



PixelPapers the Fourteenth.

1 January, 2001, First for the millennium.

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Editorial

Richard Alston's push to reform the ABC is becoming dangerously close to demolishing it. Cynics could be forgiven for thinking that he has gradually stacked the Board with people of his own political and aesthetic persuasion so that he is now able to use the subterfuge that drastic change under way is not implementing his or the Government's policy, but decisions of an ostensibly independent board.

If Board members were elected or chosen in accordance with criteria that clearly preserved the public interest against political bias, it could have some legitimate claim to autonomy, but is this so? There is, on the contrary, a good case for reforming the selection process so that it is not capable of being manipulated.

Governments attract scrutiny and criticism from the media. Politicians therefore are

tempted to control it and because of the ABC's unique position as a public broadcaster, it seems to be an easy target.

The new managing director, Jonathan Shier, does not impress and there have been reports that staff have found that he lacks coherence in addressing meetings and it is almost impossible to establish meaningful two-way communication. It is difficult to discern a rationality about what he is doing as there has been little effort to inform the public about changes to the traditional framework and there has been no meaningful opportunity for debate in the public arena. There is an impression that whatever flies off the top of his head or into it, is what Australians have to suffer.

His management style is hardly mature. For example, all senior staff were told that they would lose their jobs, so it is hardly surprising that by the time that he had decided that he wanted the very successful head of drama to stay, she had made other arrangements.

He has commissioned a report from a former Walt Disney corporation executive, Keith Bales, with ideas about how the ABC can make money, including product placement in programs, more marketing aimed at children, pay-per-view programs and an ABC credit card in commercial partnership.

It would be a pity if the ABC were spoiled in the same way as SBS, which often has a spate of revenue-raising advertising that is literally a turn-off.

Out of a recent piece on the 7.30 Report of 22nd November, came a statement from Keith Bales that perhaps goes to the heart of the problem.

"Someone in the ABC needs to educate government. I think Senator Alston I don't think understands too much about broadcasting. He's the one that needs to learn about broadcasting. The ABC aren't the only people saying that. I think Jonathan Shier can help him."

This is stunning criticism of a minister, who should understand his portfolio after several years at the helm, during which radical changes have been imposed. Richard Alston has hardly been a minister *for* his portfolio so much as a minister *against*, and the electorate could be forgiven for thinking that there is a hidden agenda to weaken public broadcasting to make the product of commercial and cable television more attractive, at the same time creating compliant public relations vehicles for the government. He has not been kept on his mettle by an expert and interested Opposition, and I doubt if many people could even name the shadow minister for the arts.

Already, there are ominous signs. Apparently the successful Quantum, a science programme, has been axed and the science section is to be disbanded. This move sits badly with the Prime Minister's recent thinking aloud that he would like to stop the brain drain, by keeping bright Australians, particularly scientists, in the country! Presumably the part of the intellectual climate that he controls is not considered to be of any significance in the process.

Paul Barry has been sacked from Media Watch, the marvelously successful programme that is critical of media excess and malpractice, that has doubtless angered some of our powerful media people. Is this a prelude to scrapping the programme so that purveyors of media junk and falsehood are untroubled by criticism?

The 7.30 report with the garrulous Kerry O'Brien is also under threat, possibly because it asks questions that members of the government would prefer not to be asked, or perhaps would rather have framed in sickening Malaysian or Indonesian media style in terms of, "Please tell us how everything is going all right, honoured minister?"

The shareholders of our public broadcasters are the public at large. Politicians have not established a mandate for radical change and there is no warrant for maverick, idiosyncratic innovations by individuals or groups unless there is public assent obtained after thorough canvassing of the issues. Despite having extensive media resources available, the minister has made little attempt to communicate.

It is high time that the government established an honest and sensible media policy, and it seems, more than time that Richard Alston moved to another portfolio.

SUBMISSIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED UNTIL MID-FEBRUARY FOR PP 14 AND FOR PP15 THEREAFTER.

