

## **Affection - Gerard Henderson**

From The Eleven Saving Virtues

Edited by  
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Parting can be difficult. A few years ago a female friend and her daughter (both from Melbourne) stayed at our Sydney home. She left behind a copy of The Oxford Book of Friendship, an anthology edited by Dennis Enright and David Rawlinson. There was also a personal inscription: 'To Anne and Gerard Henderson — Some of us may not always agree, but we enjoy it tremendously'. What to make of this? Maybe the anthology

in question was a dud at the sales counter and had been remaindered — thus creating a bulky but cheap departure present or maybe there was a message here, perhaps some advice on how not to annoy friends.

Halfway through the collected gush that is The Oxford Book Of Friendship there is a quote from Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792):

Friendship is a serious affection; the most sublime of all affections because it is founded on principle, and cemented by time. The very reverse may be said of love.

Well, maybe. But in circa 1792 Miss Wollstonecraft had just hitched up with the American writer and dead-loss Gilbert Imlay, an unfulfilled partnership if ever there was one. So perhaps it would be wise to discount her views somewhat for the immediate effect of the Imlay factor.

I Id -Therefore I Am

In any event it seems that the late Miss Wollstonecraft erred in preaching an unequivocal division between affection and love. This may work when comparing platonic friendship (affection) with a lustful relationship (love). But it has no relevance in describing that driving force of the human psyche — the id. An individual can feel deeply for the self without any lustful sexual connotations.

Right now, affection is in the air and also in the Church. Or so I hear. This information comes second hand to a non-attender. It seems strange. For in the Catholic Church of my youth God was depicted as an Angry Old Man. We were born in sin (per courtesy of The Fall) and we died in sin (per courtesy of inherited imperfection). In between we inhabited a vale of tears as best we could. At the end of it all there were (relative) winners and (dead set) losers. The former had to do time in purgatory until they were deemed in a satisfactory state to see God. The latter were sentenced for the term of their eternal life in hell where, along with Lucifer and his ilk, they were destined to suffer unending torment. Not much

affection there.

Hold the page for a spousal intervention. My wife Anne has just read the above paragraph and believes that it is not theologically correct. According to the teachings of Anne, God was not too bad a bloke – in so far as blokes go – because he did offer the option of fast track salvation. Anne reckons that those who led exemplary lives on earth qualified for this rapid promotion into heaven. All they had to do was to get a guernsey among the communion of saints. Nice club, if you can get in. And exclusive too. Anne concedes that she never came across anyone who was part of this communion. But it seems that Francis of Assisi qualified for immediate entry and possibly Mary MacKillop as well. For those lucky souls there was first a swift call from the Angel of Death followed immediately by a ringside pew in front of the beatific vision. That lot got real affection, soonest.

Son of Jansenist vs Isaiah's child

I'm not convinced. As a young boy I remember my mother's constant refrain: 'Gerard, we are all maggots in the sight of the Almighty.' She claimed to have got the saying from an Australian Jesuit. Maybe. But, if so, the cleric in question was obviously a Jansenist. Come to think of it, so was my mother who was heavily into pessimism of the theological variety. She was convinced that animals, especially dogs, were unaffected by The Fall and, consequently, in a state of permanent grace. As such they would enjoy an after-life as part of an animal communion of saints. Humans were quite another matter. My mother was deeply suspicious of the human species – and rightly so. They had let down the team in the Garden of Eden long ago and hadn't improved much since. The God we learnt about at home was just, but had a lot to be angry about. The impression was given that he would be a real affectionate type

if we were good. The problem was that, due to original sin and all that, we could never meet the standard. The bar of the state of grace high jump was always too high and would remain so – world without end amen.

Compare and contrast former Australian prime minister Bob Hawke. Now Bob was a son of the Protestant manse – Congregationalist variety. The reverend Clem was the minister around the house ably assisted by his wife Ellie. For many years those Australians who had followed Bob Hawke's career to the top of the trade union movement and then into a safe Labor seat in the Federal Parliament had assumed that he was like the rest of us – namely, affected by The Fall. That was until Blanche d'Alpuget's biography of the great man came off the presses in 1982. Talk about a revelation. The author made known to an increasingly agnostic Australia that the name Robert meant 'of shining fame' (d'Alpuget Chapter 1:Page 1).Gosh. But there was more. d'Alpuget divulged that, during her confinement with Bob, Ellie was wont to open the Bible each day. The very same Mother of Bob 'was astonished how often it fell open. as if by design, at the early chapters of Isaiah' (d'Alpuget 1:1). Not just any part of Isaiah mind you. When Ellie opened her bible her eye invariably fell on Isaiah 9:6 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder'. Some portent, to be sure.

