

FORTHCOMING FUNCTIONS AT THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE

- SPEAKER** : **BILL LEAK** (Polite portraitist/Impolite cartoonist - currently with *The Australian*)
TOPIC : *Drawing Blood*
DATE : Wednesday 27 January 1999 **TIME**: 5.30 for 6.00pm
VENUE : Museum of Sydney Theatrette, cnr Bridge & Phillip Sts, Sydney
- SPEAKER** : **SENATOR HELEN COONAN** (Government Whip, Senate)
TOPIC : *Senate Reform*
DATE : Wednesday 3 February 1999 **TIME**: 5.30 for 6.00pm
VENUE : The Chifley Conference Room (Rm 101), Level 1, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney (NOTE ROOM)
- SPEAKER** : **BRAD NORINGTON** (Author of *Jennie George* (Allen & Unwin, 1998))
TOPIC : *Writing Jennie George*
DATE : Tuesday 9 February 1999 **TIME**: 5.30 for 6.00pm
VENUE : To be advised
- SPEAKER** : **MONICA LEWINSKY aka GERRY CONNOLLY**
 To launch *Partners* (HarperCollins,1999)
TOPIC : *Monica Lewinsky talks about Partners* - edited by Ross Fitzgerald and Anne Henderson
DATE : Thursday 11 February 1999 **NOTE CHANGE OF DATE** **TIME**: 12.30 for 1.00pm
VENUE : The Dixson Room, State Library of NSW (entrance via Mitchell Wing)
LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
- SPEAKER** : **SOL LEBOVIC** (Managing Director, Newspoll)
TOPIC : *To be advised*
DATE : Wednesday 17 February 1999 **TIME**: 5.30 for 6.00pm
VENUE : The Chifley Conference Room (Rm 102), Level 1, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney
- SPEAKER** : **PETER THOMPSON** (Radio National Breakfast Show & author of *Persuading Aristotle*)
TOPIC : *The Art of Persuasion in Business, Negotiation and the Media*
DATE : Monday 1 March 1999 **TIME**: 5.30 for 6.00pm
VENUE : The Chifley Conference Room (Rm 102), Level 1, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney
- SPEAKER** : **KIRSTYN AUSTIN & JANET FIFE-YEOMANS** (Coauthors of *Injustice* (Random, 1998))
 (Kirstyn Austin was brutally raped and assaulted by the late Fred Many at the age of 15. He was sentenced to 20 years jail for the crime, but had his sentence reduced by becoming a prison informer. From jail he put out a contract on his victim's life and that of her mother.)
TOPIC : *Injustice: A Case Study*
DATE : Tuesday 9 March 1999 **TIME**: 5.30 for 6.00pm
VENUE : 41 Phillip St, Sydney
- Tue 16 Mar** : **THE HON MURRAY GLEESON AC** (Chief Justice, High Court)
Tue 23 Mar : **GERALDINE WALSH** (Letters Editor, *The Sydney Morning Herald* for 8 years)
Tue 4 May : **THE HON JUSTICE M.J. BEAZLEY** (Judge of Appeal, NSW Supreme Court)

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THE

Sydney Institute

QUARTERLY

VOLUME 2 NO 4
DECEMBER 1998

ABC ACCURACY &
MANNING CLARK

POST-MODERNIST
FRAUD

FORTRESS
AUSTRALIA
MARK II

THE REAL
J. D. SALINGER

MEDIA WATCH ON
THE POMPOUS SIX
EMMA TOM and
CHRISTOPHER
HITCHENS

Published by
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with Gerard Henderson's

MEDIA WATCH

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ONE NATION - AND THE MEDIA

The 1998 Federal election campaign did not produce many memorable moments. The only exceptions involved occasions when journalists clashed with senior members of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party. How unfortunate.

Two instances come immediately to mind. The first involved coverage of the launch of One Nation's health policy. Footage of the event showed *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist and ABC Radio National columnist Margo Kingston literally screaming in anger at One Nation operative David Oldfield during a media conference. Clearly this was one instance where the division which should be in place between reportage and involvement clearly broke down. An even more serious blow-up was to follow. Sections of the media initiated a kind of "sit-in" during the One Nation formal campaign opening. This was intended as a protest at David Oldfield's failure to deliver a costings document on Pauline Hanson's election promises at the promised time.

The behaviour of sections of the media covering the One Nation launch was both unprofessional and counter productive. It is far from clear that One Nation's election promise costings were that important. Once the Coalition decided to put One Nation last on its preferences distribution, there was never any prospect of Pauline Hanson and her colleagues winning more than one seat in the House of Representatives. However, even if such information had been significant, it was unprofessional for journalists to demonstrate their annoyance by re-entering a campaign meeting which they had been asked to leave. Speaking to Fran Kelly on the Radio National Breakfast program on Friday 2 October 1998, Margo Kingston attacked commentators who had criticised the media's coverage of the One Nation campaign. Ms Kingston accused Gerard Henderson of having said that the media "should have ignored" Pauline Hanson and claimed that (allegedly) he did not believe that "the media has an institutional right to exist". The first statement is false; the second quite ridiculous.

Certainly the media should report the One Nation Party's activities. The problem was that the likes of Margo Kingston got too caught up in the excitement of Pauline Hanson's campaign. *Age* journalist Gay Alcorn gave an idea of the thrill of it all in a column published on 26 September 1998: "Viki [*Age* photographer Viki Yemettas] drives like a maniac and I feel like hugging her. We scream through two red lights, hearts thumping. The police threaten to write out tickets to the media, but they are speeding, too, trying to make up time". Later Ms Alcorn commented that "there is something about this style of campaign that is refreshing as well as exhausting".

Following the election Margo Kingston expressed the view on *Late Night Live* (Tuesday 6 October 1998) that, in defeat, Pauline Hanson was "busily having a lonely nervous breakdown...and saying nothing". The following day Ms Hanson gave a media conference and showed no signs of having experienced a nervous breakdown. It was yet another example of a journalist having become personally caught up in the One Nation campaign. Closeness is not the same as depth.

THE ABC - AND ACCURACY

Gerard Henderson

Here is a tale of two documentaries.

“SPEAK OF ME AS I AM”

On Sunday 6 September 1998 ABC TV ran Rachel Hermer's hour long documentary on the late Paul Robeson (1898-1976). *Speak Of Me As I Am* (a co-production of BBC Wales, NJN Public Television and NCV Arts) was generally sympathetic to the black American singer and actor - and included interviews with his family and friends.

Fair enough. Paul Robeson gave strong moral leadership to black Americans before the civil rights movement became prominent in the late 1950s and early 1960s. However, the artist had one serious flaw. Paul Robeson was an admirer of the Soviet communist regime and its various totalitarian dictators - including Vladimir Lenin and Josef Stalin.

Viewers of Rachel Hermer's documentary were encouraged to focus on Paul Robeson's artistic ability and good deeds. But his weak points were not overlooked and were subjected to fair minded debate and discussion. Paul Robeson's unwillingness to speak up for fellow artists whom he knew were being persecuted in the Soviet gulag was noted. And Professor Jeffrey C Stewart (the Afro-American historian from George Mason University) openly referred to the “problem” of Paul Robeson's support for the Soviet Union and its leaders. In short, Rachel Hermer's *Speak Of Me As I Am* was intellectually honest - there was no attempt to cover up the fact that Paul Robeson barracked for Stalinism and it was recognised that any assessment of him was inadequate unless the fact was acknowledged.

“THE YOUNG TREE GREEN”

On Tuesday 8 September 1998 ABC TV ran Bridget Goodwin's one hour documentary on the late Manning Clark (1915-1991). *The Young Tree Green* was produced by Bridget Goodwin's company Bridie Films Pty Ltd. In September 1997 it was commissioned by the Australian Broadcasting Commission as one of the ABC/Film Finance Corporation documentaries. In doing so, the ABC paid the standard fee of \$75,000 for such documentaries. This represents 30 per cent of the

budget agreed to by the ABC and the FFC in such cases. The FFC provides the remaining 70 per cent.

Since the ABC was not the majority funder of *The Young Tree Green*, it did not have total control over the program. However the ABC's Commissioning Editor for Documentaries read Bridget Goodwin's treatment in May 1997 and commissioned the film in September 1997. The ABC provided editorial approval for *The Young Tree Green* when the contract was signed and, again, when the rough cut of the documentary was presented. In giving editorial approval, the ABC's Commissioning Editor (in this case Geoff Barnes) made the assessment that *The Young Tree Green* was accurate.

And so Bridget Goodwin's documentary on the late Manning Clark was shown on the ABC as part of the *Inside Story* series. Talk about *deja vu*. It was just like the old (ABC) times. According to Bridget Goodwin, her account of the life and times of Manning Clark made for a “lively debate”. Lively it may have been. A debate it was not - except in the one-time familiar ABC interpretation of debate where everyone agrees with everyone else and a highly self-righteous (and leftist) ideological time is had by all. At taxpayers expense.

The Young Tree Green contained much footage of Manning Clark. The film clips of the late Professor Clark discussing his work were one of the documentary's strengths. There were also important contributions from Manning Clark's widow (Dymphna Clark) and two of their children (Katerina Clark and Andrew Clark) who gave an important insight into the private life of a very public figure.

Along the way, many of Manning Clark's academic mates from the Australian National University got a run. Including Don Baker, Bill Gammage, Humphrey McQueen and Ken Inglis. The views on academics and/or researchers sympathetic to the late historian were also heard - namely Fay Anderson, Brian Matthews, Stuart McIntyre, Verity Burgman and Michael Cathcart. Only two people who had previously voiced criticisms of Manning Clark made it to the final cut of Dr Goodwin's documentary - Robert Manne and Michael Thwaites. Neither Manne nor Thwaites said anything in *The Young Tree Green* which was critical of any significant aspect of Clark's work. It is unclear whether either made critical remarks which were left on the cutting room floor of Bridie Films.

Rachel Hermer's strength matched Bridget Goodwin's weakness. *Speak Of Me As I Am* provided an honest assessment of Paul Robeson's attitude to

the Soviet Union and its totalitarian leaders from Vladimir Lenin to Leonid Brezhnev. But Bridget Goodwin went out of her way to prevent any serious discussion on Manning Clark's flawed views on Soviet totalitarianism and, in particular, its founder Vladimir Lenin.

A HATRED FOR BULLIES - EXCEPT FOR LENIN

Such is Bridget Goodwin's apparent infatuation with Manning Clark that she overlooked one significant contradiction in *The Young Tree Green*. Early in the documentary Don Baker (a fully paid up member of the Manning Clark Fan Club) maintained that much of Clark's writings could be explained in terms of the detestation of bullying which he acquired while a scholarship holder at Melbourne Grammar. As Don Baker told Bridget Goodwin: "This is one of the things he loathed; he loathed bully boys".

Towards the end of the documentary Brian Matthews commented in a matter-of-fact tone that "all his life" Manning Clark "had a great interest in messiahs". There was "the Messiah" - as in Jesus Christ. And four others - Australian poet Henry Lawson, Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, former Australian prime minister Gough Whitlam and, "for a while at least", Vladimir Lenin.

Hang on a minute. Lenin was one of the great bullies of the 20 Century. After all, he invented totalitarianism with its ever present secret police and labour camps and presided over the deaths of millions of his fellow citizens. So if Manning Clark really detested bullies (as Don Baker claims) why did he regard Vladimir Lenin as a messiah (as Brian Matthews maintains)?

The Young Tree Green did not explain because Bridget Goodwin did not even see the inconsistency. Yet Manning Clark's attitude to the Soviet Union and its founder Vladimir Lenin is central to any complete understanding of his work as an historian and commentator. Above all, it is what has made Clark a controversial figure in Australia.

IMAGINE IF...

Imagine if conservative B.A. Santamaria (1915-1998) had visited Spain in 1958 during the time of the rule

of the Generalissimo Francisco Franco. Imagine if, following his return to Australia, Santamaria wrote a book entitled "Meeting Franco Man". Imagine if, in such a publication, he described Franco as a "man who seems to have been Christ-like, at least in his comparison". And imagine if he had written that Madrid was "the capital city of a society, dedicated to equality, dedicated to end war [and] dedicated to the Enlightenment" and concluded that "whoever lives unmoved in Madrid must have a heart of stone".

Without question, in such a situation, Bob Santamaria would have been subjected to widespread criticism - most notably from leftist members of the Manning Clark Fan Club - with Humphrey McQueen in a lead position. It is difficult to imagine that any documentary aired after Santamaria's death on, say, ABC TV would

have dismissed out of hand any suggestion that such a book on Spanish fascism was in any sense inaccurate or disingenuous. Of course B.A. Santamaria wrote nothing praising Franco's Spain in his mature years. But imagine if he had.

MEETING SOVIET MAN

Step forward Bridget Goodwin. Now Dr Goodwin was well aware of Manning Clark's *Meeting Soviet Man* (Angus & Robertson, 1960). She discussed this with me and recorded my critical views for the documentary which became *The Young Tree Green*. Needless to say, not one moment of this long

interview found its way into *The Young Tree Green*. She junked the lot.

When *Meeting Soviet Man* was published in 1960 some members of the Communist Party of Australia thought that the book was too critical of the Soviet Union. This is hardly surprising. Communists circa 1960 would accept nothing but the most lavish praise for communists dictatorships. Those of different ilk had usually left the party at an earlier date - in 1939 (at the time of the Nazi Soviet Pact) or in 1956 (following the Soviet Union's crushing of the Hungarian uprising). Nevertheless the book said little that was critical of the Soviet system or the Soviet leaders. As Clark wrote (privately) at the time, sometimes he criticised what he saw in the USSR "but never on purpose" (This letter from Clark to Oksana Krugerskaya dated 12 May 1959 was translated from Russian and reported in the *Courier Mail* on 27 June 1998). Moreover Clark all but ignored



Chris Mitchell

the fate of fellow Soviet intellectuals who were suffering repression and, at times, incarceration.