Wordsworth

plethora

This word was popular about fifty years ago and is enjoying a minor revival. It is borrowed from medicine where it means "excess of red corpuscles in the blood; unhealthy repletion", (COD). Popular usage suggests that people mean it to indicate plenitude or abundance.

irony, ironic

Irony is not much used these days, probably due to the intrusion of politics into daily life, irony being almost unknown in that field of human endeavour, where stupidity and irrationality pass almost unnoticed. "Expression of one's meaning by language of opposite

or different tendency, esp. simulated adoption of another's point of view for purpose of ridicule." (COD) Irony can be dangerous, especially if it is received naively with a straight face, so that it is accepted as a statement rather than a quip, thereby attaching it somewhat to the utterer.

rapt, rapped, wrapped

The meaning of the variants of this phoneme are obvious from context, but occasional misuse brings delight. I have seen, in a local rag, an ecstatic, "I was wrapped", conjuring up a vision of an Egyptian mummy or a Christo-like artistic exercise, rather than rapture.

harbinger

This little word is often used clumsily in place of symptom, whereas it is, "One who announces another's approach, forerunner. (COD)" I suppose that in some circumstances a symptom may be a harbinger, but it does not seem appropriate.

fulsome

The transition from negative to positive continues as this word is wrongly used to indicate approbation.

Scissors, snails and puppy dogs tails

Scissors are referred to as a pair even though there is really only one item consisting of two moving parts, literally cutters. This invention, two knives joined with a pivoting rivet, dates back at least to Roman times.

Some items of clothing are in similar case and we have pairs of **pants** (pantaloons) and **trousers**, reflecting historical origins. Once they were singular like the **stocking** of a generation or so ago, but instead of being attached to a suspender belt they extended up one leg only, to the waist, and were tied there, covering modesty but allowing ease of spreading apart for bodily functions. Like modern stockings, which evolved into panty hose, the pairs became joined together as single items of clothing. We are unlikely to see a pant or a trouser in these troubled times.

However, people referring to a pair of **bloomers** are led into a bloomer of another sort, or error by analogy, as the bloomer was a comparatively modern invention by a Mrs Amelia Jenks Bloomer of New York in 1868, and named after her (= for her, for American readers).

A **brassiere** or under bodice (from the French, 1912) is also singular and probably in similar case, is sometimes called a pair of brassieres, or brassieres, because of involvement of a pair of breasts. The popular contraction, bra, seems to be singularly correct.

News & Views

Bob Rich advises that his science fiction book, 'Sleeper, Awake' is now for sale in electronic formats at

<http://www.geocities.com/clocktowerxtras/> You can read about this book

at <http://bobswriting.com/sleeper.html> or

<http://web.solutions.net.au/~bobrich/sleeper.html>

Sale price is \$US5. The book has already received several excellent reviews, which can be read at

<http://bobswriting.com/sleeperreviews.html>

Janet Woods is enjoying a mede of success with two popular novels accepted over a two month period and due for release next year.

PRINT NOVELS.

DAUGHTER OF DARKNESS. Hardcover. Robert Hale Ltd. (UK) Historical. May

release. ISBN 0 7090 6887 5

Four years after being drugged and tricked into marrying 14-year old Willow Givanchy, a suspected witch, and the unwanted daughter of his deadliest enemy, Gerard Lytton returns home to find his wife and family much changed.

Having lost none of her fiery independence, Willow has become a well-loved member of the Lytton family. But, although nobly born, she cannot belie her mother's dark reputation, and her father's dishonour. Then Willow's long

dead mother turns up unexpectedly, causing a mysterious series of events to unfold.

PANDORA'S GIRL. Hardcover. Robert Hale (UK) Relationship. Release date and ISBN not yet known.

Pandora's life changes when an inheritance forces her to confront her past. She discovers that a daughter born to her in her early teens, and believed to be dead - is very much alive. Aided by her new love, the confronting Welsh psychiatrist, Bryn Llewellyn, Pandora successfully searches for the girl - only to be rejected.

