Sir Bertram Mackennal's Cenotaph in Martin Place, Sydney, is sufficiently 'blank' to allow people 'to feel comforted in its presence, unconstrained by any prescription of meaning beyond the words 'TO OUR GLORIOUS DEAD' and 'LEST WE FORGET', free to deposit their own thoughts and feelings as they bent to lay a tribute.' Where some writers see rhetorical deceit, Inglis sees first a link between grammar and popular appeal, the emotional possibilities of form and language.

Inglis argues that commemoration of war became a civic religion central to Australian nationalism. That argument depends on evidence of wide support and limits to opposition. Opponents did speak out. Controversy over the economics of war or divisions kept alive by the memory of conscription would continue, but conflict on days of ritual remembrance was mostly called off. Many of those who said war memorials were a plot to deceive, an architecture for more war, could accept that they were also sites for mourning. Leftist opposition was compromised by sadness which crossed political trenches to a truce point in between, and by a belief—rarely explored on the Left—that right had prevailed.

But if some criticism subsided in the sadness, much was also silenced by the power of the cult around Anzac which was so congenial to anti-Labor ideology. Even a decade later, commemoration was still in the shadow of the conscription referenda of 1916–17. The idea that the No vote was a kind of desertion that caused many deaths at the front was, argues Inglis, 'a judgement that kept Labor men all over Australia off war memorial platforms'. Hugo Throssell, VC and socialist, spoke out against war on a commemorative platform in 1919. He was never invited on to another one. The No vote had guaranteed that Australia's was a voluntary army but the champions of Yes were quick to make the most of this 'singular purity' among armies. At the heart of *Sacred Places* is an unresolved tension between the evidence for the coerciveness of the cult of Anzac on the one hand, and the claim that it was a 'civic religion' on the other. The argument is probably stronger for the 1990s, covered in the final chapter, than it is for the 1920s when Lawrence, despite such a brief sojourn, sensed coercion beneath a thin veneer of Australian democracy.

IF *SACRED PLACES* is about 'the reverence at the heart of a very irreverent country', as Jill Kerr Conway suggests on the dust jacket, it should also be said that Inglis shares this reverence. This is evident in the language and shape of the book itself and, of course, the title. Compare *Sacred Places* with

George Mosse's seminal *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (CUP, 1990). There are broad thematic similarities, but the two books are entirely contrasting in language, mood and thrust of analysis. *Fallen Soldiers* comes out of a modernist lineage linking George Orwell to George Steiner to George Mosse, a tradition of scepticism if not outright hostility to the commemorative tradition in Europe and the US. While Mosse accepts the popular demand for archaic and ennobling language and form, his interpretation is blunt and unsentimental. His subject is the Myth of the war experience with a capital 'M'. Its tangible symbols are military cemeteries, war monuments and commemorative ceremonies for the dead. The purpose of the Myth is to make war meaningful and sacred, to offer a 'vision of war that masks its horror, consecrates its memory and ultimately justifies its purpose'. You are not far into the Introduction before you realise that Mosse is dealing with aspects of human perception and memory which trouble him deeply.

WHAT DOES INGLIS THINK about the modernist scepticism which figures prominently in the historiography of the war and its memory, and which continues to generate important publications in the field? This is a difficult question to answer because Inglis does not engage with this literature. I suspect that he recoils at the crude implications of words like 'mask', 'consecrate' and 'justify'—with their suggestion of commemoration as exercises in rhetorical deceit and manipulation, their preoccupation with power rather than participation. Is it the Inglis aesthetic which eschews this language, or is it a deeper political difference? Or is it that *Sacred Places* so vindicates Australian war memorials that modernist scepticism is misplaced here?

One clue is to be found in a short passage headed 'Trophies' in chapter four. It is just 28 lines long, but it may have implications for the entire book. 'Trophies' is part of a longer discussion of the major forms taken by war memorials. The term refers to guns fired by enemies which were shipped across the world and made into memorials all over Australia. Thousands of local councils decided to have one. From this account it would seem there were more guns spread around Australia than *true* memorials, that is, memorials which did not display the spoils of the victors.

Inglis mentions Thirroul here too. A machine gun was positioned behind Thirroul's stone soldier, presumably in the early 1920s. Thirroul had appeared 11 times in *Sacred Places* before the machine gun came into the picture. Inglis makes no comment but does quote Lawrence: 'it looked exotic, a thing of some higher culture, demoniac and fallen'.

What troubles me is this: if there were possibly more enemy guns located around Australia than true memorials, and if these guns were indeed a form of 'memorial', then why give them just 28 lines in the middle of chapter four? Guns were a most significant 'form' of memorialism. Why not ask questions about them from the start? Why not treat Thirroul's stone soldier, and the machine gun behind it, as a job lot, even if the gun did arrive a short time later? What did Councils say when they asked for a gun or were asked to take one? What was said at their unveilings? Were there ceremonies for guns? Why did some want a machine gun and others a trench mortar? How did Inglis come to miss the irony of an instrument that caused so much death alongside a memorial for bereavement?

As Inglis says on page 178, 'By the end of 1921 about five hundred artillery pieces, four hundred trench mortars and four thousand machine guns were installed beside, or within, or on top of, just about every kind of monument. Some, like the *Emden* gun, were even made the central feature: a German weapon cemented into a pedestal honouring Australians.' The text on 'Trophies' does indeed refer to Councils insulted by the offer of an instrument of war, but the sheer number of gun installations suggests that these councils were a decided minority.

The Tasmanian Soldiers National Memorial, Hobart. Benjamin Sheppard's statue was sent to London for casting in bronze, and exhibited there. As the helmeted figure was not identifiably Australian, the sculptor was able to supply a replica for Halifax, Yorkshire. (Fortman Postcards, Australian War Memorial. From *Sacred Places*.)

Jonathan Vance's *Death So Noble* (University of British Columbia Press, 1997) is relevant here because it argues that Canadian communities clamoured after machine guns and artillery pieces too. But Vance sees a significance in this where Inglis sees none. Vance links these trophies to a cult or a 'myth of victory', which shaped thinking about the war for decades and was mythical in two important respects—firstly in representing the nation's soldiering efforts as a 'triumph of romantic individualism and heroism', and secondly in taking military victory to be a dramatic proving of race superiority. Vance then finds these themes recurring in Canadian literature, art and other commemorative forms after the Great War. Again, the troubled perspective—far from breaking with the myth-ridden spirit of the past, the war rekindled it in the form of these post-war themes.

It does seem that Australian war memorials were not like Canadian ones. Symbols of victory on our memorials—the triumphal arch, the Greek goddess of war—were rare. But what of those trophy memorials and what of the rhetoric of commemoration? Inglis does not see either as embodying a myth of the war experience, that is, a certain interpretation of what the war was about and what participation in it meant, an interpretation which romanticised soldiering and celebrated blood or race. If these themes were not present in the rhetoric, then how was memorialism immunised from the wider socio-political context where they certainly were present? My sense is that something important is missing both in the analysis of memorialism itself and in its contextualisation.

I wonder, if 'trophies' were a chapter in *Sacred Places*, instead of a few lines, would the conclusions be different? Does a machine gun, 'demoniac and fallen', change the meaning of a stone soldier, 'stiff and pathetic'? ■

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ALISON LEWIS

The Berlin Republic: a haunted house?

Can national identity be forged on foundations that give place to moments of glory as well as national shame? This question, at the core of the Howard Government's procrastination over reconciliation, is currently pre-occupying Germany and its new Social Democratic and Green Government. There are signs that with the changing of the political guard and the move from Bonn to Berlin we may well see a new approach to public attitudes to remembrance. Recent debates about collective memory and the Holocaust reveal that reconciliation with the victims of history need not be a prerogative of the left or the right or of any one generation.

TO A CASUAL OBSERVER, there is no doubt that Germany has stepped out of the shadows of the past. As a brief guided tour of the Potsdam Square in the geographical and historical heart of Berlin will reveal, Germany is well on the way to recapturing much of the aura of excitement and self-confidence of a bygone era.

Nothing testifies more to this than the frantic building activity around the square and the recently completed public spaces of the Marlene Dietrich Square and the Sony Centre with its mega-shopping arcades, cinema and entertainment complexes. Visitors to the red information box on the site are hard-pressed to find remnants of the communist past here. The last vestiges of the Berlin Wall, which rendered the square dysfunctional for 40 years, are gone, and nothing remains to remind of the great ideological divide between East and West.

Even harder to find are visible reminders of the Nazi era, unless, of course, you stumble upon the *Reichstag* and Albert Speer's monumentalist architecture in the Ministry for Air Traffic a few streets away. But, as I am told on my guided tour of the building sites of the area run by a local history collective, the Nazi past is not far away: alongside the sandstone and glass boxes of the Sony Centre lie buried several of Hitler's bunkers. And down the road beneath the rows of East German luxury apartments lie several more. They were unearthed during the excavation work after the fall of the Wall.

It seems to be one of the ironies of German history that ghosts from the past habitually reappear just as a new chapter of history is in the making. This seems to be the case with the new epoch of the Berlin Republic, new not only for the shift of government from Bonn to Berlin. The return to power of the Social Democratic Party, for the first time in coalition with the Greens, is the real *novum* of the Berlin Republic. But as the new *Bundestag* prepares to occupy the old *Reichstag* in the transition from the old capital to the new, Chancellor Schröder's coalition has been plagued by a series of public spats that suggest that the 'house of Germany' is haunted yet again.

As Germany moves to assert a new sense of national identity, it finds itself faced again with the legacy of the Holocaust. At the core of current debates is the issue of whether the Holocaust can be reconciled with a national mythology that is no longer founded only on this one event, that is, on 'negative nationalism'. Certainly, the first impression is that Germany, which has provided a model for other more forgetful nations in matters of reconciliation between the perpetrators and victims of history, is showing signs of memory fatigue. But it is not that it wants to forget Auschwitz or, as in the 'Historians' Debates' of the '80s, in any way lessen the singularity of the crimes of Nazi Germany. Instead, the pressing issue now is what place Germans should accord the Holocaust in collective memory and how the Holocaust can be reconciled with the new self-confidence of the nation.