Meeting Soviet Man was the work of a fellow traveller, not that of a communist functionary. This made it all the more plausible. In *Meeting Soviet Man* Manning Clark:

- described Lenin as “a man who seems to have been Christ-like, at least in his compassion” (page 12)
- queried whether “Lenin in his long sleep in that mausoleum...would think that all the murders, all the crimes that the Bolsheviks had committed were vindicated because Soviet Man had created something worthwhile” (page 25). The implication was that the author might just hold this view.
- referred to Moscow as “the capital city of a society dedicated to end the exploitation of man by man, dedicated to equality, dedicated to end war, dedicated to the Enlightenment” and commented that “whoever lives unmoved in Moscow must have a heart of stone” (pages 69-70).
- criticised Victor Kravchenko, the author of *I Found Freedom: The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official* (Robert Hale, 1947), who defected from the Soviet Union in 1944 while in Washington DC. *I Found Freedom* was an accurate account of Soviet totalitarianism by one of the few Soviet officials who had managed to defect to the West. Yet Manning Clark described Victor Kravchenko’s book as “propaganda” (page 72).

Manning Clark’s attitude to the Soviet Union circa 1960 is crucial to any understanding of his activities a decade later - which, in recent years, have been the occasion for considerable controversy in the *Brisbane Courier Mail*. Yet *The Young Tree Green* dismissed all criticisms of Clark’s flirtation with the Soviet Union and defamed his critics.

HUMPHREY McQUEEN AND THE “WILFULLY EVIL”

Enter leftist historian Humphrey McQueen - author of that lives-of-the-leftist-saints tome *Suspect History* (Wakefield Press, 1997) which defended Manning Clark. Humphrey McQueen made a number of appearances on *The Young Tree Green* - including a 55 second “sound bite” where he defended Manning Clark’s attitude to the Soviet Union and attacked his critics as “wilfully evil”:

Manning’s notion of what was happening in the Soviet Union was always in debt to

Dostoyesky. This notion that Dostoyesky said “They will try to create freedom but they will create a vast slavery” - because Dostoyesky himself had been in one of the convict camps as a political prisoner and he knew about both sides of this. And when Manning goes to the Soviet Union it is not to find Lenin or Trotsky or Stalin it is to find what has happened to the world of Tolstoy, of Dostoyesky. But, of course, if you’ve never read Tolstoy and Dostoyesky, if you haven’t got the faintest idea what this is about, then his book *Meeting Soviet Man* - I suppose you could be stupid enough to think that it was pro-Soviet. But even to read it without having read Dostoyesky and Tolstoy, I mean it must be pretty obvious to only the most wilfully evil people that this book is a most profound criticism of what’s gone wrong in the Soviet Union.

So there you have it. *Meeting Soviet Man* is really about meeting Dostoyesky/Tolstoy man. Some critics of the book are “stupid”. The remainder are “wilfully evil”. And Manning Clark’s 1960 book is “a most profound criticism of what’s gone wrong in the Soviet Union”. Really and truly. Bridget Goodwin did not allow any alternative view of *Meeting Soviet Man* to be heard in the documentary.

Under the current ABC Code of Practice, information programs commissioned by the ABC (including documentaries) are required to be accurate. Since the ABC commissioning editor approved of Bridget Goodwin’s *The Young Tree Green* - and since the only view it ran on Manning Clark’s *Meeting Soviet Man* described critics of the book as stupid and wilfully evil - it can only be assumed that the ABC regarded this comment as accurate.

CLARK’S 1970 MOSCOW VISIT

A similar conclusion can be drawn from Bridget Goodwin’s coverage of the controversy concerning the allegation - first made in the *Brisbane Courier Mail* - that Manning Clark received an order of Lenin during a visit to the USSR in 1970 (which was paid for by the Soviet government). But first some background.

In August 1996 the *Courier Mail* ran a story (by Brisbane journalist Wayne Smith and Sydney commentator Peter Kelly) that Manning Clark had received the Order of Lenin. This always seemed a bit over-the-top. The only piece of direct evidence turned on a statement by poet Les Murray that he had seen Professor Clark wearing the medal in

Canberra circa 1970. However, under media questioning, Murray revealed that he was not the most impressive of witnesses. In short, he seemed rather vague. The supplementary evidence was of the hearsay variety. Namely Peter Kelly related how the late Geoffrey Fairbairn had once told Kelly that he had seen Manning Clark with an Order of Lenin around his neck.

This did not make a strong case. Not only was the evidence slight. Moreover the totalitarian dictators in Moscow preserved top honours - such as the Order of Lenin - for important spies. The late (and unlamented) British spy Kim Philby scored such a gong. There is no serious suggestion that Manning Clark was ever a spy for the Soviet Union. But certainly, for a while at least, he was a fellow traveller of Soviet totalitarianism.

In the event it turned out that, contrary to the initial story in the *Courier Mail*, Manning Clark did not receive an Order of Lenin. In November 1996 Alexander Losyukov, Russia's ambassador in Australia, revealed that in 1970 Manning Clark was awarded a commemorative medal to mark the centenary of Lenin's birth. The ambassador was reported as saying that Clark was one of thousands, who visited the USSR at the time, to receive such a badge.

Additional research by the *Courier Mail's* Peter Charlton clarified the incident. According to Charlton, Clark received his Lenin Jubilee Medal at an official function of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet on 22 June 1970 (*Courier Mail*, 8 February 1997). Fellow recipients included communist functionaries from North Vietnam, North Korea, Hungary and East Germany.

While in Moscow in 1970 Manning Clark made a speech in which he described Lenin as a "teacher of humanity". This was said just after the Soviet Union's brutal invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in the midst of Leonid Brezhnev's clamp-down on Soviet writers and intellectuals. All this had been done in the name of Lenin. Yet Manning Clark spoke in Moscow in praise of Lenin without saying on word on behalf of the victims of Soviet totalitarianism.

What did Bridget Goodwin make of all this? Not much, really. *The Young Tree Green* completely debunked the *Courier Mail's* claim that Manning

Clark received the Order of Lenin. But no mention whatsoever was made of the fact that Clark *did* receive a Lenin Jubilee Medallion from the Soviet Union during Leonid Brezhnev's time and no reference was made to Clark's 1970 Moscow speech.

IMAGINATION, MARK II

Now, once again, let's go into imagination over-load. Imagine if conservative intellectual B.A. Santamaria visited Italy circa 1970 and returned to Australia with

a medallion commemorating Benito Mussolini. Imagine that, when in Rome, he had praised the dictator Mussolini as a "teacher of humanity". And imagine, he had proudly worn Mussolini's graven image around his neck at dinner parties in Melbourne. Would the likes of Bridget Goodwin have dismissed this as mere affectation? Not on your nelly. But, then, different rules apply for different heroes. Moreover, by the 1990s Manning Clark had gone well beyond hero status to that of a secular (leftist) saint. By the way, B.A. Santamaria never praised Mussolini in his mature years.



Bridget Goodwin

ANDREW CLARK AND THE (CRITICAL) MAGGOTS

It was only here that some agnostics of Manning Clark got a run in the documentary. And only because, in this particular instance, they ran a line which was consistent with the views of Bridget Goodwin. La Trobe University historian Robert Manne hit the hyperbole button and declared that the *Courier Mail's* allegation about the Order of Lenin "was one of the most absurd bits of journalism that Australia has ever seen". Former ASIO deputy director Michael Thwaites told *The Young Tree Green* that, while he sometimes regarded Manning Clark's views as misleading, Clark was not "an agent of the Soviet Union".

Shortly before the views of Robert Manne and Michael Thwaites were aired, Andrew Clark told Bridget Goodwin that those who had criticised his late father's relationship with the Soviet Union were "complete maggots of people". He did not name names. Viewers of the program could well have obtained the impression that all who criticised Manning Clark as a result of his visits to the USSR in 1958 and 1970 were "complete maggots".

Once again, the ABC is involved in this description.

Under the ABC Code of Practice, the ABC's commissioning editor certified that *The Young Tree Green* passed the test of accuracy. Since Andrew Clark's views were aired condemning critics of Manning Clark's relationship with the Soviet Union as maggots - and since Bridget Goodwin allowed no contrary view to be heard on her documentary - the conclusion can only be drawn that the ABC regarded Andrew Clark's condemnation of his father's critics as accurate.

A PRESS COUNCIL INTERLUDE

In 1996 a number of complaints took the *Courier Mail's* coverage of Manning Clark to the Press Council. The signatories were Bruce Grant, Sir Zelman Cowen, Vic Carroll, Ken Inglis, Geoffrey Bolton, Hugh Stretton, Anthony Low, Davis McCaughey, Marjorie Tipping, Geoffrey Serle, Richard Woolcott, Sir Raymond Ferrall, Angela Mercer, Brian Mercer and Anne Fairbairn.

In an adjudication issued on 29 November 1996, the Australian Press Council found that the "*Courier Mail* was not justified in publishing its key assertion [that Manning Clark had been awarded the Order of Lenin] and the conclusions which so strongly flowed from it". On 1 February 1997 the Press Council dismissed an appeal from the *Courier Mail* against its own decision.

On 27 June 1998 the *Courier Mail* ran an article by Peter Charlton entitled "Lifting the Curtain". This was essentially a reply by the newspaper to the Australian Press Council's findings and Charlton dealt at some length with Clark's on-going association with the Soviet Union. The *Courier Mail* re-produced in full a letter (dated 26 February 1997) written by Zelman Cowen to Hal G P Colebatch. Sir Zelman wrote in part:

My interest in Manning Clark...should be put in context. I have known him since the latter 1930s, and we had a friendly relationship. In this case, the material from the Queensland paper was shown to me, and I thought it an unwarranted attack on a man long dead, and also saw it as deeply hurtful to his family. As part of a group, I participated in what I thought to be an appropriate course of action. We complained to the Press Council and won. There was an appeal which was rejected. Bruce Grant actually attended the Press Council proceedings, but we both worked over the material and planned the case

together. I think that it is good that we did as we did, and we were not helped always by Manning's own writings. (emphasis added)

This, in a sense, is the problem. Even Manning Clark's long-time friend Zelman Cowen has acknowledged that, when taking the case to the Press Council, he and his fellow signatories "were not helped always by Manning's own writings". Presumably he meant Clark's *Meeting Soviet Man* - the very book which was not adequately discussed in *The Young Tree Green*.

Courier Mail editor Chris Mitchell declined to be interviewed for *The Young Tree Green* since he was of the view that he could not trust Bridget Goodwin to produce a balanced documentary. After the film was shown on ABC TV he expressed the view that he had been "proven right". However there are many commentators who could have proffered a criticism of Manning Clark's pro-Soviet phase. They were rejected by Dr Goodwin.

THE ABC AND ACCURACY

So *The Young Tree Green* was run on ABC TV without even one voice on film criticising any significant aspect of Manning Clark's work. Viewers of the documentary heard that critics of Manning Clark were either "wilfully evil" (pace Humphrey McQueen) or "complete maggots of people" (pace Andrew Clark). And the ABC commissioning editor was prepared to give *The Young Tree Green* the ABC's very own imprimatur of accuracy. Fair dinkum.

The problem with lives of the saints in moving picture (or any other) format is that documentaries without criticism soon become documentaries without credibility. Rachel Hermer's account of Paul Robeson will last because in *Speak Of Me As I Am* she acknowledges her subjects strengths and weaknesses.

There was a positive side to Manning Clark. He deserves much credit for encouraging an interest in Australian history and, more generally, for his contribution to the public debate. However there can be no accurate or complete assessment of Manning Clark without recognising his one central weakness - his tendency to fawn over the Soviet Union and its founder Vladimir Lenin.

Bridget Goodwin's documentary *The Young Tree Green* failed because it was incomplete. Despite ABC assurances as to its (so called) accuracy.

J. D. SALINGER - NOT SO ALONE

Johannah Dargavel

During Joyce Maynard's relationship with J D Salinger, circa 1972, Salinger told her that one day "a long time from now you'll cease to care anymore whom you please or what anybody has to say about you". And that then she would be able to produce "a story you want to tell for no better reason than it matters to you". And so she did - 27 years later. However Maynard's story is not something that Salinger, who insists that his domestic life be kept private, would ever have wanted published

The book is called *At Home Alone in the World* (Doubleday, 1998). It is Joyce Maynard's second autobiography. Her first was written when she was just 19 years of age and titled *Looking Back*. However, this latest work by Maynard is far more honest and open.

The major hype surrounding this autobiography has been Maynard's decision to include her relationship with Salinger that began when she was 18 and he 53. However Maynard's autobiography is not simply about her years living with J D Salinger. It also focuses on a young talented woman who, despite her many successes, struggles with insecurities about her family and herself. We learn that Joyce Maynard had low self-esteem. For many years she could not accept herself, feeling she wasn't good enough for other people. She also suffered with bulimia and anorexia and wanted love and acceptance. For many years, she craved acceptance from her parents as well as her partner, J D Salinger.

So who is Joyce Maynard? Whilst raising a family (she has one daughter and two sons who are now teenagers), Maynard continued to work as a writer. Most Australians would know Maynard's recent novel *To Die For* which was made into a film by Gus Van Sant and starred Nicole Kidman. Earlier on, she published *Baby Love* a novel she describes as:

The experience of great, over-whelming love and attachment and a crippling sense of loss on the one hand, and sets those feelings in direct contrast with the experience of parenthood.

The book was well received, but not by J D Salinger whom Maynard sent a copy to. He told her: "I read this book you sent...this thing you call...your novel... Though why you thought I'd want to see it I can't imagine." He speaks as if he were handling a piece of rotten meat.

In 1984, Maynard began her weekly column for *The New York Times Magazine*. It was called "Domestic Affairs". Twenty other newspapers signed up for the series. She gained a wide number of committed readers. Joyce Maynard describes the column as telling the public about her family which "is struggling every day and falling far short of perfection". Like "Domestic Affairs", *At Home Alone in the World* is another example of the openness Maynard displays about her personal life.