Father Clem held to the same view, seeing the whole process – from Bob's conception to Bob's birth – as a playing out of events designed by the Almighty. Come to think of it, this sounds like a pretty good line as in: 'You may have a headache my dear, but I feel the call of the Lord'. Clem told Blanche that Bob was special/beautiful/destined for a great Future. And Blanche told the reader. In short, it was written.

Catholicism teaches that we are all born imperfect. However some have imperfection thrust upon them. There was Ellie Hawke in Bordertown circa 1929 telling her last born that he had been chosen as an emissary of the Lord. Hallelujah. And there was Pauline Henderson in Balwyn, Melbourne circa 1945 advising her last born that he was yet another maggot in the sight of the Almighty. Amen. Little wonder that the former became one of Down Under's leading exponents of self-love while the latter was left to wade through this vale of tears, surrounded by Jansenists, all too aware of his own imperfections. Through his fault, through his fault, through his most grievous fault.

In my (Jesuit influenced) youth it was taught that there were but seven virtues. Four (prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance) were described as cardinal. Apparently Thomas Aquinas was on the record somewhere as maintaining that this group should be termed cardinal because of their generality and importance. Some of them covered the field. According to A Catholic Dictionary (1893 edition) religion got a guernsey under justice and chastity under temperance. Then there were the three theological virtues as in faith, hope and charity. This lot was labelled as supernatural – apparently because of a direct, rather than indirect, relationship with God. This cosy  $4+3=7$  relationship has been upset by the teachings of the prophet Ross Fitzgerald. Prophet Ross maintains that there are eleven (saving) virtues – of which affection is but one. This suggests that grade inflation now has theological implications.

A considerable amount has been written about Bob Hawke's love life. Perhaps too much. However it always seemed to me that he never got over his first love – himself. Hawke has affection for Hawke in much the same way as Narcissus had a (short term) crush on frozen images.

### **Four Corners Calling**

I was musing on matters Hawke – in anticipation of the publication of the much-heralded Hawke autobiography – when circa 29 June 1994 the phone rang at my Sydney office. It was 'Four Corners' executive producer Ian Carroll on the line. Fancy that. In the past my primary discussions with Carroll had been of the acrimonious kind. Not personal – but tough nevertheless, This was different. The powers-that-be at 'Four Corners' had decided to extend an invitation to be 'Four Corners' reporter for a night and review Bob Hawke's *The Hawke Memoirs* for television. What about it? Well initially there were doubts – about time, ability and so on. Self-doubt. Moreover would I be able to do the hypocrisies by saying 'sweet nothings' to 'Four Corners' presenter Andrew Olle? The very same Olle who had banned me from his Sydney ABC radio program for some five years as an apparent retaliation for some criticisms directed by me at him. The Fall. However, in the end, the offer was accepted – albeit tentatively. And so, one maggot in the sight of the Almighty went out to assess the tome of another. Or as Radio National's

H.G. Nelson (né Greg Pickhaver) put it, Henderson elected to "lock horns" with Hawke – as in *Son of Fan of Bishop Cornelius Otto Jansen (1585-1638)* vs *Son of Guess Whose Mum's Read Isaiah*

And so it came to pass that on Thursday 7 July 1994 I entered the 'Four Corners' inner sanctum in the Sydney suburb of Gore Hill for a conference with Ian Carroll (executive producer), Mick O'Donnell (my designated producer), Harry Bardwell (supervising producer), Tony Moore (researcher), Janine Cohen (another researcher) and Christine Grima (on work experience). Lo and behold Andrew Olle brushed past. What bliss – hands were extended, hypocrisies mouthed. Flashback to the message of St Paul: 'Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another' (Romans 12:10). We had made up and affection was evident -- albeit of the feigned variety. But not with Paul Barry, 'Four Corners' very own remittance man who arrived from Britain some years ago to lecture-at-large Down Under – per courtesy of the Australian taxpayer – on our faults (including our most grievous faults).