The most interesting question to ask of the new government is what has happened to the pledge of the generation of '68 never to forget Auschwitz, now that this generation is in power? How will the '68ers, who mercilessly chastised their fathers and mothers for their complicity with the Third Reich, for 'looking away', remember the Holocaust? Will memory of the victims' sufferings be accorded a more prominent place in the Berlin era? As awareness of the diversity of stories that make up Germany's national history is heightened, some are starting to question whether remembrance of the crimes committed by Hitler's band of 'willing executioners' should assume a public form at all. Shouldn't recollection of this stain on Germany's history be a matter for each individual's conscience instead?

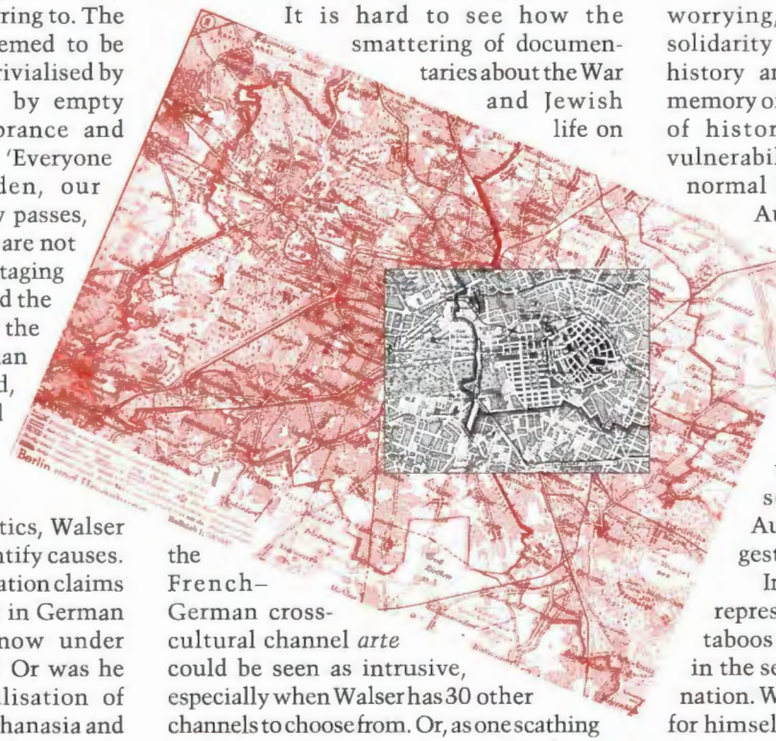
The beginnings of the current debates about collective memory were harmless enough. A speech delivered on acceptance of the Peace Prize of the German Book Traders by one of Germany's veteran writers, Martin Walser, on 11 October 1998, was greeted initially with a storm of applause. That is, by all but one of the invited guests. The displeasure it invoked in the Head of the Central Committee for Jews in Germany, businessman Ignatz Bubis, sitting in the front row, was only apparent later. Bubis was enraged and accused Walser of 'intellectual arson', a

charge he repeated in a speech given on the 50th anniversary of the Nazi pogroms on 9 November 1938, the *Reichskristallnacht*. An embittered argument resulted, and attempts at mediation between Walser and Bubis only led to further faux pas and misunderstandings.

In his speech Walser had protested against the use of Auschwitz as a 'moral club' and its instrumentalisation in moral and ethical debates. This claim was hardly new, but it left ominously open exactly which debates Walser was referring to. The memory of Auschwitz, he seemed to be saying, was in danger of being trivialised by mass media representations, by empty ritualised forms of remembrance and insincere acts of lip service. 'Everyone knows our historical burden, our everlasting shame', and no day passes, Walser contends, 'in which we are not reminded of it'. But the routine staging of Auschwitz as a threat had had the opposite effect. It had fostered the desire to 'look away' rather than to confront the past. Indeed, Walser had found himself forced to look away 'at least 20 times' or more in face of the 'perpetual presentation of our shame'.

To the frustration of his critics, Walser refused to name names and identify causes. Was he referring to the compensation claims of the labourers forced to work in German industry under the Nazis, now under negotiation, as Bubis inferred? Or was he alluding to the instrumentalisation of Auschwitz in debates about euthanasia and the ethics of biotechnology? And who were the elusive divisions of 'opinion soldiers' who wielded their moral clubs at the troops of recalcitrant mourners? Only in reference to the planned memorial to the victims of the Holocaust near the Potsdam Square did Walser become concrete. The cementing of the 'centre of the capital city', he claimed, was a 'nightmare the size of a football field'. The monument was not merely a prime example of the 'perpetual presentation of our shame'; it was 'a *monumentalisation* of our shame'. Memory in the public domain, he concluded, had become an 'obligatory exercise', an inauthentic form of penance that had lost its meaning. Only as a matter of private conscience, as personal recollection, could memories of the Holocaust be kept alive and protected from the harsh world of politics.

The point about the misuse of the Holocaust in political debate is hardly new. In the post-war era, the threat of Auschwitz has been invoked routinely, and not only in Germany, to guard against the dangers of every conceivable political evil. And perhaps it is timely to raise the issue again. But Walser has conceded to Bubis that his remarks were not intended as a polemic against the claims of forced labourers. Surely, his critics ask, his lament at the perpetual staging of Germany's disgrace in the media cannot be aimed at the preponderance of programs about the Third Reich on television? It is hard to see how the smattering of documentaries about the War and Jewish life on the French–German cross-cultural channel *arte* could be seen as intrusive, especially when Walser has 30 other channels to choose from. Or, as one scathing commentator suggested, had someone stolen his remote control?



Walser's plea for remembrance as a form of private confession best conducted far from the commercial crowds was condemned not only by Bubis. For many observers, the pietistic politics of memory implied by Walser's inward-looking conscience-gazing was only too reminiscent of the fateful stance taken by German intellectuals who claimed to have emigrated 'inwards' under the Nazis when remaining in Germany. It reveals a deeply entrenched fear of the public sphere and politics that has a long tradition in Germany. The devaluing of politics has its origins in the belief that the soul is the home of true human values. It is this belief in the higher rewards to be reaped through spiritual values that has seen German intellectuals too often turn a blind eye to abuses of power.

If memory, like one's conscience, is a private thing, as Walser would have us believe, this skirts around the issue of how nations are to organise their rituals of remembrance. Walser fails to distinguish between recollection as a private act and collective remembrance, between each individual's need to make peace with his or her own sense of guilt and the needs of a collective to commemorate official acts of heroism and shame. He implies, moreover, that there is complicity between public remembrance and forgetting. And more worrying, he overlooks the need for solidarity with the victims of German history and their right to preserve the memory of their suffering. In a bizarre twist of history, Walser appropriates the vulnerability of the victims, arguing that normal Germans are the victims of the Auschwitz moral police. Those who deny Germany the right to normality aim to 'hurt' normal conscience-stricken Germans such as himself. It is enough that he carry around his own private 'black armband view of history', but does he have to wear it on his sleeve as well, he seems to be saying. To an Australian ear this sort of rhetorical gesturing must seem familiar.

In many ways, the Walser debate represents a litmus test by pointing up taboos and changing levels of tolerance in the self-understanding of the German nation. Walser has made quite a reputation for himself, not as the moral conscience of the nation, but more as a keeper of the holy grail of the heart. His emotional outbursts have often functioned as a type of seismograph of the collective unconscious. His political affiliations have vacillated over the years. He campaigned in the early '60s for the SPD, was a one-time member of the Communist Party of Germany in the late '60s and a critic of the Vietnam War, but by the '80s had become a renegade to the left camp. He gained a profile in the '80s as something of an intellectual loose cannon when, in defiance of political correctness on the left, he voiced his wish to see East and West Germany reunified. He refused to accept the division of Germany as a permanent fixture on the historical landscape of Europe, recalling it was a punitive measure imposed by the Allies after the war.

For years he defied pressure and censure by speaking from the heart about the 'phantom pain' from the amputated limb of

the other Germany. Curiously, history was to vindicate him rather than his colleague, Günter Grass, who argued for immortalising the division of Germany as penance for Auschwitz. And it may well have been Grass that Walser had in mind in his remarks about instrumentalising Auschwitz. After all, Grass has only been too keen to assume the role of the nation's conscience and guardian of morality. Grass was, moreover, the last recipient of the Peace Prize and caused a far more minor scandal in 1997 when, in his acceptance speech, he castigated the German government for its treatment of Kurdish refugees.

As ONE COMMENTATOR in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* remarked, it is no accident that Walser's seemingly unpolitical demand for private recollection of the war goes hand-in-hand with an 'obsessive desire for normality'. It seems to have escaped the attention of many that Germany has long become a 'normal' European nation with a normal democratic parliamentary system, a normal currency and economy. If any doubts about Germany's potential for normalcy remain, then these were finally dispelled in the aftermath of unification. Here too, parallels with John Howard's insistence that he wants Australians to feel 'relaxed and comfortable' with their national history come to mind.

But today Walser is not alone in his insistence on Germany's right to a sense of nationhood that is not premised only on the Holocaust. His rejection of the 'monumentalisation of our shame' in the proposal for a Holocaust memorial has struck a chord with a new breed of left politician.

The project to build a memorial for the Jewish victims of the Holocaust in the heart of Berlin goes back ten years and was the initiative of influential Jewish citizens of Germany. It eventually found favour with Chancellor Helmut Kohl's government which had long been seen to be dragging its feet in acknowledging the crimes of the Nazi past. After two competitions to choose a suitable design for the memorial, the selection committee chose an entry by American architect Peter Eisenman. The memorial was to occupy prime real estate in the heart of the city near the seat of government next to the Potsdam Square—a site, as Walser argues, the size of a football field. The initial design for an undulating seascape of stone pillars of varying heights was thought too 'monumental' in its proportions, so the size of the pillars was scaled down. Even before the modified model was revealed, public opinion had turned against both the winning design and the idea of a memorial altogether. Among the sceptics were the Christian Democratic Mayor of Berlin, Eberhard Diepgen, the incoming chancellor, Gerhard Schröder and the political newcomer, Minister for Culture, Michael Naumann.