At Home Alone in the World begins with the relationship between Maynard's father and mother. Her father, an aspiring artist and reluctant academic, was also an alcoholic. His alcoholism remained a family secret for many years. Maynard felt ashamed of this family secret. Her mother, like many women of her generation, was frustrated by the lack of career options. She wanted to succeed as a writer, however was discouraged because she was a mother and a wife. Consequently, she placed her hopes and aspirations with the success of her daughters.

By the age of 18, Joyce Maynard had published a piece in *The New York Times* titled "An 18 year old looks back on her life". Her picture was on the front of the newspaper. The response to her article was enormous. She received hundreds of letters including one from Salinger who warned her of the danger fame would bring her. In her memoirs, she looks back, realising that Salinger was warning her against people like himself. Yet she proceeded to begin a love affair with him.

Until Joyce Maynard's *At Home Alone in the World*, little was written about the personal life of J D Salinger. In 1988 Ian Hamilton wrote a biography titled *In Search of J D Salinger*, using letters Salinger wrote which were passed on to libraries. The biography had to be re-written when Salinger filed for copyright on all his written material. However, as

Joyce Maynard observes:

Without the letters, and with so few sources willing to speak of Salinger and so little information available, Hamilton has little to work with.

Unlike Hamilton, Joyce Maynard saw Salinger's private world first hand. She knows intimately about Salinger's unusual lifestyle. Whilst unable to publish the letters he sent to her, she is able to explain what he said within those letters. She does this very well.

In *At Home Alone in the World* we learn that Salinger is a critic of the material world. He tells Joyce Maynard she must detach herself from materialism, such as desiring to become famous. He tells her she must eat certain foods and meditate for certain periods of the day. Joyce Maynard does all of this with great obedience. She wants to please yet he rarely. He is often angry with her lack of discipline.

It seems unusual that at 53 Salinger felt he could demand that Joyce Maynard stop desiring material possessions. What is more unusual, however, is that he saw his lover, Maynard, as something of a little girl. In a conversation with Joyce Maynard and her sister Rona, Salinger revealed that he saw them both as "little girls".

It is not surprising that Salinger, with his cult like status, has many fans who will criticise Maynard's decision to reveal the personal side of J D Salinger. Many will refuse to hear any criticism of J D Salinger. There appears to be a problem with separating the product from the producer. To some reviewers, *At Home Alone in the World* is a bitter book that invades the privacy of J D Salinger. Reviewer for the *Weekend Australian* Erica Wagner, for instance, argued that Joyce Maynard's autobiography was "a nasty piece of

work". Even before the book was published Joyce Maynard found that her old English teacher, who knew Maynard when she was with Salinger, viewed her decision to write about Salinger as a violation of his privacy. Others would tell her it was exploitation. But Anne Summers wrote recently in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, that women, like Joyce Maynard are beginning to show us the private worlds of celebrities such as Salinger - a side of life never mentioned in the past.

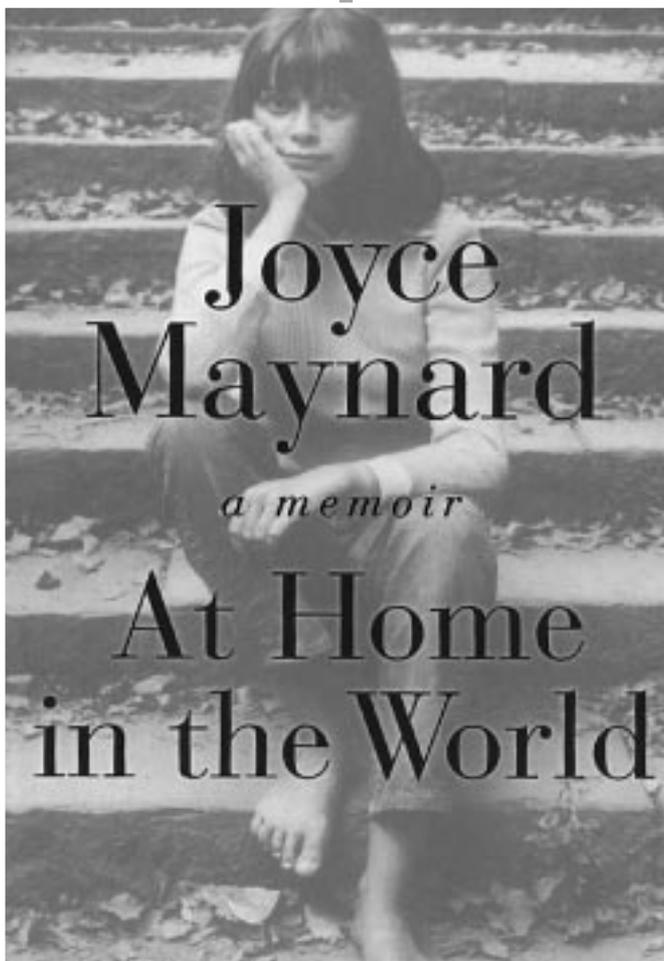
After 18 months living with Salinger, Maynard is told, "You'd better go home now...You need to clear your things out of my house." Years later, she would discover that she was not the only young woman to be enticed into Salinger's life by his letters. Salinger, despite his necessity for privacy, shared his life with many young women and later dumped them.

When Salinger discovered Maynard was writing about their relationship, he exclaimed, "You mean to exploit your relationship with me, I suppose?". Maynard replied:

It may be true that someone standing in this doorway has exploited someone else who's standing in this doorway. I will leave it to you

to meditate on which one of us is which.

It is certain that many will continue to criticise this book because of Maynard's decision to write about J D Salinger. But those who can detach themselves from the cult surrounding Salinger, will find an absorbing piece of storytelling surrounding the private life of one woman - and the once elusive J.D. Salinger.



THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES - EXPOSING POST- MODERNISM

Christian Killin

It's a fine line that one treads as a scientist with more than a smattering of knowledge concerning the arts. To know when to nod knowingly and to know when to say "bollocks". The problem is that you don't want to overstep the mark and criticise provinces that are not strictly your own - nor do you want to let bald sophistry go by - not just unnoticed but sycophanti-cally lauded.

The experience that I had when I attempted Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* is illustrative of this point.¹ I would find myself having read several pages and still be parched for meaning. As one used to being able to stare for long enough at complicated pages of formulae in order to draw together the delicate gossamer of their logic, I found the experience most disconcerting - I could not for the life of me guess at what this bald Frenchman was getting at.

On the other hand being equally at home soaking in an Ondaatje novel I did not think it just came down to the prosaic nature of my thinking. Maybe he wasn't saying anything at all.

Maybe my paradigm (god I hate that word) was subsumed by his paradigm² - the old "my paradigm's bigger than your paradigm" conundrum. Maybe I should wear my pocket protector with more pride and stop masquerading as a beret wearer.

So it was with great mirth/relief that I heard of "Sokal's hoax" in 1996. In that year, Alan Sokal, Professor of Physics at New York University had submitted an article "Transgressing the boundaries: Toward a transformative hermeneutics of quantum gravity" to the cultural studies journal *Social Text*. This mischievous article is little more than a meaningless concatenation of postmodern jargon laced with some scientific terminology - terminology with which only a fraction of the readership could possibly be expected to be conversant. Needless to say it was accepted by the journal. Sokal later revealed his hoax and howls of derision ensued from science faculties around the world.

In the wake of this delightful little incident Sokal and a co-author Jean Bricmont, Professor of Theoretical Physics at the University of Louvain (Belgium) launched an equally damaging attack in the form of *Impostures Intellectuelles*. First published in France in 1997 this book stirred up indignation in intellectual circles around the world. In the following year the cleverly entitled *Intellectual Impostures* was released in English. Its most glowing endorsements were the

Monty Pythonesque put-downs on the back cover uttered by the very French intellectuals whose movement comes under attack in the work.

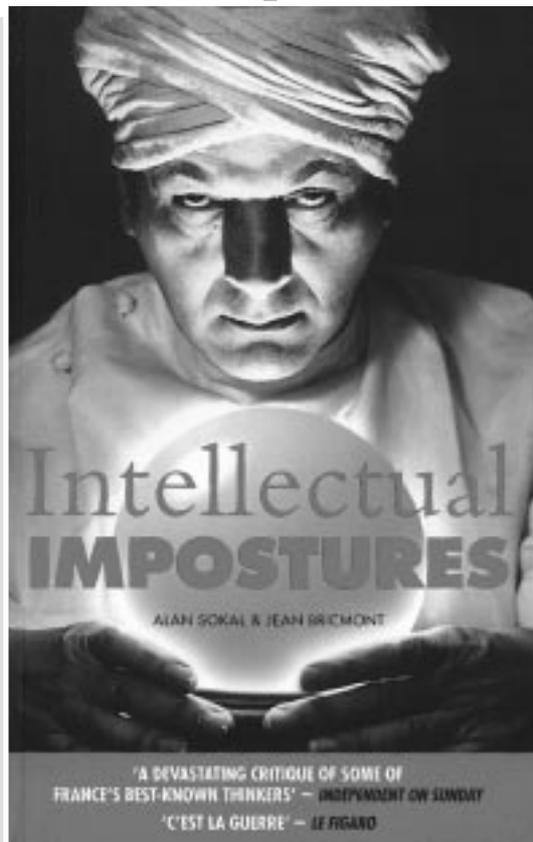
From Kristeva: "Disinformation...a politically insignificant product".

From the master, Derrida (who was spared from criticism in the work because he refrains from resorting to scientific terminology in his work - apparently he needs no props in order to obfuscate): "Le pauvre Sokal"

I like a good war.

So what could be more damaging than a respected journal publishing an article which was later revealed by the author to be utter

hogwash? What *Intellectual Impostures* does is to look in detail at the works of some eight post-modernists/post-structuralists and to examine in detail the way in which these writers abuse scientific terminology in their work. This might sound pedantic - but it is not. It is one thing to talk loosely



of creative “energy” and the like but it is completely another thing to deliberately use abstruse scientific and mathematical jargon to bamboozle one’s audience. And that is exactly what each of the authors who are analysed does in their work.

Perhaps they were hoping that any serious scientist could not wade through the intellectual detritus to get to the bits of blatant charlatanry. A couple of examples should suffice.

Jacques Lacan, the famous psychoanalyst, in the conference on *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, 1966:

This diagram [the Möbius strip] can be considered the basis of a sort of essential inscription at the origin, in the knot which constitutes the subject. This goes much further than you may think at first, because you can search for the sort of surface able to receive such inscriptions. You can perhaps see that the sphere, that old symbol for totality, is unsuitable. A torus, a Klein bottle, a cross-cut surface, are able to receive such a cut. And this diversity is very important as it explains many things about the structure of mental disease. If one can symbolise the subject by this fundamental cut, in the same way one can show that a cut on a torus corresponds to the neurotic subject, and on a cross-cut surface to another sort of mental disease.

I can assure the non-scientist that the mathematical content of this statement is devoid of meaning. More importantly, even if these words did possess meaning it is unclear how they were intended to clarify the argument for the audience. The audience is hardly expected to be conversant with the notions of mathematical topology.

This is not an isolated incident in Lacan’s work. Sokal and Bricmont have managed to dredge up numerous examples of the Lacan’s sophistry. With patience and good humour they examine the relevant passages and try to explain the scientific concepts invoked and they point out why their use in these contexts is totally absurd.

From Baudrillard, a name which arouses gasps of admiration in university cafes around the world, we have this gem:

In the Euclidean space of history, the

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shortest path between two points is a straight line, the line of Progress and Democracy. But this is only true of the linear space of the Enlightenment. In our non-Euclidean *fin de siècle* space, a baleful curvature unfailingly deflects all trajectories. This is doubtless linked to the sphericity of time (visible on the horizon of the end of the century just as the earth's sphericity is visible on the horizon at the end of the day) or the subtle distortion of the gravitational field. ...By this retroversion of history to infinity, this hyperbolic curvature, the century itself is escaping its end.

Once again the metaphors which are employed do not help to convey the basic ideas in any way. The non scientist reader is left in doubt as to their own erudition (how can they have been expected to know Baudrillard was going to slip in a bit of Einstein's general relativity into his treatise). The scientist reader is left in paroxysms of laughter.

The tactic which the Sokal and Bricmont use, is to attack the tricksters on "home" turf. They seek out those writings in which the post-modernists appeal to scientific concepts to bolster their arguments (authority). In order to "clarify" their neo-relativist diatribe these writers have appealed unashamedly to scientific concepts - concepts which have little or no relation to the issues under discussion. To make matters worse it appears at first blush that their understanding of the scientific analogies which they employ is terribly flawed. At best it is tragically superficial.

So why do they employ the verbiage of the scientific community (a community which, I might add, they have little time for)? The standard defense is to scoff at the way in which these works are taken too literally. The allusion to scientific concepts is intended only as a metaphor - those who criticise are derided as tedious pedants.

Sokal and Bricmont's eminently sensible reply is that metaphors are surely intended to clarify the argument. In the hands of these authors they are used solely as an instrument to intimidate the audience.

Each of the works which are analysed are given their own chapter. Scattered amongst these chapters are more general philosophical notes concerning the overall significance of post-modernism and the problems inherent in it. So if one tires of the detailed exegeses of the post-modernists works as I did (the fraud is so un-subtle that the joke wears a bit thin

after while), then one may seek relief in the chapters which analyse how post-modernism stands in relationship to philosophy in general. In particular it tries to ascertain in what ways post-modernism is not just a rehashing of relativism. It explores the perils of following these philosophies to their extreme; spectres in the form of solipsism (a belief that there is no external world) and in the form of radical scepticism (the concession that maybe there is an external world but the nature of such a world is not knowable by humans). It is Sokal's contention that none of these post-modernists actually hold either of these beliefs. In fact it is contended that it would be impossible to be a functioning human being whilst adhering to these theories' basic tenets.