The mind is blurred about what ignited the first of the Barry/Henderson wars. Was it my criticism of Barry's ludicrous attempt at an on-air interview in English with a non-English speaking Swiss security guard following his failure to get an 'exclusive' with one of Alan Bond's European based supporters? Barry's frustration was understandable – but not his subsequent decision to run this non-interview on 'Four Corners'. Or was it my public correction of some factual howlers in Barry's *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer* (which was hugely advertised on the 'commercial free' ABC)? Whatever the reason, when I looked in Barry's direction he was assiduously busy concentrating on the office photocopier. Continuing Anger – 2; Feigned Affection – 0.

### **The (Pre-Blanched) Hawks Memoirs**

And then it was down to work. At this first meeting Carroll, O'Donnell and myself had read the Hawke tome, then in typewritten form. It turned out that this was the penultimate version – in March 1994 Blanche d'Alpuget had been called in to work on the final editing. 'Four Corners' had the pre-blanched draft. At the meeting Harry Bardwell was surprised to observe that all three of us had a common response to Hawke's opus magnum. We all had concluded that it was home-grown hagiography, or self-affection gone mad. It was suggested that the program be titled 'The Loved One'. Readers of Evelyn Waugh will understand.

But would there be a program? There were my newspaper columns of 1991 suggesting that Bob Hawke should have stepped down as prime minister at the end of the Gulf War – and gone out at, or near to, his top. Subsequently Hawke had been criticised in my column for dumping on his successor from a great height and, in particular, for his report of a private conversation during which he alleged that Paul Keating had called Australia the 'arse-end of the world'. All this was on the record, from 1991 to 1994. Would Hawke grant an interview?

No problem, Carroll assured me. Hawke was a reader of my work as a columnist and all would be well. In the past my contact with The Loved One (TLO) had been limited to a cursory 'G'day mate' handshake in Parliament House (circa 1985) and a couple of extended phone conversations (circa 1991 and 1993). On the later occasions Hawke had suggested that we should get together for a chat – but no invitation had

been forthcoming. This would soon be remedied, presumably so the Hawke prophecy could be fulfilled. Carroll advised that I was to interview TLO at his Northbridge home overlooking Sydney's Middle Harbour on Wednesday 27 July 1994.

### **The (Post-Blanched) Hawke Memoirs**

However, a difficulty emerged. News came from the publisher that the d'Alpuget edited version of the Hawke apologia was now available. According to d'Alpuget the final draft of The Hawke Memoirs was significantly different from the penultimate opus. The word from Louise Adler at William Heinemann in Melbourne was that changes were minimal. Ho, hum. d'Alpuget was on my list of interviewees and she refused to talk to 'Four Corners' until she had been convinced that the latest (d'Alpuget approved) edition had been read. Her wish was my task.

My prime interest in the re-read was to see if, and to what extent, d'Alpuget had moderated the author's narcissism and his over-use of the first person singular. But first a reflection. In his critique of *The Loved One* program the oh-so-pompous *Quadrant* editor Robert Manne wrote that:

Taking their lead from [Gerard] Henderson, many journalists were even critical of Hawke's use of the first person pronoun in his memoir. Precisely how an autobiography could be written without generous use of the word 'I' was not made clear.

Oh how twee. Oh how Manneish. And what does 'generous' mean? The Hawke manuscript contains a sentence in which the first person pronoun occurred on no fewer than five occasions in a mere forty words – an 'I' strike rate of around one in eight:

I was not offended by this, for I realised that at times I could have shown a better appreciation of Caucus feelings when, as ALP President, I had pronounced on issues where I thought the party's interests were at stake.

This is self-affection gone mad. Even an amateur could have reduced the use of the first person singular in this sentence by at least forty per cent. When the complete book arrived the relevant section was identified at Hawke 5:70-71. There it was in its 'I' soaked glory – unaffected by d'Alpuget's blue pen. Clearly self-affection had prevailed over ego suppressors.

It is difficult to interpret Robert Manne's rush to the defence of TLO, especially since he is on record as a consistent critic of the Hawke Government. But then Manne can never be accused of consistency. In mid-1993 I spoke at a Fabulous Sixties Party organised by the State Library of New South Wales and made reference to Mr Manne's surprising conversation from Sixties leftie to a contemporary conservative intellectual groupie for Bob Santamaria and his National Civic Council. In due course the talk was submitted to *Eureka Street* for publication but rejected because the journal's editor Morag Fraser did not want to upset Robert Manne (it was later run in the *Canberra Times*). Ms Fraser explained her pro-Manne decision thus:

We are more interested in the 'why' of people's (often contradictory) actions and beliefs over the bug term than in the adducing of facts and actions that make them look like waverers. Take someone like Robert Manne, for example. Robert and Eureka Street have frequent and profound public disagreements. But we know too much about him to be able to write him off in a phrase. To do so at this stage would be to violate a trust that has been hard won and has become publicly fruitful.