After years in the wilderness, it seems the new Left has rediscovered the value of nationhood and national identity. A consensus is emerging in some quarters that the masochism underlying the notion of a monument to the victims of the nation ill befits Germany's new sense of national pride. What other 'normal' nation had done the same? A host of arguments has been made against completion of the project, some more pertinent than others. Since Australia has yet to have a proper public debate about Ken Inglis' suggestion that Australians consider commemorating Aborigines killed in the 'Black Wars' (see *Eureka Street*, January–February 1999), it is worth rehearsing some of the arguments for and against the Holocaust memorial.

By far the most popular argument comes from members of the old Left who see the desire for a memorial to the blackest hours of national history as a sign of German megalomania. Perversely, Germany was now trying to be the world's best in honouring its own crimes. Was it in fact not a mark of imperialism to want to speak for the victims, especially when this could easily be misconstrued as a form of necessary sacrifice for the nation?

Under another argument, the monumental scale of the proposal was also seen as an inappropriate mode of remembering the victims who would be just as content with a simple tombstone or memorial.

The centrality of place allocated to the project has been another bone of contention. Why devote such a large public space to a memorial when there are other more appropriate and authentic places of remembrance in the museums and the concentration camps? These exponents find the erection of a commemorative place superfluous and of little educational value.

Lastly, and not surprisingly, there have been numerous debates about the aesthetics of memory and the aestheticisation of mass murder. These have concentrated either on the choice of symbolism of the design or on the insurmountable obstacles to representing the Holocaust through art. It was thought that memorials are too much slaves to the tastes and politics of memory of the day to be lasting objects of interest and value to future generations.

The final argument to be levelled against the memorial came from ex-Chancellor and Social Democrat, Helmut Schmidt. He contended that the site was open to abuse since there was no way of controlling the use the public made of the memorial. Most worrying to him was the possibility that the monument could be desecrated by neo-Nazi graffiti. This had the potential to damage Germany's reputation internationally and would run counter to the spirit of the memorial. Since the layout of the pillars was explicitly designed by Eisenman to prevent the gathering of small groups of people—the gap between the pillars is only 92 cm wide—in order to encourage individuals to wander alone through the landscape of memory, it is hard to imagine the site's attractiveness to vandals, drug dealers or neo-Nazis.

NO-ONE CAN PREDICT for sure what use future generations may find for the monument or, for that matter, for any public building. A risk is always involved in the planning of public spaces and places. Similar fears of vandalism were invoked when Christo proposed to wrap the *Reichstag*, but they were all proven unfounded. The wrapped *Reichstag* was miraculously free of graffiti.

It is also misleading to assume that the Holocaust memorial is intended as a centre for the re-education of the population; the task of informing future generations about the Holocaust is best served by other institutions and places. That memorials and museums are not interchangeable and serve different public purposes is, however, not a view that currently finds much support. Likewise, the memorial does not aim to document meticulously the lives of the victims who died in the Holocaust as in the archive being compiled by Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation. Rather, it hopes to encourage, through contemplation of the event, acts of remembrance that are inevitably as individual and varied as people's experiences of the event.

Eisenman likes to think of his monument as a place of private and public remembrance. Walser's desire for private forms of recollection ought to find in the memorial an appropriate backdrop. It employs no overt symbolism and does not seek to represent the Holocaust in

conventional ways. The place has no centre, no focus, and there will be no guided tour available to tourists. Each individual must experience it alone. From the outside it looks deceptive, like a field of corn frozen in time. Inside the maze, it will be far more unsettling, unpredictable, a bit like the experience of the Jews 'inside' the Third Reich, Eisenman hopes.

Part of the resistance to the model clearly springs from its unconventionality and abstractness. People feel safer with memorial sites that have unambiguous messages and leave nothing to chance, even if these lessons themselves are subject to the vagaries of history. To this end the Minister for Culture has recently proposed a compromise which links a scaled-down 'Field of Memory' to an exhibition space and an equally monumental 'Wall of Books' of glass and steel to house one million books on the Holocaust.

The German parliament still hopes to make a decision before the summer break. But Naumann's compromise solution has thrown up legal and financial complications that may well mean further delays. While the outcome is too close to call, the odds are that a monument will be built. But which one—Eisenman's original proposal or a 'memorial with user instructions', costing several-fold the original design, currently favoured by some in the government? As Thomas Assheuer, writing for *Die Zeit*, has observed, to refrain from making a mark or a sign is itself a gesture full of portent. If the memorial is not built this would send a signal to future generations that could be far more injurious to Germany's reputation in matters of reconciliation than if it proceeded with the project. If it builds it, the memorial will not be for want of public discussion about the issue. If handled well, it could be a tribute to the liberal and enlightened way Germany has managed its public acts of remembrance.

In this regard, Germany must stand as a model, particularly for countries like Australia, in which debates about collective memory and national shame and about reconciliation have received little encouragement at government level. In Australia we are still a long way from the sort of consensus achieved under Kohl and still shared by the new government, that it is not enough to say sorry to the victims of history—the nation must be publicly seen to be saying sorry as well.

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The Fassifern

That name itself suggests a sandy creek,
shade of bottlebrush or blackbean or feathery
wattle—in summer there will be certainly snakes
and if you're lucky you'll catch the flick and ripple
of a platypus in the larger pools. Tiny fish
or yabbies will tickle bare toes. This is boyhood.

Boyhood is always hot, it is summer. Boyhood
knows where to find all the big pools in the creek,
it is excited by the old stories of the gigantic fish
a river cod not seen since Oxley—but that feathery
shadow has not gone away. Boyhood knows every ripple
might lead to the catch. Boyhood also teases snakes.

But in the mottled creeks of the Fassifern, snakes
bask in their own priority. This extends further than boyhood
and is a part of the country that makes town boys a mere ripple
over the surface. The Fassifern keeps secrets in each creek
and though the shallows may be dappled and feathery
now, past holds its own shadows, like the giant brooding fish.

When we scrambled down the bank in a rush to fish
or to swim or simply to escape like wrigglers or snakes
into the delight of water, our noise was like parrots, feathery
bright but raucous and squabbling. We asserted boyhood
with laughter and punches and thought nothing of it. It was our creek
and when we got there it obeyed us. We were shadows, a ripple.

We never coaxed out the mythical cod, though we did catch the ripple
of platypus and sometimes the flash of a kingfisher. We were the fish
excited by movement and sunlight. But we did learn that creek
or its aspects, and we even developed a caution with snakes
—it took only one scare. We were trapped in our boyhood
like the kingfisher and parrot in their own brilliant feathers.

The creek was the smallest part of the Fassifern, tail feathers
or wingtip—the valley spread richly all round. Its creek,
even so, gathered everything in and defined it. Even in boyhood
somehow we understood that. We accepted the mythical fish
as a sacred emblem without question. We allowed the snakes
their ancient right of passage before us to the creek.

The Fassifern returns to this, gathering snakes, a creek,
feathers on the sand, platypus or fish—a ripple
somewhere. Boisterous bare bodies. Summer. Boyhood.

Thomas Shapcott

Integrity: the long walk

***Antony Campbell** continues his series on an unconditionally loving God.*
This month: unconditional love—the vision.

IV

We love God because God first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

BEING LOVED IS THE MOST MARVELLOUS MAGIC OF LIFE. Our being loved by God—that God loves us—is in the Bible. It is in the Christian tradition. It is inevitably sullied by fear and superstition. How much more magical might it be, if only the fear and superstition could be kept away. Can we, each of us, accept our being utterly loved by God?

I cannot prove that God loves us. No theologian can. We do not prove love. We know it in our hearts, we believe it, we act on it—we cannot prove it. Signs, yes; proof, no. If we are desperate enough to try and prove that we are loved, our relationship is in trouble.

With any faith it is ultimately the same. We do not prove; we believe. The factors involved in belief are complex. Among them is the attractiveness of the vision faith offers. A vision of our world and ourselves as unconditionally loved by God needs to be attractive and coherent if it is to compel our belief. For Christian faith, that vision cannot come out of modern fantasy; it has to have roots in the scriptures, in the traditional experience of God, and in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Like it or not, we decide between visions of our world—but not on whim. Vision time is also decision time.

✦

Re-visioning faith

A God who loves creates what God loves. Plenty of people ask why God would create what became such a thoroughly fouled-up world as ours. An honest answer is simple: I don't know, nobody knows; those who think they know need to think further. Free will and human sin are too simple as answers. They do not explain a world of disasters and diseases and the rest. The honest answer drags along a further question: is our fouled-up world utterly unlovable? To me and many the answer is no. Strange, but we and our world are lovable, can be loved, could be created.

If God could find us lovable and create us as we are, is there a place for original sin? Are we, as we are, what God wanted? Sin is obvious, but love forgives. 'I, I am the One who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins' (Isaiah 43:25). Isaiah has God flatly contradict the 'God would not be God if He did not punish the transgressor' of James Joyce's retreat-giver (in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; see also A. Campbell, *Eureka Street*, December 1998, p37). Forgiveness opens the way to salvation. Salvation is being in a right relationship with God. If we think about it, knowing we are loved by a forgiving God is the most enduring motivation for right behaviour in relationship with God.

Creation leads to incarnation—the core of Christian faith. God became human; the Word was made flesh. Theologians give various answers as to why the son of God should have become the son of Mary. My own answer verges on absurdity but is also one that in its absurdity makes sense for me. God became one of us because of unitive passion, because a loving God longed to be one with the beloved.