One of the problems with *Intellectual Impostures* is that it will convince few except those in the scientific community that the thinkers involved are frauds. This is because the work's central premise is that these thinkers have little or no knowledge of science yet freely employ these concepts in order to clarify their arguments. It takes a fairly deep education within the sciences and mathematics to appreciate the depth of the faux pas which these thinkers commit. Hence the non-scientist reader has to take it on trust that Sokal and Bricmont are telling the truth when it comes to Lacan et al's fraudulence. The non-scientist reader cannot help but notice, however, the utter self assurance with which the post-modern theorists propound their rantings.

Intellectual Impostures tries to restore some credibility to the notion of theory - a notion which in the hands of these French Intellectuals has become horribly distorted. A theoretical framework should attempt to explain a bewildering corpus of facts. It is not intended to impress an audience of non-comprehending sycophants. Sokal and Bricmont's point is clear - theories are meant to increase understanding not to create an orgy of self-congratulatory and self-referential blathering.

Endnotes :

¹ Foucault is actually considered to be one of the more intelligible continental philosophers of the latter half of this century. Some of his earlier works are actually more understandable for example *Discipline and Punish* or *Madness and Civilisation*. It is when he starts to analyse the structure of knowledge itself that things get very hazy.

² This is a problem many scientists seem to ignore. Though they should be aware of the nature of their discipline - the constant overturning of old theoretical frameworks - they adopt the naive but practical approach of considering science to be truth. This kind of thing has always made me more eager to understand what people outside my discipline (particularly in philosophy) are saying.

Christian Killin is a quantitative analyst who is completing a PhD in artificial intelligence.

AUSTRALIA'S POPULATION - TIRED BROWN TRACTS

Anne Henderson

It's official. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, without significant immigration in the future, Australia's population will start to level out around the year 2030 and thereafter depopulate.

The news will be welcomed by greens like Tim Flannery who recommends an optimum population for Australia of 6-12 million. But take a trip to Tasmania and it's obvious that, even when propped up by Commonwealth funding, depopulation can be a gloomy story. Or cast a glance at Japan's economic slump. According to Professor Paul Krugman of MIT, it's about demographics. He told *Business Sunday's* Michael Pascoe in November that "Japan is structurally worse than the rest of us ... because of a shrinking working aged population from now on until as far as the eye can see."

In an era of rapid globalisation, Australia is going isolationist when it comes to people. Unlike immigrant Canada and the US, Australia's immigration program is contracting. A new look Fortress Australia is back, although just as inward looking and prejudiced as earlier models.

The latest tract in Fortress Australia outpourings is poet and environmentalist Mark O'Connor's *This Tired Brown Land* (Duffy & Snellgrove, 1998). O'Connor takes up where anti-population theorists Malthus and Paul Ehrlich left off. He weaves in and out of the multicultural debate, indigenous issues, the ageing society (a myth he says), consumerism, media politics, the environment and so on.

O'Connor concludes that, "Australia, like the world, is now full up." Immigration must stop, along with Australia's "bizarrely high" birth rates. He approves China's one child policy regardless of its social harm.

Only the paranoid will believe all they read in *This Tired Brown Land*. O'Connor is in alienation overdrive. Page after page, he offers exaggeratedly negative reports of Australia. Over population, potential food shortages, Melbournians "drinking treated sewerage within twenty years", no decent

topsoils anywhere, immigrants (global polluters) invading our fragile Australia. Frightening scenarios that can be very persuasive.

Wading through it, I remembered anti-communist intellectual, the late Dr Frank Knopfmacher of Melbourne University. His interpretations of Soviet totalitarianism were chillingly authentic but his view of the West was invariably overly pessimistic.

Under a blue lampshade, in his suburban home in Gardenvale Melbourne, the loquacious Knopfmacher would regale guests, over coffee and cake, with his vision of Cold War demise.

The US would collapse as a world power. Kissinger he feared was the court jester of the White House. Educational standards had disintegrated; the long march through the institutions had become a quick march followed by surrender; we had already lost the Third World War to the Soviets; and the lunatics had taken over the asylum, etc.

After such predictable dissertation, we would emerge into the Gardenvale night air. Stars would be shining, perhaps a moon, residents asleep, curtains drawn. No gunfire of the Third World War disturbed us as we drove off.

At page 49 of *The Tired Brown Land*, my Canberra bound plane struck slight turbulence. Sitting by a window, I had just read O'Connor's words, "Fly by air [how else I wondered] - take a window-seat - and see how much less green lies below you than when you flew last." Glancing out the window as we bumped to a landing, I observed how green the landscape looked, dams full, streams obvious, grey blue forests where clearing hadn't been made. Like the Gardenvale experience, it didn't live up to predictions.

The new jargon for discussion of immigration intakes is "population policy". To environmentalists like O'Connor this is code for severe cutbacks in immigration numbers. Australia cannot support increased population growth.

Ignore the fact that Australia has arable land equivalent to France and Britain combined, vast natural resources where less than half of one per cent of the world's population occupy around five per cent of the world's land, or our world class advances in food technology. No more people from outside is the mantra.

This Tired Brown Land is a flawed polemic. O'Connor tips scorn on anyone he can't agree with. Rod McGeoch's pro-immigration lobby group, the Committee for Sydney, is "presumptuously-named"; Malcolm Fraser has an "arrogant upperclass voice";

those in favour of cultural pluralism are the “multicultural industry”; Labor MPs have used the “politics of division”, had “rat-cunning” and were “affluent plump Australians”. Real estate agents, economists, builders of shopping complexes and the housing industry are baddies.

Not satisfied just with name calling, O'Connor also distorts his sources. He supports his case at times by quoting from the 1988 FitzGerald Report. But he conveniently ignores the report's conclusions that Australia should take around 150,000 immigrants annually on economic grounds. An article I wrote in 1997, arguing against the Hansonist line on immigrants, is interpreted as claiming all opponents of immigration are “irrational Hansonists”. I never wrote anything of the sort.

But it is the misuse of Kim Beazley's address to the ALP's national conference in 1998, that finally exposes *This Tired Brown Land* for its lack of real research. Beazley had argued for “a proper population policy” and that Australia needed “a policy which factors in the future of industry and regional development; infrastructure planning; and the impact on the natural environment.”

In *This Tired Brown Land* O'Connor interprets this as calling for cuts in immigration. “For the reasons set out in this book,” O'Connor writes, “I believe Kim Beazley is right I wish him well. He is the only current leader of a major Australian political party, apart from Bob Carr in NSW Labor, with the vision to be thinking along these lines.”

However, by the time his book was published, O'Connor had become aware that by “population policy” Beazley meant increased immigration. In an address on 3 August 1998, Beazley argued strongly for a future Australia that returned to higher immigration rates.

Firstly, because the Australian population is ageing - ie. not producing enough young citizens to cope with the burden of the increasing proportion of elderly who need government services. Birthrates won't solve the problem so we are going to need young, healthy immigrants.

Secondly, because of globalisation. “Australians must begin to understand,” said Beazley, “that no-one in this increasingly competitive and interconnected world owes a small country like Australia anything.” In other words, we need to grow faster.

O'Connor, in a postscript, admits his mistake.

Like Frank Knopfelmacher, O'Connor is plausible on the surface. But they both rely too heavily on social theory and predictions based on limited analysis. For Knopfelmacher, the Cold War was an ongoing confrontation between the forces of democracy against the corrupt forces of totalitarianism. The game plan didn't change. But he never factored in modernity, a breakdown of the Soviet system economically, Soviet citizens who listened to Radio Free Europe and who even travelled beyond the Iron Curtain at times and liked what they saw.

For O'Connor, as for Malthus, technological advance is never considered. Malthus thought that population would outrun the growth of production. But as populations increased so did production. Malthus' predictions did not eventuate. O'Connor's similar pessimism ignores scientific and technological advances. Denver Colorado's crisis pollution and brown cloud problem a few years ago was not solved by depopulation but by an enlightened and environmentally conscious citizenry. And the population kept happily growing.

Likewise O'Connor's view of Australia ignores increasing urbanisation and closer settlement. More people do not have to take up more acreages at the rate of earlier settlements. High rise, Manhattan style living is gaining popularity in cities like Sydney and Melbourne where most Australians live.

It's fair enough to improve our ecological awareness and behaviour. Tracts like O'Connor's, however, risk being counterproductive. Australia needs enlightened conservation, and a new attitude to resource management. Israel with its high rates of immigration could teach Australia plenty about water conservation and food technology.

Bob Carr likes to boast of multilingual Sydney that attracts investment and won the Olympic Games bid. All of which was made possible by Australia's high immigration intakes of the 1980s. That diversity will decline within decades if not replaced by non English speaking immigrants.

But perhaps pro immigrationists shouldn't worry. The head of Belgium's immigration task force reminds us all, “As long as the pull is there, people will keep coming, no matter what.”

Expect more Fortress Australia tracts.

Anne Henderson is Deputy Director of The Sydney Institute.

BOOK REVIEWS

John McConnell

AUSTRALIA AT THE CROSSROADS: RADICAL FREE MARKET OR A PROGRESSIVE LIBERALISM?

By Fred Argy

Allen & Unwin, pb, 1998, rrp \$ 24.95

ISBN 1 86448 669 4

Australia at the Crossroads portrays a modified economic vision for Australia. One that differs to the vision prevailing in official circles. Not that Fred Argy is a stranger to official circles. He has been an adviser to a number of Australian governments. His crossroads present us with three choices.

One path leads back to old-style state paternalism. The author argues convincingly against a return to the age of high protection and high regulation. Another choice is to continue on down the present path. Fred Argy calls this the radical free market path. But this hard liberal agenda is too competitive, too harsh, he says. It enshrines competitive individualism. The social costs are too high. They outweigh economic and employment gains in some instances. Hard liberalism is an alternative label for economic rationalism or economic fundamentalism. The author is critical of hard liberalism on three counts: goals, intermediate targets, and instruments.

Fred Argy's choice is the third possibility. This is the progressive liberal path, the choice, he argues, that is caring and consensual. It permits trade-offs between per capita incomes and social welfare goals. It elevates social quality of life and employment goals to a higher priority. Enhanced social welfare is the promise. Comparable growth outcomes may well accompany diminished social costs. However, progressive liberals are willing to trade-off some efficiency gains in the pursuit of equity and employment goals. They are more sensitive to distribution.

This is good economics, the author says. He adds that it is also good for equality of citizenship and sense of community. Unlike many opponents of economic rationalism, Fred Argy does not seek to dismiss gains beginning to permeate the economy from economic reform. In fact, he speaks favourably of much reform. Here, indeed, is a problem for the

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author. His very reasonably expressed arguments are likely to disappoint many predisposed to support his progressive liberal economic banner.

They will balk at the acceptance of economic restructuring. They will find it difficult to assent to the stated preference for free markets where markets are doing the job. And they will find it difficult to support inter-vention designed to improve rather than to supplant market operations, where markets are not performing.

Fred Argy believes that the Australian economy does not need major surgery. There is no need to turn society upside down, he argues. After all, the Australian economy has performed reasonably well during recent decades. The 1990s reflect "better ways of doing and organising things" - especially in transport, electricity, communications and GBEs (government business enter-prises). "The Australian economy has performed better since 1991-92", the author remarks, "especially in real per capita incomes, profits, savings, investments, competitiveness, trade orien-tation, workplace flexibility, productivity (in both public and private sectors), inflation and growth stability". This amounts to quite an endorse-ment of reform.

Referring to GDP, he says it is "hopelessly inadequate". GDP, of course, is an imperfect indicator of production, let alone some pointer toward community well being. Although broad income measures reveal that we do not rank all that badly on net income differentials or gender, skill, and age-wage dispersion to date, Fred Argy senses deepening social divisions and tensions. The early signs are there, he suggests, of a dysfunctional society. Drug abuse, fear of assault and theft, rising family stress and breakdown, child abuse, youth suicide, declining mutual trust and sense of community, scepticism towards politicians and the political process, social anger, resentment and discrimination are all too prevalent in today's society.

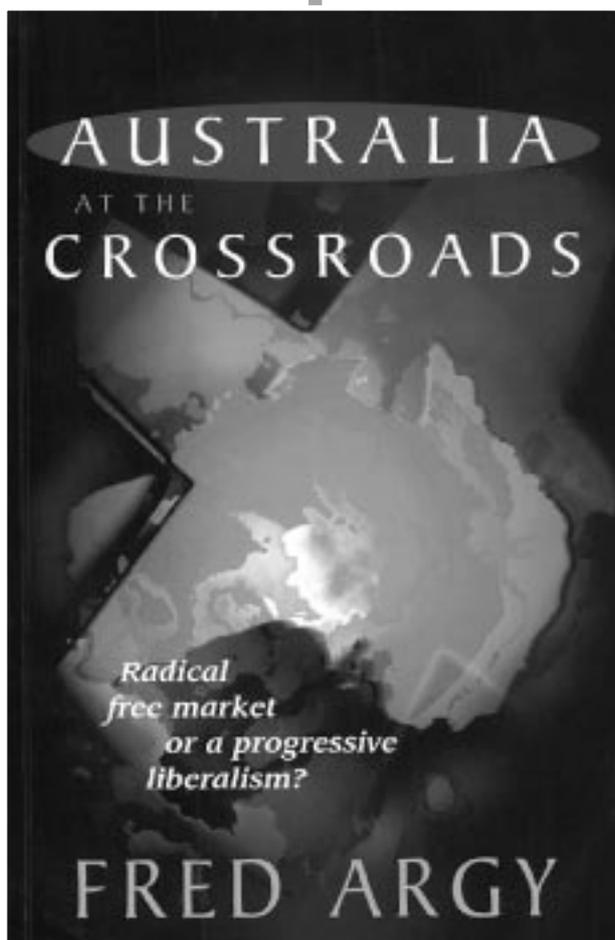
There are growing concerns about access to quality health and education services.