How cosily affectionate -- and how convenient, especially For *Quadrant's* editor. It seems that Bob Hawke believed that a similar cosy relationship existed with me. Namely that my public support for some of his stances as prime minister -- along with two (unrequited) invitations for a chat -- would ensure that the 'Four Corners' review would be soft and that our 'Fruitful' relationship (to borrow Ms Fraser's adjective) would continue for ever and ever amen. To Hawke the interview was to be between (ex) prime minister/mentor and scribe. To me it was just a case of one maggot (in the sight of the Almighty) chatting to another.

Then there is the question of narcissism. Turn to line one, chapter one of *The Hawke Memoirs*. The book commences with the author's report of his mother's dying words to him: 'It was a pleasure, son' (Hawke 1:3 and d'Alpuget 18:337). So it was in the beginning -- by divine portent out of a reverse oedipus complex. And *The Hawke Memoirs* ends with the author's message to his people when the government was upon his shoulder (as in Isaiah 9:6): 'Above all else, it has been a pleasure' (Hawke 31561). From a mother's affection for her son, to the son's affection for his country. It's all been a pleasure. And it's all part of a portent.

The lesson of the final version was that whatever d'Alpuget had done, she had not reduced the narcissism overload. Indeed *The Hawke Memoirs* in published form reflected how the author had felt a 'sense of destiny' when he decided to enter politics in 1979: 'Everything I had done to this point had prepared me for this step' (Hawke 7:97). Likewise when TLO became Labor leader in March 1983: 'For me, it seemed a moment of destiny, as if the whole of my life had been lived in anticipation of, and preparation for, that day' (Hawke 9: 127). It all sounds rather Calvinistic -- as in Hawke was predestined for (Labor) leadership while others, in the absence of (political) grace, were denied that form of salvation which comes with achieving the top job. But the theory is not without theological justification. No doubt, in his time, the Reverend Clem Hawke opened up the Bible at Romans 8:29: 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren'.

### **A Walk in the Park**

I met Blanche d'Alpuget in the Sydney Botanic Gardens on Friday 22 July. It was late afternoon and cool but dry. Blanche appeared in a long brown coat, white blouse and dark beret. The location was Mick O'Donnell's idea. We sat on the verandah of the Gardens Restaurant. First there was coffee, then the interview followed by a walk in the park. There were problems with noise from planes, birds

and machinery. But the filming proceeded apace with a focus on TLO's deep sense of affection for the Australian people, an affection which was fully requited. Blanche understood well. Spoke Blanche:

I think no plant grows in ground that's barren or unprepared for it... Bob had been, as it were, psychologically prepared by his background to be a leader of the Australian people. In some strange way, hundreds of thousands or even millions of Australian psyches had been prepared for him. So what I'm saying is somehow the Australian earth was prepared for this particular plant to support it... And he had this really interesting relationship with the people as if somehow the people were his mother. Or that's how it appeared to me observing it. And you'll notice throughout the book he refers to the wisdom of the Australian people or the intelligence of the Australian people. It's that idea of your mother will never abandon you or reject you. She might get angry with you but it's only ever temporary - you'll always be taken back - and to my mind this is what accounts for the constant forgiveness one's found among the Australian people for things he's done.

Shortly after Mick O'Donnell, expressing concern about fading light, called a halt to our discussion. His aim was to take some film of Blanche and I walking in the gardens before darkness descended. Mick wanted the atmosphere. Blanche wanted the exposure, reckoning that next to me she looked not only very slim but (relatively) tall as well. And I wanted out of the visual cliché which requires that two people walk in a park before, lo and behold, finding a bench on which they sit and immediately converse on the meaning of life.

In the event Mick's will prevailed. Take 1 -- Blanche and Gerard depart from a tree and begin the long march to designated bench. Cut (a schoolgirl has got in the shot). Take 2 -- Blanche and Gerard depart. Cut (the shrieking noise of an angry bird has disturbed the Cinematic calm). And so it went on. Until Take 6 - when Blanche and Gerard, after a seemingly endless walk, successfully end up on a park bench and (without sound) appear to be discussing the meaning of life. Or something like that.