The final steps in this brief re-visioning of faith are Christ's passion, death, and resurrection and the continued presence of Christ in the eucharist. It is an absurd scandal that the son of God should have died as a criminal on a Roman cross ('Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles', 1 Corinthians 1:23). But if you love human life, you don't opt out of it. In Jesus' time and place, if he stood by what he lived for, what his life meant, conflict with the political authorities was a certainty and crucifixion its outcome. Rescue or avoidance would have meant opting out of the reality of human life. Resurrection is the pledge of our future with God. The eucharist is a loving God's presence to the beloved in ways that go beyond and yet continue the incarnation. These are sentences where chapters are needed, but they will do to point towards a possible picture.

Above: One incarnation of the unconditional: a wounded Canadian lights a wounded German's cigarette in the mud of Passchendaele, November 1917. Photograph from the Public Archives of Canada.

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'Absurd' is a strong word. I use it because it describes where I find myself on these issues of faith—and I am not alone. 'Stumbling block' and 'foolishness' are other words for absurdity. To finish that quote from Paul: 'but to those who are the called ... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1 Corinthians 1:24). That is the power of the vision that goes beyond absurdity. In the often cruel chaos of our world, a loving God may seem absurd. Denial does nothing for the chaos and the cruelty—except that it strips away any possible permanence of meaning. Beyond absurdity there may be meaning.

✦

Fundamental to my faith

For me, three decisions are primary in my faith. They come first; everything else comes after them. They come in question form: i. Is there a God? ii. Do I survive my body? iii. Does God love me?

To all three my belief answers 'Yes.'

Whether there is a God is a matter of belief, not knowledge. Someone who believes in a world with God cannot escape the whisper that 'perhaps there is no God'. Someone who believes in a world without God cannot escape the whisper that 'perhaps there is a God'. This ruthless 'perhaps' is inescapable.

When we look at our universe, the possibility that it just happened cannot be denied—even if the odds are incredibly slim. The possibility that it was created somehow cannot be denied either—even if it sometimes seems incredible. When we have said 'created', we have said it all; the 'somehow' is of minimum moment. I look at our world in all its wonder. With Stephen Hawking, I ponder why there should be a universe for science to describe. And I believe in a creator or sustainer God.

I believe that I survive my body, that when the worms are done there is still a 'me'. I can't prove it, even to my own satisfaction. I know there are others (including most in our Older Testament) who believe that when life is ended they are snuffed out like a candle—leaving even less trace. I cannot prove them wrong. But a merely physical and material existence would be ultimately meaningless for me and I do experience a meaning in life. I do believe I survive my body.

I believe that God loves me, loves us, is primarily our lover rather than our judge. What vision attracts me to this belief? The vision recognises the human race as lovable. Possibly no century has faced human ugliness as ours has ('an unequalled sum of death, misery, and degradation', Norman Davies)—and yet we may still be able to recognise ourselves as lovable. The vision recognises our physical world as worth creating. No previous time has been so fully aware of the world's disasters as we are with our television and modern media—and yet we may still recognise our world as worth creating?

✦

The magic

Visions resist language; words are refractory tools. An experience that took the wind out of my sails points towards the vision that is so difficult to describe. I was saying to a friend how I hoped that there might be relational beings peopling worlds across our universe. She asked why. I replied that it would make the creation of our universe in all its immensity more intelligible. It would dispel that sense of human egocentricity, with us existing all alone in the vastness of an infinitely expanding universe. She looked at me and said: 'Tony Campbell, if you really believed in God's passionate love, you'd realise that God loves enough to create the entire universe just for you.' In that expressive Irish phrase, I was gobsmacked. My head knew she was right. But I couldn't get my insides around it; I still can't. Such love is unbelievable; I believe it is right; I still hope there are millions of other peopled worlds in our universe.

Are we passionately loved by God to that extent? I believe we are, but it beggars belief. A vision is there that I'd love to be able to describe. A vision is there that I'd love to be able to see. I believe—and stumble along in the semi-dark as best I can. It gives a whole new sense to Paul's 'through a glass, darkly' (1 Corinthians 13:12). What would it mean to be loved by God to that degree? What would it mean to take that on board in our lives?

At the bottom of it there is an act of faith: the conviction that a God exists. For me, on top of that act of faith sits the conviction that God is primarily loving. None of the other possibilities canvassed in classical theology have completely satisfied me. They may sound fine in a theological treatise; they do not carry weight for me in the world I live in. So I believe in a God and in a God who loves. The Older Testament even gives me words for it: 'you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you' (Isaiah 43:4).

Back then to basic questions: is our world creatable and are we lovable? My answer is grounded in classical and orthodox theology: should we think something good to be beyond God, if we creatures are able to do it? Any good we can do, God can do better. If we can perceive the lovable in another, why shouldn't God? If we can see worth in our world, for all its appallingness, why shouldn't God and why shouldn't God have created it? For me, that's the gist of it. It can do with a little bit of filling out.

Our world. When I can ask those who have been close to the poorest and least advantaged of people, my question is, 'If you were God, knowing their situation, would you create these people?' The answer—after a long pause—has been, 'Yes, I would.' For all the squalor, degradation, and harshness, there is a joy

in life and a nobility in people that eager missionaries and hardened journalists find lovable. If we can, can't God? Is it so unthinkable to have created our world? An evolutionary world might entail risks. How many of us would want God to have held back before these risks? At the heart of horror, within a Nazi concentration camp, there can be nobility beyond belief: 'when they come to judgement, let all the fruits that we have borne be their forgiveness' (anon., Ravensbrück).

Ourselves. We need not stop at appearances—'so marred was his appearance' (Isaiah 52:14). Behind appearances we can be surprised to discover people we didn't expect to find. Often there is gentleness or loveliness or a wealth of experience that was hardly hinted at externally. Do we want to deny that insight to God? We are able to love—despite appearances, even knowledge. We know the fragilities and faults, the weaknesses and vulnerabilities, even the meanness and bitchiness of those we love and still we love them. And they know ours—and they love us. Surely God loves better than we do?

Our God. Can God's love be less than unconditional? Classical theology requires God's love to be perfect. Is perfect love less than unconditional? Was Shakespeare right: 'love is not love / Which alters when it alteration finds / Or bends with the remover to remove' (Sonnet 116)? Should we expect less of God than unconditional love? Parents can love their children unconditionally. Should we expect less of God?

A God who so loves and does not intervene is a God of mystery. Anger, frustration, grief, and pain must be part of the image of such a God. The Older Testament does not shrink from such language. We are helpless before the pain and suffering of our world. Should we claim the mystery of God's also being helpless to eliminate pain and suffering from our world? We may not experience God intervening in our day-to-day lives, but God is not powerless either. As those who love us do, God too has the power to inspire us, challenge us, support us, encourage us, and be there with us. ■

Possibly no century has faced human ugliness as ours has ('an unequalled sum of death, misery, and degradation', Norman Davies)—and yet we may still be able to recognise ourselves as lovable.

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Peter Craven

High-toned Terfel

Bryn Terfel, at the ripe old age of 33, is by way of being the biggest time baritone in the world.

Put like that it sounds preposterous, but this giant of a Welsh bass, whom Abbado chose to sing Hans Sachs' Flieder monologue at his Wagner concert when Terfel was still in his 20s, shows every sign of being the greatest male operatic star since Pavarotti. He is also well on the way to becoming the most celebrated bass-baritone since Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. The even more remarkable thing about the boyo Joan Sutherland picked as Cardiff singer of the year a few years ago is that Bryn Terfel (unlike such talented peers as Roberto Alagna and Angela Gheorgiou) has a voice of some immensity. He told ABC FM's Margaret Throsby recently that he didn't have Fischer-Dieskau's upper register but he has some of his lightness of dramatic touch, a lot of his range of tone colour and a deep black depth that you could imagine encompassing Verdi's Philip and the Russians. It's also hard not to imagine Terfel becoming the great Wotan of the early 21st century.

It's all there on the CDs. He's recorded Jokanaan in *Salome* twice, once for Sinopoli and once for Dohnányi. He recorded the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro* with John Eliot Gardiner and figures in two contemporary *Don Giovannis*: he was Solti's last recorded Don in a cast that includes Renée Fleming, and just last year he recorded Leporello to Simon Keenlyside's Don for Abbado. There's a *Kindertotenlieder* (with Sinopoli) and a CD of Schubert lieder with Malcolm Martineau at the piano, some of which (the voice individuation in 'The Erl-King', for instance) makes Fischer-Dieskau look dramatically understated.

But it's the solo CDs, together with the looming stage presence, that have made Terfel the great opera singer of the moment. The *Penguin Guide*, no less, declared that *The Vagabond*, Terfel's collection of British songs by Vaughan Williams and Finzi, Ireland and Butterworth, was the greatest thing of its kind ever done. Then there are the crossover collections of show tunes. It was Michael Shmith who said of Terfel singing 'Edelweiss' from *The Sound of Music* that he made it sound like Schubert.

Well, the great man has been in Australia recently, singing Falstaff at the Sydney Opera House (see photo, above) and giving concerts (and a recital) there, as well as in Melbourne and Perth. It all provided a fascinating opportunity to see a great singer at his first peak (before the talent has fully ripened) and before the fame has become so monumental and familiar that any concert is a virtual reality, an anthologisable souvenir relegated to the Tennis Centres.

Terfel's performance in the title role of Verdi's *Falstaff* for Opera Australia was billed as one of the major events in the performing calendar by International Opera Collector. It was Terfel's very first attempt at the role, which he is to record with Abbado later this year. It was also the hottest ticket in Sydney and the night I saw it, at the second performance, the Opera House had no hint of formality about it but there *was* that strange electricity that overtakes a theatre when there is some anticipation of a great performance. It was justified, I think, not least because of conductor, Simone Young (who presumably has something to do with Terfel being here in the first place), and Yvonne Kenny, who sang Mistress Ford with great grace and sparkle, and everyone else who highlighted *Falstaff*'s grandeur by integrating the whole opera—even if they could as easily have been eating up the scenery for all most people cared.