Tragedy reunites the pair in a painful and uneasy relationship. Unwittingly, Pandora over-reacts, trying to buy her daughter's affection with generosity. Trinity is defensive, resenting her mother for the invasion of her privacy as she awaits the birth of her son.

As the uncomfortable circumstances of Trinity's birth unfolds, her baby's arrival brings joy and understanding to the two women, enabling them to reach compromise.

E-Novels.

SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED

LOVE'S ILLUSION.

A duet of category romances to be released in May by New Concepts

publishing. <http://www.newconceptspublishing.com>.

Also available from New Concepts.

SPELLBOUND & IN BED WITH THE ENEMY.

4 1/2 star review from Holly Domiano, December "Affaire de coeur"

America's foremost romance readers review magazine.

"Romantic comedy is the name of the game here. If the reader were expecting Sabrina, or Charmed, these programmes are tame compared to the steamy sensuality and tender emotions of Janet Wood's novel. The emotions may be hot, but it's a satisfying heat. This book will definitely leave the reader spellbound."

Ann Davis, deputy chair of the World Poetry Congress, Sydney 2001

(See ad on first page and Poetry Page) reports on a novel competition

My latest win was the Centoria Centrefold Short Short Story competition - 45 words exactly - Entry fee was 2 x 45c stamps, Winner take all. I now have enough stamps to last me for some time to come

NEWS FROM THE SOCIETY OF WOMEN WRITERS.(WA)

"FOOTPRINTS" millennium anthology was launched in November.

With a foreword by Ruth Reid, "Footprints" has ten decade header poems and over forty short stories to take the reader on a journey through the 19th century.

With stories selected by Janet Woods and Carmel Cottrell over a period of two years, the anthology was typeset by Trudy Graham. Contributors of the

featured work include Jean Lang, Ethel Webb-Bundell, Beryl Richards, Trudy Graham, Janet Woods, Jennifer Langley-Kemp, Claire Grose, Carmel Cottrell and Constance Herbert.

FOOTPRINTS costs &19.00 which includes GST. \$25.00 including local postage and packing. \$26 interstate. Cheques should be made out to SWW, WA.

It can be obtained by the following methods.

Janet Tel: 9331 5114 or email: woods@iinet.net.au

Or write to SWW,WA. PO Box 434, Northbridge 6848, WA.

Joker

IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY FOR AN FBI MAN TO ORDER PIZZA

The following is quoted from remarks made during a conference on global organised crime, sponsored by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies:

It seems that FBI agents conducted a raid on a psychiatric hospital near San Diego that was under investigation for some sort of medical fraud. After hours of reviewing thousands of medical records, the dozens of agents involved had worked up quite an appetite. So the agent in charge of the investigation called a nearby pizza parlour to deliver a quick dinner for his colleagues. Because they were taping all conversations at the hospital at the time, the following conversation was recorded:

Agent: Hello. I would like to order 19 large pizzas and 67 cans of soda.

Pizza man: And where would you like them delivered?

Agent: We're over at the psychiatric hospital

Pizza man: The psychiatric hospital?

Agent: That's right. I'm an FBI agent

Pizza man: You're an FBI agent?

Agent: That's correct. Just about everybody here is.

Pizza man: And you're at the psychiatric hospital?

Agent: That's correct. And make sure you don't go through the front doors. We have them locked. You will have to go around to the back to the service entrance to deliver the pizzas.

Pizza man: And you say you're all FBI agents?

Agent: That's right. We've been here all day and we're starving.

Pizza man: How are you going to pay for all of this?

Agent: I have my chequebook right here.

Pizza man: And you're all FBI agents?

Agent: That's right. Everyone here is an FBI agent. Can you remember to bring the pizzas and sodas to the service entrance in the rear? We have the front doors locked.

Pizza man: I don't think so.