While these problems do not stem solely from economic sources, there is nothing to be gained by missing the connections. Globalisation, the author argues, is adding to "a widespread sense of national helplessness". There is a growing fear, perhaps, that we are losing control of the forces that shape our lives. Fred Argy refers to a number of concerns about the impact of globalisation. These include a changing balance of power between labour and capital, rising job insecurity, macro-economic policy constraints, rearranged policy goals and priorities, powerful financial markets, destabilising capital flows and perverse effects on equity and employment.

Australia at the Crossroads was being completed as consciousness was dawning that the Asian miracle was converting into a crisis. Perhaps yesterday's economic heresy is being transformed into tomorrow's conventional wisdom; witness the changing attitudes towards curbs on international capital flows in the light of the Asian economic crisis and its global aftermath. Fred Argy fears that we may be entering a period where pressures associated with globalisation and the shift towards small government - and the policy inclinations of the Howard Government - will intensify the difficulty of providing shelter to the

poor. He believes that an appropriate policy switch will enable the long-term trend in unemployment to be shifted into reverse without undermining progress in material living standards. This way, Australia can retain a sense of fair play, social stability and cohesion.

According to the author, this will involve tackling a free market coalition comprising business, bureaucracy and government. He sets out six ways to mobilise support for progressive liberalism. *Australia at the Crossroads* divides into six parts: economic performance, the dangers of economic



extremism, progressive liberalism, international evidence, the battleground between hard and progressive liberalism and concluding comments. It is a book well worth reading.

**IT'S YOUR CONSTITUTION:
GOVERNING AUSTRALIA TODAY**
By Cheryl Saunders
The Federation Press, pb, 1998,
rrp \$16.95
ISBN 1 86287 244 9

The lack of familiarity among many Australians with the content of the Australian Constitution contrasts with the importance of the document. *It's Your Constitution* is a welcome addition to the available publications on this subject. Because Cheryl Saunders has produced a book that discusses the Constitution with a commendable clarity. The language is straight-forward. Issues are discussed in chapters of four or five pages in length. There is a logical flow to the sequence of the ideas and the organisation of the 27 chapters.

Professor Saunders is Director of the Centre for Comparative Constitutional Studies at the University of Melbourne. The book's introductory chapters discuss the meaning of a constitution along with some of the important issues. Chapters 6-14 focus on exercising a say in the political system. Individual chapters address the idea of parliament, democratic elections, the bicameral nature of parliament, democratic rights and amending the Constitution.

Making decisions is the theme linking chapters 15-21. Here the focus is on government and parliament, the head of state, the judiciary and Commonwealth State finances. Five chapters follow on the limits on government. The rule of law checks and balances, and the separation of powers are dealt with in this section of *It's Your Constitution*.

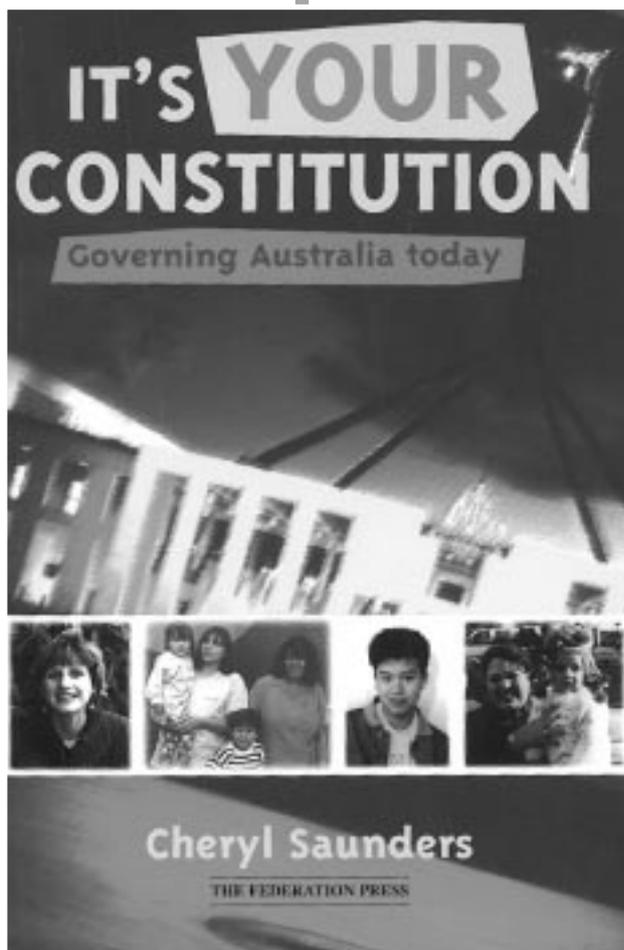
The final chapter has an eye on the future. It goes under the heading of the Constitution turning one hundred. The approaching centenary, of course, presents an opportunity for Australians to become more informed about this very important document, and to place it under renewed scrutiny. Cheryl Saunders believes that it is more important that appropriate evaluation is undertaken than ensuring that such review is completed within any particular time-line. She considers that the Constitution has done a good job, on balance. High Court interpretation has added an element of flexibility to a document that has changed little in wording.

Nevertheless, there are significant omissions. There is no mention of the prime minister or cabinet. There is no bill of rights, although opinion is divided on whether such an inclusion is desirable. There is no clear statement on the governor-general's powers. Commonwealth-state finances are not resolved satisfactorily.

One searches in vain for general statements about Australian values and aspirations. What is there to inspire the collective Australian spirit? Yet constitutions declare nations most important rules. They summon up ideals to which individuals can aspire to and celebrate with their fellow citizens.

The Australian Constitution is unable to fulfill such a unifying or uplifting dimension, or indeed to provide common ground with indigenous people. Should Australians decide to become a republic and change the head of state, then a further impetus will be provided to moves to reform the document. Cheryl Saunders states that her purpose in

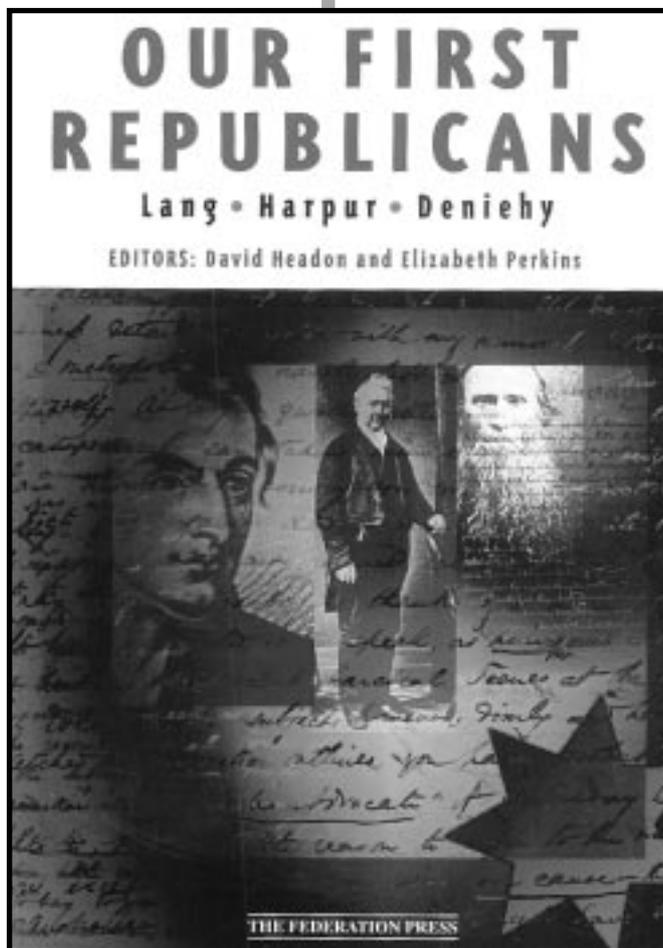
writing *It's Your Constitution* was to explain what it is, what it says, why it matters. In approaching how much say we have in politics, who makes government decisions and how, and what limits apply to government, the author provides informative material on the meaning of democracy, the idea of



parliament and parliamentary representation, parliament and executive relations, as well as intergovernmental relationships.

There is discussion on the words of the Constitution in the context of modern developments and trends. Does information technology, for example, beckon us in the direction of some application of direct democracy? Democratic decision-making by e-mail perhaps? *It's Your Constitution* is a splendid book. In addition to a wide general readership, it would be good if senior secondary students throughout Australia encountered this publication. It is easy to comprehend. It is not laden with references to High Court decisions or to sections of the Constitution. It focuses on the issues of central importance. The one disappointment is that it is all text. Some photographs, illustrations or cartoons would add to the book's appeal.

**OUR FIRST
REPUBLICANS:
JOHN DUNMORE
LANG, CHARLES
HARPUR, DANIEL
HENRY DENIEHY:
SELECTED
WRITINGS
1840-1860.
Edited by
David Headon
and
Elizabeth Perkins
The Federation
Press, pb, 1998,
rrp \$ 29.95
ISBN 1 86287 265 1**



Feel like reading what our first republicans had to say as centenary approaches? The opportunity is there in *Our First Republicans*. David Headon and Elizabeth Perkins have edited selected writings of John Dunmore Lang, Charles Harpur and Daniel Henry Deniehy. They have made these selections more accessible by eliminating archaic spellings and excessive capitalisation. *Our First Republicans* includes a short introduction to each selection. The eleven selections from the prolific pen of John Dunmore Lang are grouped appropriately under the title: "Going the whole hog". No doubt about it. This

vigorous republican called it as he saw it. While seeking to attract Protestant farm workers to counter increasing Catholic arrivals ("a thoroughly Jesuitical device of mixed marriages"), he wrote thus to Earl Grey: "...I am happy to say I have succeeded far beyond my own highest expectations, although I have experienced nothing from your lordship's office but incivility and obstruction."

As for Earl Grey, he deserved "dismissal and impeachment". I wonder what he would have said about Bill Clinton? John Dunmore Lang identified with American revolutionary writers. He saw New South Wales as the future America of the

Southern Hemisphere. He hoped for the day when the country would be called the United Provinces of Australia. As the editors point out, Lang's writings reveal him as perverse and combative, as one who questioned authority and class-conscious social conventions. He exhibited a distrust of power, particularly of government from a distance.

There was a skill evident in London, Lang thought, at finding unqualified men for important posts in the colony. Any local government including the very worst to emerge from popular election, he believed, would be incomparably better for the colony

than the best available in Great Britain. Following the Eureka rebellion, Lang drafted a Declaration of Independence. At one stage, he invoked the spectre of armed colonial revolt. The outspoken Presbyterian minister and Calvinist exercised a strong impact from the 1830s to the 1870s. He died in 1878.

The republicanism of Charles Harpur (1813-1868) was founded on a belief in social equality, individual liberty and the spiritual dimension of human life. He was no supporter of the English class system or of what he perceived to be its greedy monarchy.

Charles Harpur believed that Australia represented the opportunity for a new and better culture to emerge. This would involve a blending of wisdom emanating from the new environment with the best values inherited from European society. His belief did not blind him to the limitations of the spiritual, cultural and political environment in which he lived. Indeed, he expressed concern about the available leaders. They were too self-interested and politically inept, he thought, to lead an independent Australia.

Harpur considered there was a natural human progression towards republican and democratic beliefs. Universal suffrage and universal education offered the means of achieving a suitable political democracy. Ultimately, he believed, the form of government was of secondary importance. Moral and intellectual rights were far more decisive. So he favoured delaying the move away from the monarchy given the state of the local leadership on offer. Charles Harpur's writings also expressed support for physical action to establish an Australian republic.

Daniel Henry Deniehy died prematurely. His was the shortest public life of the three, yet the book devotes more pages to Deniehy than to either of the other two republicans. Headon and Perkins state that Deniehy's *Goulburn Herald* editorials re-present "Australia's most challenging republican output by a single author". Daniel Henry Deniehy's involvement with the *Goulburn Herald* was to end with his election to the NSW Legislative Assembly. There, he quickly became an isolated figure, a situation connected to his intelligence combined with a capacity for satire. At one stage, Deniehy attacked cultural-cringing locals, referring to them as geebungs, a term subsequently popularised by Banjo Paterson.

Our First Republicans included 16 pages of photographs. Headon is Director of the Centre for Australian Cultural (Canberra) and teaches English at the University of NSW. Dr Perkins is Associate Professor of English at James Cook University.

John McConnell is the co-author of several senior text books



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WILL ADDRESS

The Sydney Institute

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Wednesday 17 February 1999

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REVIEW OF THE REVIEWERS

Stephen Matchett

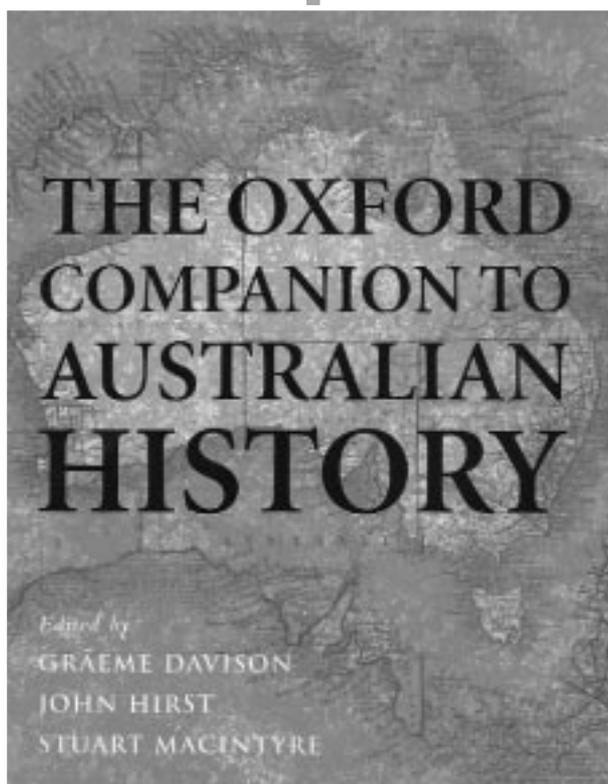
Australians have a curious relationship with history. We lack the epochal narratives of struggle, the fierce and bloody rites of passage, the speeches that symbolise a nation's coming of age. Even today, 40 years since deracinated English textbooks ceased to be the staples of school history, many readers still bury themselves in tales of other nation's conflicts. There is a fascination with the War Between the States among men who only have the sketchiest idea of the history of Federation. People who can mumble lines from the Declaration of Independence or Gettysburg Address have only the vaguest awareness of Chifley's "Light on the Hill" or Menzies "Forgotten People" addresses. The AIFs aside, Australia does not have much in the way of history as melodrama.