Perhaps it was Blanche's reference to Bob Hawke's mother that made me think about my own, as I sat on the park bench wondering about life and what to say next. My mother, the theological fatalist, was ever conscious of - albeit not afraid by - death. As a young boy I recall being told: 'You never know the hour nor the day', meaning that serious sin should be avoided at all cost lest, following a sudden death, you got struck out by the mortal sin/death/hell trifecta. While sitting on the park bench, I got around to talking about the last trumpet and related matters. Discussion turned to Sir Richard Kirby (the subject of d'Alpuget's inaugural biography) who was born in 1904. At issue was why, despite ill health, Kirby had lived to such a great age. Easy, came the reply. According to his biographer, Kirby was afraid of dying - and fear of the noise of the last trumpet had

kept him alive, So I asked Blanche if she was afraid of death. No, was the strong response.

Why not? Well, Blanche continued, she believed in reincarnation. What about you? she queried. Negative – having been brought up to regard death as the only certainty on this earth. And in what form would Blanche reincarnate? As a Chinese opera singer, apparently. Shirley Maclaine eat your heart out.  
Cut.

### **At Home – With the Loved One**

First there were the phone calls. Malcolm Fraser called after receiving a message from Mick O'Donnell. It was quintessentially Malcolm. No he wouldn't be interviewed For 'Four Corners' but, yes, he just might agree. He didn't. Then Hazel Hawke returned my call. Yes she would be part of the action, believing that the resultant publicity could lead to further sales of her very own *My Own Life: An Autobiography* (1992). Then, shock, an invitation was extended for a radio interview with Andrew Olle. Clearly my Olle duck (in cricket parlance meaning a failure to score) had been broken. This was confirmed when Olle himself called to say that he wanted to re-schedule our on-air discussion to the morning of the 'Four Corners' program. In other words the batting order had been re-arranged somewhat but that was all. What (potential) bliss.

Then there were first-up interviews with Bob Hawke's mate Barry Cohen (he described TLO as the most 'self-centred person' he had ever met) and with former Hawke staffer Graham Freudenberg (who lists his recreations in *Who's Who* as 'reading, drinking, smoking'). These days Freudenberg is a member of Western civilisation's new leper class. On entering a conference room at New South Wales Parliament House (where we had arranged to meet) there was no sign whatsoever of Labor's historian in-residence. But soon a puff of smoke was visible beyond the glass. And there on the verandah was your man Freudenberg, dragging on a cigarette with all the apparent guilt of a twelve-year-old behind the school shelter shed.

Eventually it was time to call on The Loved One himself. The taxi driver had trouble finding the Hawke abode. It turned out that he had the street right but not the elevation. There is an upper and lower version of the carriageway in question. Before their separation Bob and Hazel lived on the latter, closer to the water. At the door was an evidently affectionate Hawkey. It was very much a case of 'G'day mate'. A (sincere) apology was extended for past failures to follow up various invitations for a chat. This would be rectified and time allocated once *The Hawke Memoirs* was a fait accompli. Really.

On entering the Hawke architect designed dream home, which hangs on a rock overlooking the water, the resemblance to a five-star hotel (albeit of the unoccupied genre) was obvious. The walls are white, as are the carpets. For the most part the furniture is new (except for Hazel's desk) and designed to fit the home. In Bob and Hazel's house there are many levels.

Above ground level – bedrooms. Ground level – his and her studies. Here Hawke has a quite extensive library along with a built-in desk surrounded by mementos of a (truly) brilliant political career. There are photos – invariably signed 'affectionately yours' or some such – on the wall with (variously) Kenneth Kaunda, Rajiv Gandhi, Mikhail Gorbachev, Margaret Thatcher, Zhao Ziyang, George Bush. They compete for space with framed certificates of such academic achievements as Doctor of Laws (University of New South Wales, *honoris causa*), Bachelor of Letters (Oxford) and Bachelor of Arts (University of Western Australia). Well done Bob, still if academics like Dame Leonie Kramer – AC, DBE, D Phil, MA, Hon. D Litt, Hon. LLD, FAHA, FACE – can flash their honorific titles and honorary degrees, why not our Bob? Why not, indeed.