Falstaff is, of course, a very strange opera. It is Verdi so late as to resemble nothing else that he did. Gone is the exaltation of *Aida* and *Don Carlos*, or the darkness and transfigured melodrama of *Carlos* and *Otello*, though the opera, apart from being 'Shakespearean', does have in a hectic, farcical way the kind of run-on quality that makes *Otello* a masterpiece of music drama.

George Steiner never tires of saying that *Falstaff* is superior to its Shakespearean 'original' *The Merrie Wives of Windsor*. One might add that *The Merrie Wives* is not all that much of a thing for an opera to be superior to. It is one of the slightest plays Shakespeare ever wrote (according to legend because Elizabeth I was in love with the fat knight). But Boito provided Verdi with a splendid and highly literate libretto that reads Falstaff through the mightier lens of Henry IV—this is most obvious in the quizzical play on 'onore'. What is it? 'Una parola'—an answer which derives from Falstaff's great soliloquy at the end of Henry IV, Pt 1—and in the semi-tristful 'Va vecchio John' which takes the suggestion of its first line from 'Go thy ways, old Jack'. It is often remarked that *Falstaff* is an opera without great arias. The exception, 'Eh paggio', is in fact a stand-up dramatic moment. It is as if Verdi is resisting the temptations of self-sufficient melody almost in the way that Shakespeare in *Henry IV* resisted the lures of 'poetry'. So Falstaff trills, for a few seconds, about being a page for the Duke of Norfolk, an exquisite, chirupping, nostalgia seems to float into the opera but then is heard no more.

No, this is the musicalising of a profoundly domestic farce and Verdi gives it a mock-heroic grandeur as well as a great flash of parodic romance in the last act when Falstaff is confronted with a world of apparent hobgoblins and fairies, a late Victorian touch which in Verdi's hands is transfiguring.

Simone Young does Verdi proud in this production, keeping the strongest sense of

the working musical paragraph through this most autumnal and facetious of operas. It is a work where the dramatic situation is consistently crude but the music is 'light' and refined, it has a 'classical' dryness in the face of all this buffoonery and the cartoons that are sketched are nothing if not fine-lined. And there is a poignancy, a recurrent melancholy that Verdi gets from Falstaff's reactions to his vicissitudes, which is consonant with the gentle cynicism of old age that pervades the work like a premonition of winter.

Musically, this is a fine production. Young co-ordinates very skilfully, Kenny is sparkling and authoritative as Alice Ford, and there is splendid teamwork from Rosemary Gunn as Meg Page and Irene Waugh as Mistress Quickly. Michael Lewis is a frenzied, appalled Ford (full of memories of the blood-and-thunder Verdi in his big moments) and Amelia Farrugia is a graceful Nannetta. The ensemble work is superb. And Bryn Terfel, majestic, restrained, authoritative through every shift and turn, is marvellous.

The production by Simon Phillips is not, though it is one of the best things the newly appointed head of the Melbourne Theatre Company has done.

Phillips' approach is busy and stylised in a way that robs *Falstaff* of some quantity of its ease and naturalness. He has his singers skip about the stage like pantomime creatures and the sight of *Falstaff* having to be 'fey' under directorial instruction scarcely tallies with the besotted heterosexuality that is the opera's central datum and abiding comic absurdity. But Phillips handles at least the broad conception of the final scene in smog and confusion with a good deal of boulevardier skill so that in its overall shape (if not in its detail) it is atmospheric and true to Verdi's vision.

So it must be said (with bells on) is Terfel's performance as Falstaff. It is magnificently rich-toned and he is capable of diminishing it to a whisper when occasion demands. The toughness of this voice is extremely suited to the mock-heroics of this role, more particularly as Terfel is a glimmering and magnetic actor–singer who manages to inhabit a role that—with his own height and bulk and with the benefit of padding—he is physically suited to in any case.

He may not be literally the most distinguished singer to essay this role in this country—the great Tito Gobbi did it here 25 or so years ago—but he is probably the greatest Falstaff at the height of his powers we are likely to see. A baritone or bass might manage it when those powers were beginning to slide, but it remains remarkable that Terfel should attempt this of all roles when he is so young and be so dramatically convincing in it. I suspect that the monkey he has on his back is Fischer-Dieskau—another non-Italian singer—who made a magnificent stab at the role with Bernstein.

WHATEVER IT IS, Bryn Terfel wants to conquer the world of opera and its environs. It's the environs that may prove the worry. He has done Scarpia recently and now Falstaff. He has said jokingly that the Australians should ask him to do Wotan, so he seems to have little fear of biting off more than he can chew. And nearly everything he touches turns to gold. Sometime opera librettist David Malouf remarked that Terfel's recital in Sydney (which included the Finzi settings of Shakespeare's songs) was one of the very greatest he had ever seen.

In Melbourne a few weeks later we saw another side of Terfel. This was the second of two concerts (duplicating the same program) but in this case conducted by Roderick Brydon rather than Richard Hickox (whose concert with Terfel, the previous night, had been booked out many weeks before and who had to return to Sydney for *Billy Budd*). This was Terfel, the international star. The first half consisted of 'Non più andrai' from *Figaro* and the catalogue aria from the Don together with the 'Feuerabend' and Wotan's farewell, 'Leb wohl, du Kuhnes, herrliches Kind', from *Die Walkürie*. The rest of the evening (apart from the orchestral interludes designed to let the singer get back his puff) were show tunes, mainly Rodgers and Hammerstein and Lerner and Loewe, the mines Terfel has dug for his crossover recordings.

He is an extraordinary performer, with a stage presence that could dwarf a cathedral. This is in some ways even more notable in a one-man show than it was in *Falstaff*, where the characterisation (even though it seemed contraindicated with the director's conception) was nothing if not disciplined. In Figaro's aria exhorting Cherubino on to the hazards of military glory he is rollickingly light and mocking, diminishing one word to nothing in order to boom out the next with a contrasting richness; whirling, gyrating, playing it for laughs. This was a great singer bringing out the comedian in Figaro at least as much as Ezio Pinza in the old Bruno Walter recording; a masterpiece of understatement that came close to milking. The 'Madamina, il catalogo é questo' was equally ingratiating. A book of the Don's conquests open before the pop-eyed face of this singer with the mobile eyes and limbs. It was a terrific rendition, oozing with a self-conscious charisma that a thoughtful director would admire but watch very carefully and harness.

Wotan's Farewell, however, was entirely 'straight' as well as absolutely sure. Here there was the grave intensity of the father banishing the child of his heart, the voice stark with loss and bewilderment.

It would be wrong to say that in the second half, after the interval, the glory had departed but it was a bit of a pity that Bryn Terfel stuck so much to the particular Broadway corner he has so far recorded. He was at his best with the big voice numbers from Rodgers and Hammerstein, 'Oh What a Beautiful Morning' and 'Some Enchanted Evening' though he doesn't sing the latter—which is written for his kind of voice—with the authority that Ezio Pinza or Giorgio Tozzi brought to it 40 or 50 years ago. And when it comes to 'Oklahoma' Terfel's voice, which can take on precisely the sharpness of the Broadway baritone, is nevertheless not as idiomatic as Howard Keel. He is wonderful to listen to, of course, but he would be wonderful to listen to doing 'Three Blind Mice'. In the case of 'How to Handle a Woman' you wonder if anything is governing the choice other than the desire to do homage to another Welshman: it's impossible for him sing this kind of *Sprechgesang* as well as Richard Burton for whom it was written—a great singer shouldn't try to do a song in which everything has been scaled down to accommodate a great actor. But this is probably just my disappointment that there wasn't more Wagner or Mozart or Schubert or Butterworth. In his first encore he did a Welsh song with a kind of riveting intensity that made you realise what the cakewalking and the elaborate showmanship allowed you for a moment to forget. Yes, Bryn Terfel has the kind of pub lair temperament that makes him a great showman of a very Welsh variety but just underneath that there is an artist of a rare kind. And he comes out of a tradition as old and as wild, as impersonal and rapt, as any hills worth finding. ■

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GEOFFREY MILNE

Life as performance

COMPANY B at Belvoir St Theatre is one of the most adventurous and successful major theatre companies in Australia of the past decade, as witness its recent admission to the clientele of the Australia Council's Major Organisations Fund. Supposedly Sydney's *second* theatre company (in the way the hierarchy of these things is meant to work), Company B—on the strength of what I've seen of it—is consistently its best.

The Belvoir St Theatre in Surry Hills was the former salt and sauce factory vacated in 1984 by Nimrod when it turned its back on the home of its golden years to pursue its final grandiose and fatal expansionist phase in the bigger Seymour Centre. The sad remainder of the Nimrod Theatre Company's life is now history, but its second theatre and something of its spirit live on.

Fearing the loss of yet another Sydney venue—and worse, a much-loved and lived-in alternative one—a huge consortium of over 600 theatre people, calling themselves Understudies, purchased the building in June 1984 and set up what is now known as the Belvoir St Theatre Ltd. Many of the consortium were previous members of Nimrod, including actors, stage managers, designers, directors and administrators. Robyn Archer was a consortium member and so were Alan John, Kerry Walker, Robert Menzies, Geoffrey Rush, Mary Vallentine, Neil Armfield and Chris Westwood. These canny folk set up not one but two companies, with separate boards of management and with separate legal identities: Company A responsible for the theatre and its operations and Company B the resident production organisation. Even if the production company failed (no idle thought in Sydney in the light of events at the time) Company A would still retain the venue for others, or so the story went. So far, this eventuality has not arisen.

Company A has done little to alter architect Vivian Fraser's 1974 refurbishment. The main Upstairs Theatre retains a marvellously intimate, if eccentric, semi-thrust stage, seating upwards of a just financially viable 300 people. Downstairs is a smaller, black-box style, end-on studio theatre like most of its kind throughout the country; it seats about 110 in orderly tiered rows.