But in the last 30 odd years a genuine market for books and ideas about Australia's past has emerged and which still continues strong a decade after the Bicentenary.

For a supposedly pragmatic, present-centred and intellectually disinterested nation we have developed a remarkable fascination with our past. We watch polemicists and politicians invoke it in defence of their own particular prejudice. We delight in the historian as personality. We take sides in the disputes between the acolytes of St Manning and St Geoffrey. We variously agonise over dispossession of the original inhabitants or celebrate the triumphs of national building (by Anzacs or migrants depending on our age). We are even seeing the beginnings of a strange hybrid of green left and economic right as opponents of migration and advocates of protection invoke the shade of Alfred Deakin to argue for a fourth way in Australian public life.

The Labor Right has always understood the importance of history and respects a mantle of genuine scholarship, or at least an antiquarian mastery of names, dates and anecdotes.

For many Australians educated in the 1960s and 1970s Australian history is a straight forward whiggish tale of the long march of every bloke overcoming foreign masters and their toadies intent on stealing our resources, enlisting us in their wars, martyring our heroes, be they horses, boxers or prime ministers, and trammelling our own culture. As the times changed the tale grew to include first women then migrants and, in the last 20 years, indigenous Australians.



Throughout the long post war boom the Tories did not bother with the past and they still pay the price. The vision of the Whitlamite generation who benefited from the massive expansion of free tertiary education in the 1960s and 1970s established a popular orthodoxy that suited their times.

With the high moral ground denied them, conservatives have occasionally tried to play the nationalist card, suggesting that there is one, open and inclusive tale of the Australian tribe, a story of a practical, good natured, egalitarian culture in which good commonsensical men and

women are and were always welcome.

It is neither an engaging nor convincing tale and the conservatives have rarely had the elan or the arguments to dispute the broad left orthodoxy. Paul Sheehan's polemic, *Among the Barbarians* with its pantheon of Australian saints among heroic soldiers, explorers, farmers and otherwise unclassified nation builders, has sold an extraordinary number of copies in spite, perhaps because of, a not entirely comprehensive mastery of the scholarly sources.

It seems that, regardless of the cause in which history is enlisted, it sells. For the last 30 years we have published and bought bewilderingly large numbers of books on history. The sales of the scholarly monographs may not be large, there is

nowhere in the world that they are, but writers like Patsy Adam-Smith and Eric Rolls sell books by the barrow. Robert Hughes reached large numbers of general readers with *The Fatal Shore*. Thomas Keneally is about to reach more with his forthcoming history of the Irish diaspora, (about as Australian a subject as is possible). Scientist Tim Flannery had a surprising success with his edition of the diaries of Watkin Tench followed last year with those of Tench's contemporary, sailor John Nicols.

Under Paul Kelly *The Australian* turned the national past into a source of sales as he tapped into his readership's interest in history. And even symbolic acts of popular ancestor-worship are important in a way inconceivable 20 years ago. Chris Masters' recent *Four Corners* on the 80th anniversary of the Armistice commemorated the first AIF without the petty "mateship beat the Kaiser" ethnic triumphalism of conservative commentators.

The publication of *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (edited by Graeme Davidson, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre, \$79.95 h/c) should then be another triumph in this golden age for writers and readers of Australian history. A decade on from the enormous 12 volume bicentennial publishing project, *Australians: An Historical Library* the *Oxford Companion* should demonstrate how the discipline has taken stock of 30 years of research, scholarship and participation in the great political debates of our time.

Certainly the *Companion* does exactly that, it is a work of comprehensive scholarship. But a landmark during a golden age it is sadly not. In fact it is the work of a profession which in its present form, is under long siege. At the very time when there is an enormous national interest in how Australia came to be as it is and how Australians of all ethnicities and cultures variously suffered or prospered in the process academics are turning their back on their audience.

There are all sorts of reasons for the discipline's decline. Where once history was a staple of the Higher School Certificate around the country it is now a minor study. Lovers of moral panics will blame this on leftist plots and point to the Victorian Certificate of Education as an example of what a collapse in academic standards can do to a subject that requires scholarly vigour. The far more likely reason is the explosion in year twelve subject choice. Where once history stood as the only alternative to economics or German, now it competes with dozens of other disciplines.

One of the *Companion's* editors, Professor Stuart Macintyre, argued in a discipline review essay published by DEET that the profession of the academic historian peaked in the early 1970s at least in terms of numbers with 750 professionals. Twenty years later their number had shrunk to 450.

The contraction is not as dire as it appears. The old intellectual boundaries are collapsing and scholars who once would be historians now work within a "trans-disciplinary paradigm" researching and teaching in new composite areas such as, gender, cultural, leisure, tourism and heritage studies. The future of academic history probably lies in its ability to colonise these new disciplines and certainly the long fascination with women's history and more recently the history of Australian indigenous inhabitants is demonstrated by strong publication records.

But while the evolution of new areas of study might offer some hope of employment opportunities for young historians, the problem the profession faces is that what engages them often does not much interest the lay market. As Macintyre points out: "There is an urgent need to bridge the gap between academic historical research and publication, between the discipline and popular discussion."

The conservatives would argue that this is because the academy has embraced doctrines of the relativism of language and lost interest in explaining the past through primary sources; the written records of previous institutions and individuals. More simply it may be because academics take no interest or pleasure in the subjects that engross the rest of us. This is neither a good nor bad thing but it does explain the profession's decline at a time when the community is turning to the nation's past for evidence and ammunition for contemporary political battles.

The *Companion's* editors acknowledged the problem when interviewed for a long feature by Richard Yallop (*Australian*, September 12). According to Yallop they saw the discipline's problems as lying in the vocational spirit of the age that equates education with employment and has little place for the indulgences of historical study. How this pessimism fits with the enormous community interest in narrative history is an issue Yallop raised but did not answer.

It is however an issue that goes to the heart of the *Companion's* purpose. It is not a smart career move for scholars to ignore the popular market when university funding is tight but then again the scholar's function is never to play to the gallery.

The tenor of some of the early reviews of the *Companion* reflects this dichotomy. On one hand the conservatives decried everything they normally complain about. Not enough about the AIF, too much about social history that does not relate to the heroic triumph of decent men. Too much intellectual ephemera and not enough scholarship. On the other they criticised the *Companion* for its superabundance of scholarship, too much space on historiography and practitioners that will bore the general reader.

The editor's dilemma is of course far more complicated than this and has more to do with scholarly fashion as the humanities disengage with the community and retreat into methodological obscurity than it does in any resolute rejection of a public role.

The historical narrative of immigration, war and development, the general history of nation building and the campaign and party history, the sorts of books that general readers buy have never met with much interest in the academy. In an environment where written records are suspect and the old masculinist concerns of politics and economics out of favour, the gap between academic and general reader is wide.

This is most notable in the *Companion's* treatment of politics. The Split, surely the most significant political event of its generation, is lumped in with all party ruptures and covered in a bare 200 words. The DLP gets little more and the Labor Party's entry is shorter than that for the study of labour history. Similarly the Liberal Party receives less coverage than that of the various philosophies collectively known as liberalism.

But it is in the absorption with matters of primary interest to professional historians that the *Companion* demonstrates that it is largely a journal of record for the trade. There are an extraordinary number of entries for historians and discussions of specific specialities. Not all of the 120 odd historians are household names and some of the 80 entries on historical disciplines, particularly those on ancient doctrinal disputes verge on esoterica.

These are hardly hanging offences. Scholars are not obliged to service the interests of more general readers but to go where the pursuit of knowledge takes them and the *Companion* is better for it. Certainly the *Companion* is very heavy on subjects that would not have got a run in a volume like this published 50, perhaps even 30 years ago.

Most notable is the coverage of the enormous growth in scholarship on aspects of Aboriginal

history. There are listings on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, on art, on cultural ownership of that art, on history, language, myths, archaeology, land rites, the stolen generation, historiography, and government policy and land rites.

Future scholars will find these entries particularly significant in demonstrating how Australian writers began to come to terms with the history of relations between immigrant and indigenous Australians over 200 years. For a scholar wading through the record of bigotry that has so be-devilled the populist media and fringe politics since Mabo it will provide a sense of how Australia's opinion leaders are studying this most Australian dimension of the nation's history.

And while the idea of objectivity is discounted in these post-modern times the treatment of Aborigines in the *Companion* is a model of historical writing. The few moral judgements offered will give little comfort to the occasional literate bigot searching these pages for evidence of a leftist plot to denigrate the achievements of settler Australians. Thus Richard Broome concludes his entry on "massacres":

Many Australians now see the recognition of massacre as a prerequisite for reconciliation. What was once unmentionable is now openly discussed. This surely is a measure of our maturity as a nation. Now it needs to be discussed critically as a measure of our impartiality.

Overall the *Companion* is an excellent exercise in scholarship and a tribute to the editorial team. Three hundred historians produced 1600 entries which cover an extraordinary amount of ground and demonstrate just how much writing of Australian history has occurred in the last 20 years.

The old staples of political and economic history do not dominate and there are new subjects which many readers outside the academy may not recognise as sub sets of historical scholarship. Thus there are listings for "masculinity", "gender", "gay history", "lesbian history", "homosexual history", "sexuality" "feminist history" and "herstory". There is also the inevitable marginalia, with a page on Australians travelling and writing overseas and an entry, albeit short, on the game of *vigoro*.

There are also the inevitable and unavoidable editorial judgements which will variously delight and annoy. Including chronicler Wendy Lowenstein, journalist Anne Summers and scholar Humphrey McQueen for their contributions to Australian history and letters while ignoring Paul Kelly, Robert

Manne and Gerard Henderson will please some and strike others as questionable.

On the whole only the most determined nitpickers would find much to complain of in this comprehensive volume. Unsurprisingly the early reviews, save a few, do just that.

Peter Craven (*Australian* 16 September) took the easy path of pointing to the inevitable anomalies, inclusions and exclusions. He wondered why Erol Flynn, Peter Finch did not get guernseys and pointed to the *Companion's* appalling oversight in ignoring conductor Charles Mackerras' standing as "the world authority" on Janacek. For which offence the volume must surely soon appear in the remainder bins. Craven set the tone for most reviewers in pointing out the *Companion's* "structural peculiarities" including being more interested in people who write about history rather than those who make it. As example he pointed to the equivalent space allocated to Marxist historian V Gordon Childe and prime minister Ben Chifley.

The editors can take some comfort at failing to meet Craven's standards because he is certainly a hard man to please. His major complaint is that while no companion to British history would ever leave out Richard III this volume ignores Andrew Peacock. Perhaps the good ambassador should have locked up a couple of Kooyong pre-selection aspirants in a Toorak tower.

Despite Craven's quibbles the mantle of defender of the great humanist tradition fell to Peter Ryan (*Sydney Morning Herald* 17 October). Ryan has no doubt that history is in crisis and knows precisely who to blame:

Professional historians have largely vanished into the worm-holed woodwork of interpretation (and reinterpretation and revisionism). They are thus now more dealers in second hand wares than they are creators and storytellers. Or they have so specialised themselves that, were they in the medical faculty, they would be professors of ingrowing toenails or readers in dandruff.

Ryan argued that the *Companion's* failures sprang from its limitations on the three issues that make a great reference work; meticulous accuracy, an absence of controversy and an overall sense of a guiding hand, "an odd-sock drawer of articles from experts won't do. A reference work is not a symposium".

Nor was Ryan happy with the contents - "practitioners of political correctness will find small offence" - and pointed out, without feeling the need to state that it was a failing, that, "Aborigines get more space than both AIFs". Ryan's greatest grievance was his treatment, in reference to his well-known views on Manning Clark and that of Geoffrey Blainey, with regard to the manner of the latter gentleman's departure from Melbourne University:

From time to time the browsing reader wonders about uneasy spots in the Australian collective historiographical conscience, some of which the *Companion* buries tactfully in blandness, others which it dodges or denies. In either case, the result is something less than the whole truth.

There was more of the same from Maurice Dunlevy (*Canberra Times* 10 October) who grizzled (without substantiation) about the *Companion's* "distinct Melbourne bias", its emphasis on historiography, the absence of illustrations or a chronology and local history and the general failings of academic historians. The mean-spirited conclusion criticised the *Companion* for failing to meet Dunlevy's standards, without bothering to explain them:

The *Companion* would interest journalists, students, crossword addicts and conversation-makers but it wastes too much space on academic history and historians and devotes too little to the substance of history. History is too important to leave to academics.

David Day (*Australian*, 10 October) produced a superior but respectful and sympathetic version of the same argument. He acknowledged the care of the writing and the quality of scholarship but argued that the *Companion* laboured under the burden of being both a general reference work and a professional handbook of Australian historiography:

Many of the problems with this volume stem from its two-headed nature - trying to be a *Companion* to both Australian history and Australian historiography. The publishers should have had the courage of their convictions and split this Siamese twin of a book into two volumes, commissioning a general reference book that was truly comprehensive and definitive and a separate one for the specialist. As it stands, neither the general reader nor the specialist is likely to be satisfied.

No prizes for guessing which of the two volumes would do the better business.

Ray Cassin (*Sunday Age*, 18 October) produced the most thoughtful and positive of the reviews making the case for the relevance of academic history:

Given the influence that historians like Reynolds and Blainey have come to wield over the thinking of many people who are not historians and who do not spend much, if any, of their time reading the works of academic historians, it may seem odd that the history profession feels itself under threat.