Ground level minus one is the kitchen and open-spaced dining/living room area. Head down one floor and there is a shrine to Bob Hawke – sportsman and sports fan – along with a huge screen for receiving horse races from all over the world. The walls abound with photos of TLO with various sportsmen (victorious, of course). There are also relics – of the second class variety. Kim Hughes' Australian XI cricket cap, Richard Hadlee's cricket ball and a (somewhat deflated) football, Australian Rules variety.

I am the batsman and the hat  
I am the bowler and the ball  
The wicket keeper, pavilion cat  
I'm Hawkey – I can do it all  
– With apologies to someone or other

Then it was time for a long, long interview, broken after every ten minutes while the 'Four Corners' camera crew changed film. For some reason which I do not understand 'Four Corners' has an abiding affection for old style film – believing, apparently, that it gives a better quality image. The BBC, on the other hand, does not use film (preferring tape) and will not buy any current affairs programs which do.

Hawke is a skilled media performer. So he was not expected to make any blunders. Nor did he. On arrival I noticed that Hawke invades the personal space of those whom he wishes to impress. There are but two options – hold your ground or back away. I elected for the former. Being of the same height – that is, short, this entailed that we eye-balled one another at close range. It was much the same with the interview. There, separated only by a table, we eye-balled one another for over an hour, relieved only by the breaks for film replacement. On one of these occasions an invitation was extended to head downstairs for light refreshments. Tea or coffee? I went for the latter and received the former. Still my lot was better than the crew who during almost five hours at the Hawke abode were offered no sustenance of any kind.

### **Polygraph Challenged and Affection Stressed**

On only two occasions during the interview did TLO show any signs of self-doubt. The first was when – at the prompting of Mick O'Donnell – I asked him to take a lie detector test. This related to the pre-launch leak from *The Hawke Memoirs* in which the author maintained that, once

upon a time, Paul Keating had referred to Australia as the arse-end of the world — as in AEOTW. Hawke said that Keating had evoked the AEOTW description; Keating denied it. Then on 24 June 1994 Hawke issued a press statement in which he stated, interalia:

..Mr Keating's latest position in regard to my reported record of his conversation with me is to deny having made the statement I attribute to him. I simply say in this regard that I am prepared to take a lie-detector test on this matter.

When I asked Hawke to take a lie-detector test for 'Four Corners' he declined — unless Paul Keating would take one too. Pity really. The idea of the prime minister of Australia and his predecessor wired up to a polygraph machine had a certain appeal. Also Mick O'Donnell was keen on the visual opportunity, having already shot film of a topless male at the Royal North Shore Hospital all wired up for polygraphy. Alas.

The only other time when the Hawke visage was ruffled turned on Billy Hughes — and affection. From a young age my Father had told me that Hughes was the lowest of the low, a Labor rat, no less. Hughes was Labor prime minister of Australia in 1916 when he split with his party over conscription and joined the political conservatives — initially the Nationalists, then the United Australia Party, finally the Liberals. In Labor parlance Hughes was a political Judas Iscariot. Hence my interest in *The Hawke Memoirs* in which the former prime minister commented on his successor's one time support for a broad based indirect tax:

For the first time he [Paul Keating] reminded me of some of the wild-eyed figures of Labor history I had read about in my youth. Affectionately, I saw in Paul glimpses of that Famous maverick, Billy Hughes, Labor Prime Minister in 1915-16. Hughes was often struck by epiphanous shafts of wild imagination that caused him to want to flood Lake Eyre in South Australia, or to turn the Queensland rivers inland. Like Hughes, Paul had a sometimes bizarre dimension to his character. And like Hughes he was not without vision; certainly both Keating and Hughes saw themselves as producers of great national designs. But while Keating acted the zealot . . . (Hawke 19:306)

And so it went on. It seemed to me that Hawke was making a direct link between Hughes and Keating. But not to Hawke. Let's go to the transcript:

*Gerard Henderson:* As a student of Labor history, as an academic and a scholar, you know that in the labour movement perhaps the worst name is the name of Billy Hughes — the Labor rat who is said to have sold out the Labor Party. You actually compare Paul Keating' with Billy Hughes. You see similarities in their personalities?