Company B's productions since 1985 have ranged from radical reinterpretations of the classics, contemporary Australian drama to recent new writing from abroad. Australian playwrights as diverse as Robyn Archer, Jack Davis, Jenny Kemp, Louis Nowra, Stephen Sewell and Tobsha Learner have rubbed shoulders with Chekhov, Shakespeare and Brecht on one hand and David Hare, Jean Genet and David Holman on another. The repertoire is genuinely eclectic: partly reminiscent of the old Nimrod, partly parallel to the STC, and there has been some acrimony between the two in recent years. But that's another movie ...

Likewise, a vast array of directors have staged productions there (the list includes Barry Kosky, Kingston Anderson, Bogdan Koca, Jim Sharman, Gale Edwards and others) but Neil Armfield remains the principal name associated with the company's major successes. Mostly a 'nomad' director throughout his career, Armfield surprised by opting to become a 'settler' Artistic Director at Company B in 1994. Among the finest productions I have seen from Belvoir St have been Stephen Sewell's *Hate* in 1988, the extraordinary adaptation by Dave Holman of Gogol's *Diary of a Madman* in 1989 (with Geoffrey Rush a superb Poproshin), a *Hamlet* in 1994 (one of the best imagined and realised I have seen in this country) and John Harding's *Up the Road* in 1996—all directed by Armfield.

Other Company B productions that have enhanced its reputation have been Chekhov's *The Seagull* in 1997, a savagely pared back production by Michael Kantor of Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* last year and the huge co-production with Black Swan Theatre (WA) of Tim Winton's *Cloud Street*, also last year. Company B is clearly a company of national significance.

Its 1999 season is as eclectic as any in the past. The Sydney season began with David Hare's *The Judas Kiss*, continues with a new Australian play by Justin Fleming (*Burnt Piano*, in March and April) and a remount of Leah Purcell's monodrama *Box the Pony* (in April and May) before Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (from late May into July). After that, there's more new work, from Christine Evans (*My Vicious Angel*, in July and August) and from the contemporary Russian Alexej Slapovskij (*The Little Cherry Orchard*, from November 10). The touring season sees *Cloudstreet* in Melbourne in July and August (in association with Playbox, the MTC and the Victorian Arts Centre Trust) and Adelaide in August (with STCSA and the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust), as well as *The Judas Kiss*, which is undertaking a massive tour until the end of June.

David Hare is the most frequently staged English playwright in Australia at present. (He is also sufficiently ubiquitous in England to have copped a pejorative mention in Martin Crimp's recent version of Molière's *The Misanthrope*!) *Skylight* has been seen all over Australia since 1986 and the rather tedious *Amy's View* covered most of the east coast last year. Hare's career parallels David Williamson's in some ways; both appealed to new wave audiences in the 1970s with their slightly shocking ways of looking at the world. Now they are the darlings of the maturer subscriber sector.

THE *JUDAS KISS* is yet another fin-de-siècle bio-play about the life, loves, tastes and opinions of Oscar Wilde—following in the wake of sundry others, like the Abbey Theatre's *The Secret Fall of Lady Constance* of 1997 (seen at the Melbourne Festival in 1998) and the notable film of the same year.

The play is in two long acts, each focusing on an anguished dilemma for Wilde. In the first, he is torn between fleeing to France (to avoid arrest and the humiliation of an inevitably public trial) and staying with Lord Alfred Douglas. As we know from history as much as from the rest of the recent Wildeana, he procrastinates and stays.

In the second act, set in the Naples villa to which Wilde and Bosie have retreated after his release from prison, the question is whether to bow to his wife's threat to cut

off his allowance—and never let him see their children again—unless he leaves the disreputable Bosie. At the moment when Oscar decides again to stay, the matter is taken out of his hands. Bosie caves in to his mother's financially loaded invitation to rejoin the family and exits with his straw boater and suitcase, leaving Oscar alone on stage mouthing a silent laugh that could be a sob.

The play's strengths include its tight, two-dilemma structure and many of its ideas. It's good, for example, on punishment: 'The *trial* was not my punishment', says Oscar in his villa, bereft of money, servants and even food; '*this* is my punishment.'

There are also lots of good lines for Oscar (they sound as though they could have been written by Wilde), like his sardonic commentary upon the gay diaspora in the first act when the world knows of his impending arrest: 'Every invert in England is heading for the boat train to France; tomorrow's takings in all the best restaurants will be counted in pennies and the Opera will be stone-dead tomorrow night.'

The play's faults include its over-writing (is no-one game to take the blue pencil to Hare?); we could easily lose the first ten minutes and their gratuitous heterosexual act between two hotel servants in Bosie's bed, and we could do without a fair bit of the Galileo diversion in the second act. There is also a degree of predictability about *The Judas Kiss*: we know its facts from history, and Hare's structure spells them out, especially in Act 2. Finally, there's the problem of Bosie. Both in the writing and in Malcolm Kennard's performance he is such a whining, petulant little prat that it's hard to see why Oscar gives him a second thought.

Neil Armfield's production is workmanlike and strongly focused on its key subjects. Dale Ferguson's triangular set does its job well (I especially liked the clock with no hands in the first act hotel room) and Tess Schofield's costumes are excellent. But it's the performances which sustain most interest at the end of the night.

The star of the show is veteran Queenslander Bille Brown. His portrayal of Wilde is histrionically near—but never over—the top and with just a hint of Frank Thring. It's a tough role, especially in the second act when Wilde barely leaves his chair. Brown gives it the levity and the weight (as well as the irony) it needs. ■

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Don't put your Oscar on the stage

OSCAR WILDE IS, ON THE FACE OF IT, a gift of a subject to any playwright. Who could fail to catch fire from representing the tragicomic story, so sparkling and so sombre, of the great wit and dramatist who went to prison for loving a lord; and who made out of the experience (in his great letter 'De Profundis', in his extraordinary 'Ballad of Reading Gaol') a kind of legend which has meant that the Life of Oscar is about as close as a secular age can get to the life of a saint. In those moments when he was capable of taking himself seriously, he was probably more inclined to think of himself, as his contemporaries did, as a great sinner. He said that when the last trumpet sounded he would pretend from his purple and porphyry tomb that he did not hear it, but he died in the Catholic Church. So, it must be said, did Lord Alfred Douglas and even his father, the screaming, scarlet Marquess of Queensberry. As Yeats might have said, it just seemed to be in the air.

Wilde himself never gets out of the theatrical ether and it's not hard to see why. He was a 'star' (which is perhaps what he meant by a genius, though he was certainly that as well). Because the genius did go into the life—so heartbreakingly in the end, after the sparkle of the comic strutting—it seems like a comprehensive, a renaissance, life to modern taste. The heroism, the larger-than-life quality, of Wilde is the opposite of modern. He seems in some ways like the Indian summer of the Victorian age on whose giants' shoulders the modernists rode; in some ways its tragic coda.

In any case he's theatrical murder. It's interesting to reflect that there have been more or less successful screen Wildes from Peter Finch to Stephen Fry. My own formative impression of Wilde as a young teenager in the early '60s—before I ever saw Edith Evans as Lady Bracknell—came from seeing Michael MacLiammóir's one-man show, 'The Importance of Being Oscar'. It toured here and MacLiammóir, in virtuoso Anglo-Irish tones, captured not only the grandeur of the poseur but the prose poet of the fables and the letter-writer who could dramatise his feelings with the precision of a great pianist.

MacLiammóir captured some essence of Wilde: bisexual but not blighted, gay but not camp, styled but not posed, as actorish as all get-out but effortlessly masculine and 'Irish', a man of great courtesy and toughness for all his folly. And someone with a sense of humour so deep that it even survived his ruin.

But MacLiammóir's show, like the films, was a kind of doco–drama, splicing the work and the life, making nothing up. Those whom the gods want to make idiots of they allow to write plays in which Oscar Wilde is a character. In the quasi-archaic medium of live theatre it is an act of recklessness to write stylised and dramatically charged words and put them in the mouth of the greatest talker known to modern memory. Film can impersonate Wilde, a good enough stage actor can make magic from the letters and quips (with their intrinsic drama) but the idea of turning the most archetypally individualised figure in the history of recent celebrity into a character in a play is likely to be suicidal because it is bound to involve massive attacks of the anxiety of influence on the part of the playwright who tries to write like Wilde, as he or she almost inevitably will.

Still, there is quite a list of those who have fallen in battle. In the last 15 years or so, and with no conscious effort on my part, I have succeeded in seeing a play about Wilde by the poet and academic Evan Jones performed at La Mama, I think, with Simon Hughes as the man with the green carnation; I have seen Fred Parslow, red-faced and raucous, sounding reminiscent of his own characterisation of Toad in *The Wind in the Willows* play Oscar to the Bosie of the blonde boy from *Gallipoli* (Mark Lee) while Sir Robert Helpmann, no less, not long before his death, impersonated the aged Douglas in some tower above the stage. Then, just last year, the Abbey Theatre gave us a brooding Celtic Wilde who moved like a ghost through an inventive and experimental piece of theatrical tushery which reserved its moments of high drama for the theme of child molestation as it could be extrapolated from the childhood of Constance Wilde. Not one of these pieces of theatrical metempsychosis left this critic more useful, happier or wiser, and I suspect that the ghost of Oscar Wilde would be inclined to say, in his gentle way, that although he knew nothing against the moral characters of the authors of these pieces, going simply on the way they wrote, they should have been sent to Reading Gaol instead of him. ■

—Peter Craven

FLASH IN THE PAN

Vale Stanley Kubrick. Sue Lyon and James Mason in Kubrick's 1962 film of Lolita.

No waking

The Dreamlife of Angels, dir. Erick Zonca. There is a dark angel and an angel of light. Both of them are at a loose end. Isa (Elodie Bouchez) carries her world in a backpack; she gets a job doing piece work in a garment factory where she meets Marie (Natacha Regnier), who takes her in off the street for a few nights.

In spite of her apparent kindness, it is soon clear that Marie does not connect with other people so much as collide with them. The flat she is minding belongs to a woman who has recently died in a car accident; the woman's daughter is lying in hospital in a coma. Marie is indifferent to the fate of her hosts; Isa becomes absorbed, even obsessed, by them. She starts a vigil at the bedside of the daughter, a stranger, becoming her guardian angel. She reads the girl's diary and then continues it in her own hand. Her luminous handwriting becomes almost another character in the film. Meanwhile, Marie is obsessed by a wealthy nightclub owner, Chriss (Gregoire Colin). Hers is a dark obsession, strengthening its grip as it becomes more hopeless and destructive.