Net Anon

Honk If You Love Jesus

We received a letter from Grandma the other day. She writes:

The other day I went up to a local Christian bookstore and saw a "honk if you love Jesus" bumper sticker. I was feeling particularly sassy that day because I had just come from a thrilling choir performance, followed by a thunderous prayer meeting, so I bought the sticker and put it on my bumper. I was stopped at a red light at a busy intersection, just lost in thought about the Lord and how good He is and I didn't notice that the light had changed. It is a good thing someone else loves Jesus because if he hadn't honked, I'd never have noticed! I found that LOTS of people love Jesus! Why, while I was sitting there, the guy behind started honking like crazy, and then he leaned out of his window and screamed, "For the love of GOD! GO! GO! Jesus Christ, GO!" What an exuberant cheerleader he was for Jesus! Everyone started honking! I just leaned out of my window and started waving and smiling at all these loving people. I even honked my horn a few times to share in the love! There must have been a man from Florida back there because I heard him yelling something about a "sunny beach"... I saw another guy waving in a funny way with only his middle finger stuck up in the air.

Then I asked my teenage grandson in the back seat what that meant, he said that it was probably a Hawaiian good luck sign or something. Well, I've never met anyone from Hawaii, so I leaned out the window and gave him the good luck sign back. My grandson burst out laughing...why, even he was enjoying this religious experience! A couple of the people were so caught up in the joy of the moment that they got out of their cars and started walking towards me. I bet they wanted to pray or ask what church I attended, but this is when I noticed the light had changed. So, I waved to all my sisters and brothers grinning, and drove on through the intersection. I noticed I was the only car that got through the intersection before the light changed again and I felt kind of sad that I had to leave them after all the love we had shared, so I slowed the car down, leaned out of the window and gave them all the Hawaiian good luck sign one last time as I drove away. Praise the Lord for such wonderful folks!

Net Anon

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Catastrophe SBS

Holiday television on most channels featured a number of excellent disaster documentaries about quakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis, as if to counterpoint and provide contrast to the good times of our celebrations. It is sobering to reflect that more than six hundred million people live under the threat of sudden extinction from these sources, like the million or more people of Naples, who live in a depression between Vesuvius and another active volcano system, and the people of Bali who live on massive Mt Agung.

Catastrophe on SBS presented a very stimulating thesis of writer and historian, David Keys, that the so-called dark ages were literal rather than metaphorical, covering the

whole world with more than a year of darkness or low light. According to dendrochronology, which seems to have become a source of a marvellous record of climate stretching back for seventy centuries, trees in most parts of the world had a very grim year in 535AD and little better in the next five or six years. The culprit seems to have been Krakatoa, which according to the royal records in the Indonesian city of Solo, blasted apart Java and Sumatra, killing 32000 people with a force since reckoned to be equivalent to an American billion or one thousand million Hiroshima atom bombs, providing enough fine ash to circle the globe in a terrible winter of darkness for a year or two, causing profound physical and social changes.

Its quite fascinating, as the cross referencing of data from various disciplines, presented by scholars from reputable universities, falls into place.

One annoying feature is a shot through Keys's window from outside his very ordinary house north of London, showing him beavering away at his computer and books. It is repeated ad nauseum, suggesting that the producers must have been obliged to hire a cherry picker by the week and decided to get their money's worth!

Titus

The film based on Shakespeare's unrelentingly horrible *Titus Andronicus* and starring Anthony Hopkins, is now screening.

I read the play fifty years ago as I ploughed through the bard's complete works. as part of my self education, and was left, along with distaste, with the conviction that it would never again be presented.

It is truly horrible, with rape, mutilation, murder and cannibalism, but I suppose that we've seen scenes almost as bad in the reality portrayed on our television screens in coverage of the Balkans and East Timor.

I am afraid that it is one film that I would not walk across the road to see.

Hornblower

Forrester's series of books on the adventures of his hero, modelled on Horatio Nelson, was once one of my favourite reads. The television mini-series directed by Andrew Grieve and written by Mike Cullen, was mildly disappointing. It is visually charming, has fine actors, excellent backgrounds and model ships convincingly showing warfare at sea.