Cassin did not argue that politicians and polemicists are generally in thrall to some (living or dead) historian, but he certainly found it odd that at the very time the discipline has become so politically important much of its academic practice is irrelevant outside the universities:

So, at a time when rival historical understandings exert such a profound influence on national political debate Australian students are gradually losing access to the kind of conceptual training that would help them come to terms with those understandings and form their own judgements.

Sadly Cassin declined to explain why, apart from blaming university funding cuts:

Vice-chancellors are forced to give priority to vocational courses - in the narrowest sense of the term - considered likely to attract fee-paying students. Traditional academic disciplines don't have that kind of cachet; it is not a problem unique to history or even to the humanities as a whole.

The possibility that the profession's recent directions do not appeal to the market is one obvious answer which Cassin declined to entertain (p. 25). Cassin's argument was strongest when he addressed the critics' main complaints; that the mix and balance of subjects in the *Companion* are faulty and that it is too remote from the interests of general readers in history. Thus he tackled Craven's "too much Childe, too little Chifley" argument head on:

Peter Craven has managed to miss the point comprehensively. ...Comparing the entries in a work such as this one on the basis of length is in itself an apples and oranges

exercise and does not take account of how the entries might be read together.

It is a point well made. The Chifley entry links to others; "postwar reconstruction", "light on the hill", "Australian Labor Party", "J.T. Lang", "Curtin", "Curtin", "Coombs" and "Evatt". The "Lang" link in turn refers readers to "child endowment", "Garden", "Depression", "Scullin", "Theodore", "Nairn" and "Keating". And so it goes.

The *Companion's* temper is not inclined to traditional political history but even in this case Cassin demonstrated that the cross references create a far more substantive analysis of an issue than a single entry in isolation would indicate. Cassin made his strongest point in defending the *Companion's* emphasis on historiography. The grand narratives of Marxism and liberalism "have frayed" as historians took up new academic concerns but the impact of ideas on the way Australians live is something the *Companion* is right to address:

We partly acquire our sense of identity through coming to understand the ways in which the narratives of our individual lives are embedded in the wider narrative of the communities in which we live. ... Browsing through such a work as the *Companion* is one way of reflecting on what narratives are still available to us as historians, and how they are related to the narratives favoured by earlier generations.

Cassin's was an excellent piece, well thought out and closely argued, a review that paid the three editors the respect that their scholarship and labour merit.

But in being true to the profession is the *Companion* too removed from the interest of lay readers of history? Is it in fact less triumph than symbol of a discipline in decline? They are issues Cassin raised but declined to answer:

Ultimately, work such as this will be judged by whether it helps us locate our own narratives on the wider narratives of that imagined community we call the nation. If the *Companion* serves that role it is likely to fulfil one of the goals of its editors and promote a revival in the formal study of Australian history.

A comment demonstrating how little confidence students of the past have in its future study.



GERARD HENDERSON'S MEDIA WATCH

Believe it or not, Sydney radio personality Alan Jones did not suddenly nail his colours to the political mast at the commencement of the 1998 Federal election campaign. There was no need. The fact is that Mr Jones has been flying the Liberal Party flag for aeons.

So much so that the top-rating 2UE breakfast host has become a predictable barracker for the Federal Liberals. Consequently it was no surprise when, in the lead up to the October 1998 Federal election, Alan Jones let all and sundry know that he was supporting John Howard and the Coalition - and that he did not think that Kim Beazley and his Labor team were up to the job. Change a few names, add some pack drill, and it was very much a repeat of Alan Jones's performance in the 1996 Federal election - and quite a few before that.

However, this time round, Alan Jones was not the only media personality whose sense of self importance triggered the need to advise the electorate-at-large about their voting intentions. As if anyone cared. Let's hear it from the Pompous Six.

ROBERT MANNE'S THREE PAGES OF ADVICE

Robert Manne was first out of the blocks. On 31 August 1998, even before the election date had been announced, Associate Professor Manne told readers of his *Sydney Morning Herald/Age* column:

At the last Federal election I voted for the Howard Coalition. This time I will not. I would like to explain, as straightforwardly as I am able, why.

There followed some 1200 words explaining why John Howard "will not have my vote". Yawn.

On 28 September 1998 Robert Manne decided it was time to advise Kim Beazley by means of a BIG TEASE. In his *Sydney Morning Herald/Age* column Robert Manne revealed that he had discovered the "last three pages" of the speech with which Kim Beazley had intended to close his address at the formal opening of the Labor election campaign. Mr Manne claimed that, at the last moment, these three pages "were hurriedly cast aside". However our

Robert had decided to "reproduce them here" - presumably for the benefit of *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Age* readers.

There followed a thousand or so words - allegedly by Kim Beazley - on the republic, immigration and "Aboriginal-European relations". Next came a hint in the final paragraph that this material may not have come from the last three pages of a Beazley address. Shock, Horror. Followed by an admission that the three pages in question were "the fabrication of some unknown political columnist whose head is buried in the clouds". Robert Manne, no less. Yes Robert Manne was the author of the famous "three pages". Yet more yawns. Send in the clouds, they've got to be clouds.

PIERS AKERMAN BAGS "OLEAGINOUS" LABOR

Piers Akerman was (yet) another columnist who believed that readers would be interested in his voting intentions - and that the political party of his choice would benefit from his advice.

On 29 September 1998 Mr Akerman commenced his *Daily Telegraph* column with some criticism of the Coalition government's "extraordinary ineptitude" during its first term. He went on to describe John Howard's team as mediocre. Then our Piers addressed himself to the BIG QUESTION - or rather, the BIG QUESTIONS - in somewhat jumbled prose:

The question: should the Coalition be re-elected? could...be answered yes - and no.

Yes, because it does offer genuine reform, it does offer a more realistic program of economic management, and it has a fair track record. No, because it failed to effectively deal with a number of outstanding problems in its first term, not withstanding a hostile Senate.

Unfortunately, the question: should the Labor Party be elected? can only be answered no - and no.

No and no. So there. And, just in case anyone missed the message, Piers Akerman offered even more

advice in a side column. He recommended that “all holders of pre-1985 assets should carefully consider Labor’s plans to hit them before marking their vote on Saturday”. He seemed unconcerned that the Coalition had not attempted to remove capital gains tax provisions with respect to assets obtained after 1985.

Just like Robert Manne, Piers Akerman considered that his advice might be useful to the party of his choice, even if time might prove to be a problem. Piers Akerman declared:

It’s too late now, but regular publication of full page advertisements featuring mugshots of these members of Labor’s team to remind the public of who could call the shots would have assisted the Coalition immeasurably.

Gee whiz. What a “you beaut” idea.

The targets Piers Akerman had in mind included “dolts like Gareth Evans, Simon Crean and Martin Ferguson” along with the “repellent and oleaginous Nick Bolkus”. Just in case anyone forgot which side he was barracking for, our man Piers condemned Labor’s election campaign which, he maintained, was “marked by smear, innuendo and distortion”.

Then he got heavily into the smear/innuendo/distortion genre himself by alleging that Labor had a “plan to reintroduce death duties by stealth in the guise of the reintroduction of capital gains taxes on pre-1985 assets”. This implies that the Howard Government is running a de-facto “death duties by stealth” taxation regime by applying a capital gains tax to post 1985 assets. But our Piers refrained from making this point. To use a favoured Akerman term, how oleaginous can you get?

It seems clear that the Liberals got the message as to which party Piers Akerman was supporting in 1998. The post election Liberal Party knees-up was held at the Sydney’s Wentworth Hotel. According to the *Australian Financial Review’s* “Rear Window” column, guests were divided according to yellow badges (they went to a special room) and blue badges (they mixed with the hoi polloi along with the red badge wearing media). It’s good to know that, although a member of the media, Piers Akerman received a yellow badge and was able to mix freely with the Liberal Party’s VIP guests. Good show, Piers.

GIBBO REVERTS TO (LABOR) TYPE

Mike Gibson like Robert Manne, voted for John Howard in 1996. And, like Robert Manne, he felt the need to tell his Radio 2GB listeners, and readers of his *Daily Telegraph* column, that he had changed his mind in 1998. Our Mike, you see, is a VERY PUBLIC

BLOKE. Followers of the *Daily Telegraph* read all about it on 30 September 1998.

One thing about which I have never had the slightest problem is telling you how I am going to vote. With a lot of people, their vote is sacrosanct. The ballot box is their confessional. “It’s none of your business,” they’ll say. “How I vote is between me and the ballot box.”

But how I vote is between me and my conscience. And because this column is a diary of what I do each day and how I feel, because it is a public airing of my conscience and the way that I am thinking, I have to tell you that on Saturday I’ll be voting Labor.

And so it went on, and on. Mainly about the “inequitable and iniquitous” Goods and Services Tax - and the further privatisation of Telstra. According to Gibbo, the Howard Government’s arguments supporting the full privatisation are an “insult to our intelligence”. So there.

MICHAEL DUFFY’S TWO VIEWS ON JOHN HOWARD

Michael Duffy weighed into the “Now I’ll tell you how I’m voting” genre on election day. Writing in the *Daily Telegraph* on 3 October 1998 he declared:

This election campaign has been so mind-numbingly boring, that, as many people have observed, it has not produced a party that clearly deserves to win. But it has done the next best thing - it has produced one that clearly deserves to lose.

Since Mr Duffy believed that the 1998 Federal election campaign was “mind-numbingly boring” it came as some surprise that he chose to write about it at some length. HOW BORING.

In case you missed the full Michael Duffy column, here is the answer to all your queries. The party which deserved to lose was Labor. According to Duffy, under Kim Beazley’s leadership, Labor would return Australia to a “past of glorious promises and failed realities”. The Coalition, on the other hand, was “offering small gains and modest achievements”. This, according to Mr Duffy, “is not so exciting but it is almost certainly more relevant to what the world’s going to look like over the next three years”.

In his election morning epistle to the Aussie voter, Michael Duffy described John Howard as a “man of

substance” who had a proven “leadership” record. That was on 3 October 1998. This is the very same Michael Duffy who wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* on 22 August 1998 that John Howard was “not a strong leader”. In those (not so far off) days, Michael Duffy was very critical of John Howard:

John Howard is not given to outbursts, at least as far as we know, and the evidence is mounting that he is not a strong leader. On the night he launched his new tax package, the Prime Minister was as excited as we have seen him in public. It was a frightening sight.

Parents around the land shielded their children’s eyes from the sight of this puppet-like-figure with jerking shoulders and eyebrows, and a fleeting grin so large it seemed to engulf half its face. The smile would suddenly appear at inappropriate moments, as if someone behind the camera had flashed a “smile” card.

What a metamorphosis. On 22 August 1998 Michael Duffy declared that John Howard was a “puppet like figure” who was “not a strong leader”. By 3 October 1998, however, he was a “man of substance” who had demonstrated true leadership. Work that out if you can.

AT LAST, THE BOB AND CHRIS SHOW

The *Christopher Pearson/Bob Ellis* public blue is one of the best gigs in town. Now showing in the *Australian Financial Review*. Mr Pearson is never shy of harping on one topic week after week after week after.... In mid 1998 he wrote a four part series on One Nation and all that. Then, at the time of the libel case involving Tony Abbott/Margaret Abbott/Peter Costello/Tanya Costello vs Random House, C.P. wrote three articles in a row on, wait for it, Bob Ellis. Something of a waste, when you think about it.

So it turned out to be appropriate that Bob Ellis and Christopher Pearson were asked to write for the *Sunday Age* on the morning after the (election) night (Sunday 4 October 1998), advising readers how they had voted - and why.

Not surprisingly, Bob Ellis declared his commitment to Kim Beazley and Labor. In full barracking mode, he anticipated an ALP victory with a majority between 14 and 30. Fair dinkum. And he related a “three minute” conversation between Kim Beazley and himself on the campaign trail which had covered “medieval weaponry” including the relative merits of the crossbow and the longbow. After that they

“talked of Agincourt”. All in three minutes. Fair dinkum.

On the same page Christopher Pearson stated why he had supported John Howard and the Coalition. He “concentrated on the shortcomings of John Howard’s opponents”, declared that “John Howard’s great strengths are leadership and commitment to the national interest” and railed against the “politically correct brigade”. This is the very same brigade to which Mr Pearson once belonged, until relatively recently. Now read on.

PEARSON vs WHITLAMISM

Even if Christopher Pearson sometimes forgets. Writing in the wake of the Coalition’s election victory in his *Australian Financial Review* column (12 October 1998), Christopher Pearson declared - with full-on pomposity:

...while Howard has won a great battle he hasn’t yet won the war to implement tax reform, let alone the longer struggle to undo the old Whitlamite settlement.

Hang on a minute. What’s this about overturning “the old Whitlamite settlement”? Presumably meaning the political inheritance of Gough Whitlam and his Labor allies.

Let’s not forget that Christopher Pearson, in his own particular way, played a role in supporting and maintaining the very Whitlamite settlement which he now maintains should be overturned. C.P. was born in August 1951 - so he was 21 when Gough Whitlam became prime minister in December 1972.

Christopher Pearson has publicly acknowledged that he first voted for the Coalition in March 1996. This means that, before his political conversion to political conservatism at around the time such conversions became fashionable Down Under, Christopher Pearson voted for Federal Labor under the leadership of Gough Whitlam, Bill Hayden, Bob Hawke and, yes, even Paul Keating (the first time round in March 1993). In between, C.P. was an enthusiastic supporter of what might be called the “Dunstan settlement” in South Australia. Former South Australian Labor leader Don Dunstan initiated many of the social reforms which were later implemented at a Federal level by Gough Whitlam.

Fancy that. Here we have Christopher Pearson, at age 47, publicly advocating the overturn of Gough Whitlam’s political legacy which he supported in his twenties, thirties and even into his early forties.