This film has a wonderful sympathy for working-class women. It includes a range of richly compassionate portraits, some lasting a matter of seconds. It's not so easy to know if that compassion is extended to the depiction of Isa and Marie. They are old for their 20 years. When Marie's mother appears briefly, it's impossible to imagine her as a child. Marie and Isa are self-reliant, insular, burning inwardly with angers which the script only partially explains. But their performances are captivating. You never stop wondering how they reached this point of emotional development; you almost pray for their release from a world which is drawn in fine detail. Their life may be a dream but there is no waking from it.

—Michael McGirr SJ

The art of war

The Thin Red Line, dir. Terrence Malick. It seemed entirely appropriate that I saw *The Thin Red Line* on the day Stanley Kubrick died. I have always considered Kubrick's 1957 masterpiece, *Paths of Glory*, to be the greatest of all anti-war films. Now, for me, *Thin Red Line*, made more than 40 years later, is on a par. The anti-Homeric message is the same: there is nothing ennobling about battle, no matter how high-minded are the ideals men bring to the conflict; patriotism is a sham; in the end war is simply about individual survival. Moreover, who the real enemy is becomes uncertain. In Kubrick's magnificent final scene, as the French soldiers stop jeering at the frightened German girl they have captured and weep with her instead, they have come to realise this. So do Terrence Malick's men of Charlie Company, as they listen with resigned hostility to their gung-ho new commander, Captain Bosche (George Clooney), liken the company to a family, or, most movingly, as they come to recognise that the Japanese, who they must kill and who must kill them, are, like them, ordinary men, decent men, bewildered men, caught in a situation they can do nothing about.

To say that *The Thin Red Line*, an adaptation of James Jones' best novel, follows the men of Charlie Company as they fight to gain control of the Melanesian island of Guadalcanal during the first months of the Pacific war is to describe only the film's first layer. Though the action sequences are intensely confronting, much of the meaning of the film comes through voice-over, as the soldiers contemplate what the war has done to them, to their sense of self, and as they think about the world in which they now exist. The strong ensemble cast—Sean Penn as First Sergeant Welsh, the cynical NCO who holds the company together, Jim Caviezel as the idealistic Private Witt, who dies a hero, and Elias Koteas (Captain Staros) who so loves his men that sending them to their deaths becomes too much to bear—are quite outstanding and glue the action and the contemplative sequences together. For that matter, so does the beautiful Daintree forest, where much of the filming took place, and which provides the backdrop for the film's powerful contrast between the wilderness and the destructive power of mechanised humanity.

But ultimately *The Thin Red Line* belongs to its director, Terrence Malick. He has made only two previous films, yet such is his reputation that established box-office stars like Clooney and John Cusack were jostling each other for bit parts. Inevitably Malick's war will be contrasted with that of Steven Spielberg in *Saving Private Ryan*. It is not to denigrate the latter to invoke once more the distinction between art and craft. There is a universality about *The Thin Red Line*, as there is about *Paths of Glory*. The two of them may not win the popularity polls, but they were made to last.

—John Salmond

Strictly tango

Tango, dir. Carlos Saura. This is an eloquent film. It communicates through colour, music and most of all, the passionate movement of the dance.

The film's story is an afterthought, little more than an excuse for the celebration of

the dance we know as the Tango. Story? Well in short, a film within a film.

A gifted film director (Miguel Sola), in deep depression after his wife leaves him, immerses himself in making a film about the Tango. One of the film's main investors (usually surrounded by a gymnasium of body guards) pressures the director into casting the backer's mistress whose talent is sight unseen. Fortunately, she can dance a flashy Tango and the director falls in love with the backer's girlfriend, which even to the casual movie-goer seems both a bad career move and a distinct threat to longevity.

The linking story is weak and at times threatens to become tedious, but have you been to the opera recently?

Spanish director Carlos Saura has made several notable films about music and dance. In each of them he has emphasised colour, style and elegant movement at the expense of storyline. In the case of *Carmen* the story was already familiar. For his film *Flamenco*, three pages of script sufficed.

No, if you want strong narrative this isn't your sort of movie. But it is if you want dramatic dancing, passion that threatens to burn the screen, gorgeous colour and cinematography that matches the best I've seen in years.

That Italian master of light and image, cinematographer Vittorio Storaro, has excelled himself, using his cameras and lights to achieve a wondrous spectacle. As Storaro himself observes, 'stories are mostly told in words to the detriment of music and image. The art of screen-telling is to narrate through light and movement'.

Many say it, few can do it!

Performances are adequate. Sola plays a reflective director; Cecilia Narova, as the wife, dances better than she acts and Mia Maestro (a dead ringer for Tara Fitzgerald) is suitably sexy. However, inevitably the film is a triumph for the camera, lighting, design and the sheer magnetism of the dance that inspired it.

True, at the end I felt the film was danced out, but only by a whisker.

—Gordon Lewis

The road to Brazil

Central Station, dir. Walter Salles. Go to Central Station and encounter Brazil. Not Brazil whose future has arrived, as the military regime used to proclaim, nor the Brazil of exotic carnival colour, but director–scriptwriter Walter Salles' Brazil of restless, disappointed survivors: Brazil searching for soul and community in the heartless flux of commuting.

The central metaphor, indeed the whole film, risks cliché. The narrative ingredients are familiar. There at Central Station we find a hard-edged biddy (Fernanda Montenegro) supplementing her teacher's pension writing letters for literate or semi-literate customers at a dollar a piece. Biddy has long since been corrupted by her own skills of survival. But she recovers self-respect and discovers love as, against the grain, she assumes responsibilities of care for a young boy (Vinicius de Oliveira).

Boy has been orphaned when his mother, one of the biddy's customers, is knocked over by a bus outside the station. Boy discards childhood illusions and finds a place in the world as the relationship develops. Boy and biddy discover new identity, and we discover identity-seeking Brazil, in that most cliché-ridden cinematic form of the road movie.

But clichés of narrative and form are movingly transcended in *Central Station*. Biddy is soon a very specific Dora, utterly convincing in her muddled journey from opportunism and strike-first vengefulness to love. Boy becomes Josué, maturing before our eyes out of macho pose and illusion without ceasing to be a believable Brazilian boy. Brazil, at the station and on the road from Rio to Bom Jesus in the north-eastern backlands, is not the Brazil of exotic stereotype, but the Brazil of everyday life at the grassroots with its peculiar mix of tedium and drabness, vibrance and passionate intensity.

Once or twice a twang of sentimentality in the relationship of Dora and Josué, or too long a pause on local colour among the shrine pilgrims up there in the backlands, brought this old Brazil hand back from the illusion of being there again. But most of the time I was deeply moved to recognition, and beyond, to new learning about the human condition and the mysterious working in it of what some of us call grace.

—Rowan Ireland

It's a shrink wrap

Analyze This, dir. Harold Ramis. An old school pal of mine is a psychotherapist; she laughed so hard at this movie that she didn't dare drink any more mineral water. 'God, the *boundary* issues! Spot-on!' she kept gasping while trying to tell me about the movie without breaking up. After all, you do your best work with areas you know intimately, and one area that most American movie industry folk are familiar with is going to a shrink.

The script (by Ramis, Peter Tolan and Kenneth Lonergan) is generous with irony and alludes copiously to Mafia mythology in other films, even TV. (The name of Robert De Niro's character, Paul Vitti, is obviously a nod to *The Untouchables'* villainous Frank Nitti.) And as usual De Niro shines: if there were any meaning in the truckloads of trophies churned out by the Tinseltown speechnight, he'd be the Dux based on this performance, since he never gives a bad one anyway, and this part was obviously written straight into his DNA.

The only problem I had with *Analyze This* was that I found myself guffawing unstoppably at a man weeping bitterly, in the throes of a rending personal crisis that was threatening not only his sanity but his life. A Mafia boss has to look very strong indeed—any hint of trouble in bed or head will see him 'whacked' very soon. Billy Crystal (below, with de Niro) as Ben Sobel, a New York psychiatrist with a few problems of his own, was a fine lens for our perception: we view Vitti through his perspective.

We can talk the talk of neurosis, angst, alienation, so that Vitti's disgust when œdipal issues are explained to him becomes hilarious. He is, after all, a criminal who has killed and robbed, yet we end up feeling sorry for him even as we laugh, sorry in a way that we don't feel for the gently autonomous, but emotionally wounded Sobel. The abiding mystery is how Mafia thugs continue to be sympathetic, and how many of Hollywood's best efforts concern them.

—Juliette Hughes

On the menu

VIEWERS OF THE *Four Corners* program dealing with spies in the Church might have occasionally wondered if they'd stumbled onto a less knockabout episode of *Father Ted*—one where perhaps Mrs Doyle and Dougal were being run by the bishop. I was also reminded of that episode in *Blackadder* where the witch-hunter almost got Edmund. Add to that rich memories of the Elizabethan *Blackadder* where the preposterously puritanical aunt was served an anatomically allusive turnip, and you've got a perspective on what's been going on lately in all the areas that used to be taboo at dinner parties: religion, politics and sex.

In most of my dinner parties, we talk of little else. I mean, what the hell else is there? Pets? (You'll be faced with the puzzling resilience of your neutered terrier's libido, as he tries to tango with your guest's Hush Puppies.) Gardening? Forget it. You're basically left with desktop publishing and perhaps quilting as long as you don't mention AIDS.