Ioan Gufud, who plays the lead role, is a handsome young man whose gamut of emotions seems to be somewhat limited, not the proverbial A to B but certainly no more than A to D!

I suspect that Cullen found Forrester's tales lacking in dramatic elements and invented some of his own, but I am much too lazy and not motivated to check. I can't remember the murderous senior midshipman, or the strong relationship with a buddy midshipman during Hornblower's incarceration.

However, I do remember the evocation of harsh navy discipline in the books, where captains at sea had power of life and death over their crews and the men were cruelly and

brutally hazed. This is lacking in the film.

Nevertheless, like the books, the films provide a charming way to waste an hour or two.

Pride, Prejudice and Pottering

During the break I caught an earlier film version of *Pride and Prejudice*, starring Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier. What a pair of charmers they were! At the time they were probably a tad old for the roles but they played them well.

For the first time I was struck by GG's boyish surname, and given that studios were very creative with the names of their players, wondered if it had been rigged and changed from something like Norma Jean Broadbutt or Fanny Plodd by some big cheese at executive level. (I haven't encountered Greer elsewhere as a first name.)

The production had a *Gone With The Wind* feel about it, probably helped along not only by the expansive interior sets, but also by the tinkering of dialogue and plot, with Mr Darcy's formidable aunt transmuted at the end into a benevolent good fairy. This is in complete contrast to the recent superb BBC production which followed the book to the letter, using commendable ingenuity to bring the work to the screen.

Fartiste

"AS IT HAPPENED: LA PETOMANE: FIN DE SIECLE FARTISTE - Under the name "Le Petomane" Joseph Pujol was the toast of the Paris stage. Turn-of-the century bourgeois audiences were first shocked then won over, by the man in a red velvet suit with a hole cut in the bottom to release his remarkable talent. He played the trombone but his greatest instrument was his rectum. Appearing at the Moulin Rouge, he was the rage of Paris, at times outdrawing and outgrossing the decade's most popular star, the actress Sarah Bernhardt. (From the USA, in English) PG." I quote directly from the ABC website, which provides a fuller run-down of programmes than the usual guides.

I turned on, not because of the subject, but having briefly sojourned in Paris I was curious about the promised contemporary detail, and was not disappointed, as amongst other matters, I learnt that the Boulevard Haussman on which I stayed, was in fact named after the creator of the boulevards.

Clive James has alluded to fartars, who seemed to be creatures of mining and military camps, where men were perhaps inspired to perform their own morning trumpet solos to help relieve the tedium. Pujol did in fact develop his remarkable, disgusting skill, during his time as a soldier. Perhaps, only in that turn of the century Paris (They may have to do something about fin de siecle) and the Moulin Rouge, could it be brought into the general public arena.

The programme was noteworthy for its tongue-in-cheek attitude and some sly digs at theatrical pretensions generally. The promised contemporary detail in posters, places and people was faithfully delivered.

Fortunately, the technology of Pujol's time was not capable of delivering recordings of the act in sight or sound, apart from a few stills.

Writers on Writing (ABC)

I hadn't caught this programme before as I'm usually dozing at my computer or in bed by 10.00 p.m. The segment on playwrights was excellent. I intend to tune in again.

Tripitaka Outed

Kerrie Murphy, writing in *The Australian*, has confirmed something that may have perplexed old and young fans of the charming Japanese children's series of yesteryear, *Monkey*. Masako Natsume, who played the boy priest, was a girl. Sadly, she died of leukemia in 1985.

I can remember that we tried to draw some evidence of the sex of the name from its ending, working on the analogy of Italian, Mario and Maria, but Japanese names did not seem to follow this pattern.

Paradoxically, the adventures of Monkey, Sandy, Pigsy and Tripitaka, won much more acclaim in other countries than in their native Japan.

Grey Owl



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