E.T. STRIKES FORWARD

While on the topic of overturning settlements, consider the case of Emma Tom - recently recruited to *The Weekend Australian* from the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

On 1 November 1998 the Channel 9 *Sunday* program ran its feature story Helen Dalley's report "Extra! Extra! Read all about it". Ms Dalley's thesis was that the "old" newsprint media was under threat from the "new" media including "the Internet and ever more forms of electronic communication".

Enter, in *Sunday* parlance, "novelist and journalist, 20-something Emma Tom". She was described by Helen Dalley as "a recruit in *The Australian's* battle to win the elusive youth market with its brighter style"

A cat walked back and forth across Ms Tom's desk as *The Australian's* star recruit spelt out her views on the contemporary Australian media - per courtesy of the *Sunday* camera:

Emma Tom: I'd describe myself as a fairly risqué and provocative writer. I'm interested in both subject matter that pushes the limits of what's regarded as acceptable journalism and also stylistically I'm interested in pushing the boundaries. ...In most of the print media in this country, I don't find a great deal of interest to me. There's not a great deal there for me. I don't read a lot, I don't see many people I can relate to and what they write about is of little concern to me. Little or no concern to me. I don't like the style. I don't like the subject matter.

On reflection, this sends out a depressing message to Ms Tom's fellow writers on *The Weekend Australian*. Never mind, let's hope they read our Emma.

Emma Tom's inaugural *Weekend Australian* column was published on Saturday 26 September 1998. Since then she has been busy pushing the limits of what's regarded as "acceptable journalism" on page 2 of the *Weekend Australian* with a puff (publicity) lead on the front page. The style is similar to that perfected by Tara Palmer-Tomkinson in the London *Sunday Times*. The column is always about one essential subject - the columnist's private life. And, each week, there is a photo of Emma Tom as THE CULT OF PERSONALITY.

Since Ms Tom is on record as declaring "most of the print media in this country" is of little concern to her, it's to be assumed that followers of our Emma may not proceed past page 2 of *The Weekend Australian*

each Saturday. If so, this is subject matter they will find:

- 26 September 1998. Emma Tom's inaugural column in *The Weekend Australian* is entitled "Dating Oldfield": violation without sex". The plot centres on our Emma's suggestion that she and David Oldfield (he of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party fame) should have a date. They do. Highlights/lowlights include:

- D.O.'s suggestion that E.T. has "been trying to entrap him by deliberately wearing a low-cut frock"
- E.T.'s awareness that D.O. seems to have been "perving on my cleavage in the lift"
- D.O.'s concession that, in such matters, "he is only human"
- E.T.'s declaration that she refuses to "button down" her "breasts for anyone".
- D.O.'s (alleged) confession that he is "both a bust and a leg man"
- E.T.'s observation that D.O. "applies a great deal of lip balm"

Well, at least this is more interesting than a report on One Nation's "easy tax" policy. And now for the moment you have all been waiting for. Emma Tom writes that "the upshot of events is that Oldfield doesn't try to screw the innocent young journalist; neither does he make a move...". Well how about that for pushing the boundaries of acceptable journalism.

- 3 October 1998. Emma Tom has to fly to Malaysia to deliver a paper at the 1998 Commonwealth Writers Seminar. *The Weekend Australian's* star columnist has three problems. Let's not worry about one and two. It's the third one that forms the basis of the piece. For E.T. discovers that, somehow or other, she has "ended up with a large bite mark" on her neck - a "whopping great hickey". Er, that's about it. Ms Tom returns to Australia having discovered that the Malaysian locals want to "avoid discussing politics with meddling foreigners". Maybe. Or perhaps Malaysians are scared of hickey wearing, limit pushing Aussie journalists.

- 10 October 1998. Emma Tom reports on election day which she spent at the Livid music festival at the RNA Showgrounds in Brisbane. E.T. describes the early part of the day of a woman she names as T.W. viz "T.W.'s day so far. 1. Wake up. 2. Spew in friend's loo to expunge previous night. 3. Down mug of pure speed. 4. Get to Livid". And what about the morning after the big event when E.T. herself woke "with a whippersnapper headache and a tongue that rattles round [her] throat like a cockatoo's". And she discovers that, contrary to the advice of the previous evening, the Coalition won the election and that "this particular hangover is not going to go away any year soon". How livid can you get?

- 17 October 1998. Emma Tom is still writing furiously about the topic she knows best. Namely HERSELF. E.T. contemplates getting “jelly wrestling lessons” at an inner city hotel while checking out the venue in question. E.T. takes umbrage at a “No Bus Tours” sign. Our Emma now goes into philosophical mood reflecting: “After all, what’s the point of a night on the town if you can’t whip down ya’ daks and stick ya’ bum against the back of a bus window while you’re finding a park?” What indeed?

In the event, E.T. does not get her full jelly wrestling lesson. Pity really.

- 24 October 1998. E.T. gets to race in the Fender Bender at the Parramatta City Speedway on a Saturday night. She reports that her pre-event anxiety is such that she has “developed an unfortunate case of nervous flatulence”. Later, while waiting for the car race to commence, E.T. tells a “bloke from the pit” that she is “sorry about the nervous flatulence”. According to E.T., he understands what she is on about and replies not to worry. What a knowledgeable gentleman.

It turns out that ET survives her first race but, the second time round, gets her gear box stuck in first and blows the engine. A least this should have drowned out sounds of any nervous flatulence - at least when changing gears.

- 31 October 1998. E.T. reports that she “got married last Sunday”. Wow. To a certain David Liam McCormack of the Brisbane band Custard. She explains why. At considerable length. There is little real boundary-pushing journalism here. Except for E.T. reporting a friend’s advice that she and David should not proceed “until you’ve farted in front of each other”. In the event, this particular advice is ignored. Unless, or until, the newly wedded couple returns to the Fender Bender Speedway. At least E.T. gives a good reason for her surprise marriage. Namely she “thought it might piss off Bettina (holier than I used to be) Arndt”. What better reason can there be?

Emma Tom signs off her fifth *Weekend Australian* column by promoting her next effort with a series of questions:

Next week. Does the wedding day go to plan? Is anyone left weeping at the altar? Which party wears the white PVC nurse’s uniform? And are there bootleg videos of the wedding night? To be continued.

Only one question was not raised by Emma Tom about her marriage and all that. Does anyone really

care? To be continued.

FR. MURRAY ON THE NEED FOR PUBLIC CONFESSION

Also in the DOES ANYONE ONE REALLY CARE? category is James Murray - who writes for *The Australian* on religious affairs. On 21 September 1998 Fr Murray preached-at-large about US President Bill Clinton and his various indiscretions of a sexual kind.

First up. Fr James concentrated on what Bill Clinton needed to do to receive forgiveness for his sin - or sins:

President Bill Clinton’s dilemma is wanting to be forgiven after having been found out. He has flamboyantly confessed to being a sinner in the presence of Catholic priests, Protestant pastors and Jewish rabbis as well as the Bible Belt Christians who are his natural constituency.

In fact, one of the recurring images of the Clinton presidency has been regular attendance at Sunday worship, Bible firmly under the arm. It has usually been to the Baptist Church, strong on individual testimony, baptism by total immersion and sin [sic]. But the Baptists may want more signs of the guarantee of repentance: “amendment of life”. The church believes repentance is a three-way street: contrition (being sorry); confession (owning up); and amendment of life (changing your behaviour).

Here James Murray seemed to be suggesting that the US President is a hypocrite. How interesting. Then, after much preaching - and some discussion about sex - Father James finished up with a rather bleak evaluation of Bill Clinton’s chances of forgiveness - at both temporal and spiritual levels:

In the eyes of many American believers, and not only Christians, Clinton has been testing God’s patience to the very limit. And the debate is no longer whether he has sinned - he has admitted that, with a wry smile - but whether he can be forgiven.

Forget the next world, for the moment at least. The results of the 3 November 1998 US Congressional elections indicate that a majority of voting Americans have decided that the president’s private life is not a

matter which should affect their voting behaviour.

DAVID BERNSTEIN CONFESSES - PUBLICLY

While on the topic of forgiveness, consider the case of Melbourne journalist David Bernstein. Writing in *The Age* on 19 September 1998, Mr Bernstein saw fit to out himself - as a former book stealer, no less. David Bernstein occupied the "Saturday Essay" spot for a day and told readers how, in London in the mid 1970s, he had become a book thief - with a preference for T.S. Eliot's published list. Then one day in the Dillon's Cambridge he was STRUCK BY A SENSE OF REALITY viz:

After a week or two in Cambridge, I found myself in Dillons, the city's leading academic bookstore. My fingers itched as I browsed through their marvellous English literature section. I zeroed in on my quarry, and was about to slip the book into my bag, with the same easy innocence I had acquired in London, when it suddenly struck me, like a face full of icy water, that if I took that book, it would only be a first of many - and only a question of time before I was caught. The consequences would have been immense, starting, almost certainly, with my expulsion from the university. Hands shaking, I returned the book to its place and walked out. I have never since so much as thought of stealing a book - or anything else for that matter. But it was a frighteningly close call.

There was a message to all this, apparently. Something to do with "just how easy it had been to cross the notional line between 'right' and 'wrong'". This reflection lead David Bernstein to wonder aloud about what it would have been like "to work as a guard in a Nazi death camp" as did the fictional Hanna in Bernhard Schlink's novel *The Reader*.

David Bernstein went on to declare that it would "be obscene to even begin to equate [his] experience as a book thief in London with Hanna as a guard in one of Hitler's slaughterhouses". But, on the other hand, it is "deeply disturbing to reflect on how a not dissimilar, incremental process of social pressure, expediency, and ethical rationalisation appears to have played itself out in both cases". So, on the one hand, any comparison with petty book theft in London circa the mid 1970s is "obscene". However, on the other hand, it's worth labouring away at the point in order to get to the end of a Saturday essay. Or something like that.

which David Bernstein did not cover in his "How I became a thief" confession is the one most readers would have been interested in. Namely, whatever became of the stolen works? Does Mr Bernstein still have a good T.S. Eliot collection? If so, can anyone borrow from this? The books will be returned. Promise.

BOB ELLIS ON "PASSIVE TOTALITARIANISM"

But then David Bernstein is not the only confused journalist doing the rounds right now. Take leftist eccentric Bob Ellis, for example. In articles in *The Age* and *Courier Mail* last August, Bob Ellis warned about an emerging "passive totalitarianism".

Apparently there is the active totalitarianism presided over by the likes of Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin and Mao Zedong. And there is the passive totalitarianism which, apparently, requires that Mr Ellis no longer make reference to Pauline Hanson's previous occupation as the owner of a take-away seafood shop or to reflect on her adviser David Oldfield's love life. Shucks. But, of course, Bob Ellis invariably says what he wants to say. Which suggests that whatever he is complaining about it is certainly not totalitarianism.

Not for the first time, Bob Ellis is confused. Those who objected to Pauline Hanson being referred to as a fish-and-chips shop lady (or some such) were not exhibiting signs of totalitarianism - active or passive. They were just speaking out against snobbery.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS IN HYPERBOLIC MODE

Obviously the message was not picked up by British commentator Christopher Hitchens during his recent visit to Australia. Writing in the September 1998 issue of *Vanity Fair*, Hitchens referred to Pauline Hanson as a "harsh mouthed monarchist and fish and chips purveyor". How very clever. But Mr Hitchen's cleverness did not stop there. In commenting on the 1998 Queensland state elections he wrote that One Nation "did well in the urban and suburban electorates, as well as among the traditional sheep-shaggers and graziers". In fact One Nation did not do very well at all in urban Queensland (meaning Brisbane). But what is a fact here and there to a Brit who thinks in cliches - of the Aussie as sheep-shagger genre?

For what it is worth (not much at all - Editor) Christopher Hitchens also told his *Vanity Fair* readers:

- Film director Baz Luhrmann "took over the direction of [Paul] Keating's campaign" in early 1993 and single handedly "turned a widely predicted

Confused? Then join the club. About the only issue

defeat into a pundit-flattening victory". Just Baz Luhrmann, all by himself.

- Until recently "Aussies who felt that there must be more to life" than (i) deference to the British, (ii) cultural surburbanism, (iii) macho aggression, (iv) sheep obsessiveness, (v) xenophobia and (vi) beer were "impelled to emigrate". Apparently only seven belong to the "I was impelled to emigrate" club - Clive James, Germaine Greer, Bruce Beresford, Peter Porter, Robert Hughes, Peter Weir and Fred Schepsi. The rest, apparently, were busily engaged in one or more of the options described in (i) to (vi). Or perhaps developing relationships with sheep.

- "Much of Australian cultural and political life today is an organised revenge for that moment of arrogance" in November 1975 when Governor-General Sir John Kerr dismissed the Whitlam Labor government. According to Hitchens, the dismissal was an "unconstitutional coup".

If Christopher Hitchens had any understanding of Australian government he would understand that, whatever happened in November 1975, it was neither unconstitutional nor a coup. But then if Mr Hitchens was well informed on such matters, he probably would not get to write about Australia for *Vanity Fair*.

IF THE HUB-CAP FITS....

What are facts to some are issues of interpretation to others. A recent report by the Australian Associated Motors Insurers Ltd (AAMI) demonstrates the point. The same data elicited the very diverse print media coverage on the very same day (26 October 1998).

Brisbane's *Courier Mail*: "Queensland's motorists are among the most foolhardy in the nation".

Sydney *Daily Telegraph*: "Sydney drivers are the most aggressive, over-confident motorists in Australia...."

Canberra's *Canberra Times*: "Canberra drivers might just be the worst in Australia..."

Melbourne's *Herald Sun*: "Victorians are the most reckless drivers in Australia".

Adelaide's *Advertiser*: "Road rage and a selfish attitude on the roads have made South Australian drivers the worst in the nation..."

It's very much a case of the (very Australian) less-holy-than-thou syndrome.



GERRY CONNOLLY

appearing as

Monica Lewinsky

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