Not that anyone takes any notice of the old dining mores now: forget the naffness of fishknives, people are eating pizza or KFC in front of the telly where, strangely, you still see families eating at dining tables. And never have so many cooking programs been aimed at so few cooks. Programmers are very aware that despite the boom in eating-out and takeaway, punters are still eager to *watch* people cooking just like mother used to. But no mother ever served yabbies in a balsamic guava sauce on rocket. And Ian Hewitson or Geoff Jansz are unlikely to show you how to cook a leg of lamb till it's grey all the way through, with really chewy roast spuds, followed by steamed pud with custard made out of proper custard powder, not that poncy crème anglaise. People were thinner in those days ...

Last year a commercial that sneered at women who cooked had to be modified after protests. Even though we aren't cooking as much as we used to, we'd rather like to. It's part of the fantasy life, the easy little life we all want, that the telly men are tapping into. I still watch *Bewitched* on cable sometimes just because Samantha can clear a kitchen by twitching her nose.

Our ids, egos and very occasionally our superegos have all been laid out in the focus groups for the marketeers. This product will comfort you, remind you of warm fuzzy safe things, or tingly juicy exciting things, they tell us. Meadowlea congratulates harried single mothers; a bowl of nuked noodles counts as cuisine. Yet we are watching less television. There are other things to do, and since so often there is nothing worth watching, videos can be rented, friends visited, dogs walked.

But sometimes it's worth watching the television for divers reasons. Fascination is the best one, and I must confess to having been fascinated by the deeply weird *King's School* (ABC), the *Sylvania Waters* of privileged pedagogy. As a sociological exercise the six-part series was uncomfortably efficient. There was something different about these young people, different from the teenagers I know, as different as their parents' cars are from the cars of the people I know. They drive shiny new pride machines, as glossy as their own grooming. (No mums wearing curlers and moccies; no tats on the dads.) The kids were as handsome and glossy as you'd expect silvertail kids to be. (Why were their cadet uniforms like the Confederates?) And their adolescent rebellion—ah, that. It consisted of furtive snoggings with Tara girls (where King's Boys' sisters tend to go) whose harmless little display of boxer shorts during a maids' chorus in the school production was met with a response from authority that left me slightly amused but a bit queasy.

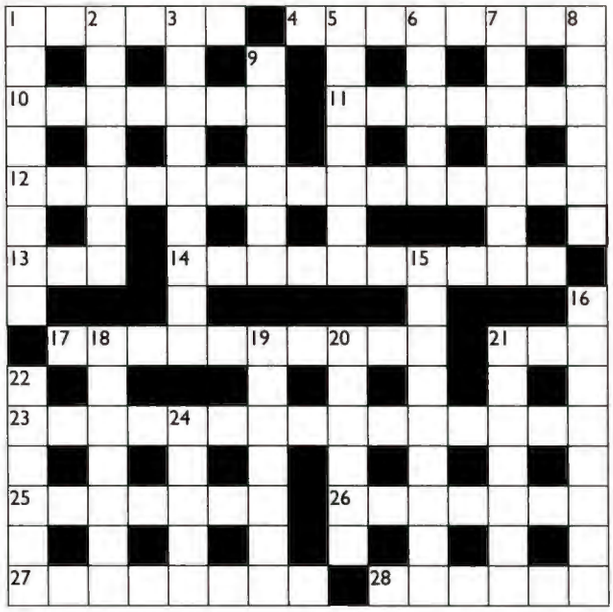
It brought back something from the distant days when I was an English teacher. I remembered my employer, a middle-aged religious, chesting (or rather, bellying) a small junior who had committed the crime of talking on the way into the school chapel. There was the sergeant-major-in-your-face yelling, there were the ridiculous rhetorics. (*Are you defying ME? Do you consider yourself above the rules of this school?*). It was more than a telling-off: this was abuse, and the abuser was having a shudderingly good time. The kid was shell-shocked; too well-brought-up to say 'Up yours'. There is an old saw that you regret more your omissions than your deeds ...

King's School had a scene in it that was uncomfortably similar. The girls' little bout of cheekiness (boxer shorts forsooth, be glad they weren't thong undies) was met with outrageous histrionics from the two teachers from Tara who were in charge, one like Hyacinth Bucket, the other more in the vinegary pageboy style, both of them stuck way back in Winifred Norling and the Chalet School when it came to questions of disciplining the gels. To hear the bollocking those lasses got, you'd have thought they'd lap-danced the rowing team. And here's the rub: the poor girls took it. They cried tears of shame and general hurt feelingness, and were hugged by the harridans so they could go back on and perform in that significant drama *Me and My Girl*. No Becky Sharps at Tara, I'm afraid.

IF YOU THINK I'M TAKING THIS TOO HARD, think about what was done to Monica Lewinsky. That girl was doing no more and no less than the sitcoms and soaps tell her she can do. In *Friends, Dharma & Greg, Melrose Place, Drew Carey*, people have sex in much the same way as you'd clean your teeth (to borrow a comment from actor/writer Mary Kenneally, whose series *Australia, You're Standing In It* had far too brief a life). Girls in these sitcoms are 'feisty', 'assertive', 'taking responsibility for their pleasure'. All well and good. Watch a Jerry Springer show, just once, for your sins, and see what the most powerful country on earth is watching and what it's telling people is okay to do. Watching the BBC4 Jon Snow interview with Lewinsky on Nine's *Sixty Minutes*, it was possible to see a character that had been formed, for good or ill, by privilege, indulgence, and the dominant popular culture. A bit silly, a bit self-centred, a bit garrulous, but totally misguided and horribly betrayed and abused by the very systems that should have been her shield. But the vultures still cruise for the vulnerable, and when Lewinsky fell into the hands of that Iago, Linda Tripp, she was taken through a process that reminds us that our most cherished freedoms are only a bad government away from disappearance. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance reviewer.

Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 72, April 1999



Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM

ACROSS

1. Direction flower followed for the festival. (6)
4. Such moving praise about the present was heavenly! (8)
10. All together in foreign service added note. (2,5)
11. Irishman brought disturbance, being a nationalist. (7)
12. Armed insurrection in Dublin in 1916 is what is celebrated at 1-across, in other words. (3, 12)
13. Some unspecified Roman yardstick. (3)
14. Teases cunning customer, possibly, without cause. (10)
17. Strange boa on railing discovered by early Australian. (10)
21. Pitcher we hear you dropped. Right for the ram? (3)
23. Critical that it's not on the house! (15)
25. Turn down the lamps? It's a pleasure! (7)
26. What may be true, say, flows from the mouth? (7)
27. Make up nightly account (when learner leaves) about this form of sailing. (8)
28. Decrees out east were promulgated in long document. (6)

DOWN

1. Episode you'll hear about in the future? (8)
2. Read out the outline in an atmosphere that is fairly hot! (7)
3. Oriental follows 1-across with new easy ritual to start with. (9)
5. A quiet approach to Margarita in new gear? (7)
6. I can't clown with such a grotesque gesture! (5)
7. Introductory Latin I? I may be enrolled in that course. (7)
8. Supplement the superannuation, say, of former nurse. (6)
9. Say no to such rubbish. (6)
15. With a damaged internal organ and a facial twitch—no wonder she's irritable! (9)
16. You heard about the library classification system I'd not hand over to someone so naive and trusting? (4-4)
18. For a start, badly uncomfortable abdominal pain is hardly conducive to country life. (7)
19. Untangle tangle I use for dessert. (7)
20. A more insensitive issue of the magazine, perhaps? (6)
21. Derive satisfaction, say, from drug guy ingested. (7)
22. On 1-across 22-down, 12-across happened, according to Christians. (6)
24. Could possibly exhibit strength. (5)

Solution to Crossword no. 71, March 1999

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

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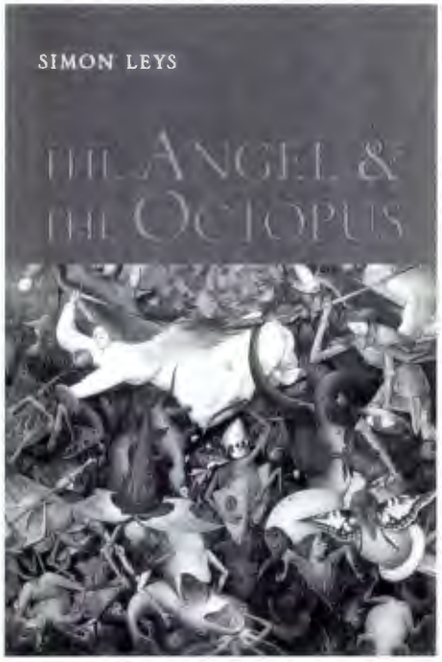

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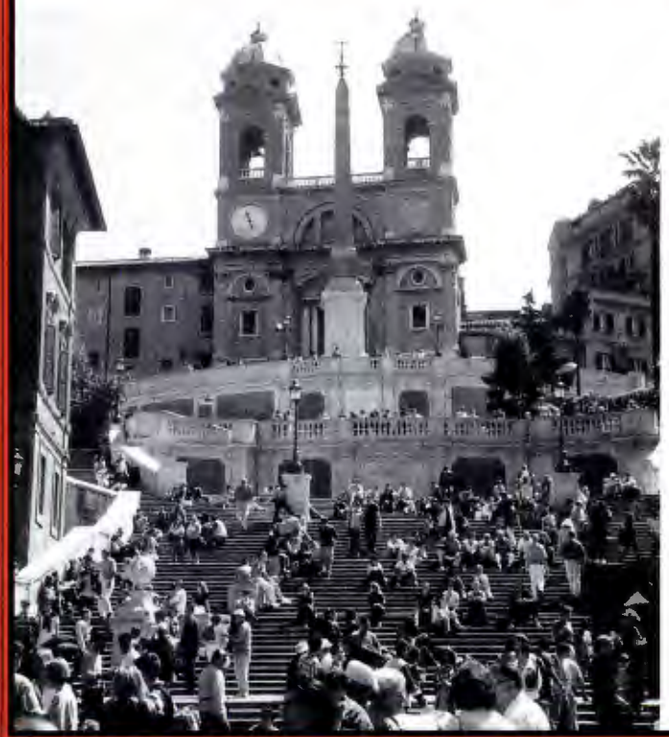

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