*RJ. Hawke:* Yeah, but I mean that is a very loaded question, if I may say so, Because the sense in which I make the comparison with Hughes is in no sense going to the question of loyalty to Labor. I mean Hughes is a bad figure, a bad name in the Labor pantheon because he ratted. Now there is no sense in which the linking of

Keating and Hughes is on that issue. It, as you will recall ...it's in the sort of wildness of vision. Because Hughes was talking about turning the rivers inland and that sort of thing. And I said if you look back you'll see that the context is said with a certain affection – that there was this wildness of vision. Now it's...really is quite unfair to go to that because when you say Hughes is a bad figure in the Labor pantheon it is because he ratted. He's not a bad figure in Labor history, Gerard, because he had some sort of wild imaginations about things. So, I just repudiate that as...an unfair example.

GH: But Paul Keating wouldn't have had grandiose plans to turn back the rivers. or to flood Lake Eyre, would he?

RJH: I'm saying...if you read, as I'm starting to wonder whether you have...

GH: I've read it.

RJH: Yeah well. you will find that in that section it was not, I repeat, any question of . . . loyalty to Labor. But it was in the sort of way in which Paul would grab hold of an idea – as he did with the GST [Good and Services Tax] . . . , It became almost a wild visionary religious thing with him . . . that this was going to be the thing which solved everything . . . I mean I just reject that as an unfair sort of proposition that you're putting [concerning Hughes].

Cut for another film roll change. An agitated Hawke leapt quickly from his seat and beckoned me to follow him to a built-in cupboard at the end of his study. There he found the manuscript of *The Hawke Memoirs* and quickly located the reference. After a quick re-read his face reflected signs of triumph. The message was unambiguous. Hawke confidently claimed that I had got it wrong. Not so, came the reply. But he would not budge. Surely it was self-evident, Hawke declared. Pointing to the first word of the second sentence, he argued that I had neglected to cite one crucial adverbs Hawke had not simply equated Keating with Hughes. Oh, no. He had done so 'affectionately' (Hawke 19:306). Wow.

In the private exchange that followed Hawke maintained that there was a world of difference between bracketing Keating with Hughes without qualification and doing so affectionately. This seemed hair-splitting. Consider the following: 'I say, with respect, that you are a rat'. Does 'with respect' really help? It's much the same with affection. Consider: 'We used to say, affectionately, that he acted like Jack the Ripper'. Affection or no affection, the comparison is pretty damaging.

Ditto with Billy Hughes.

### **A Man of the Book**

Around this time it became evident that TLO had an abiding

relationship with his book which he titled *The Book*. Hawke views his memoirs in much the same way as fundamentalist Christians regard the Bible – if it is written, then it is truth, without qualification.

*Gerard Henderson*: Can I put to you this proposition? If you'd stepped down just after the Gulf War you would have gone out as a very successful politician, very popular politician. something of a national hero in so far as Australians have them. Why didn't you go out at the time of your own choosing?

*R.J.Hawke*: For the reasons I make quite clear in the book.

In short, it is written. So there.

At the end of the hour-long interview Mick O'Donnell wanted to take some actuality. Most of the (visual) action centred on the billiards table. The invitation was extended for me to play TLO – but declined. So Hawke played himself for the benefit of the cameras, and the sound crew which picked up Hawke saying that the task of performing under the television lights was 'difficult for a man who hasn't done it for a while'. Apparently so.

It seems that billiards is all about knocking red balls into various pockets by means of a white ball propelled by a cue. The white ball should stay on the table at all times. Hawke advised me in detail about all this as he set up a shot for the 'Four Corners' crew. Action. Hawke hit the white into a collection of reds and, horror of horrors, white headed straight into a far pocket. Excuses. Hawke blamed (i) the position of the camera, (ii) the power of the lights and even (iii) the location of the camera crew for this mishap. He expressed the wish that this error should not be shown to 'Four Corners' viewers. It wasn't – unlike my (unexplained) laughter at Hawke's dilemma. Now few would doubt that Hawke is skilled at ball games, including billiards. But his abiding affection for himself is such that he could not endure being filmed missing a shot in a game against himself. TLO really likes to perform in public.

### **Train Love – and the Three Minute Option**

It was during (yet another) film change-over that my mind started to drift somewhat. Talking to Hawke across the table, it appeared that here was the contemporary Mr Narcissus writ large – healthy with an all embracing ego and a propensity to perform in public. Momentarily my eyes glazed over comparing the plight of the successful public performer with others of the narcissist genre who prefer to measure the impact of their Physical beauty in (relative) private.

*Flashback*. In February 1986, when I was chief of staff for Liberal leader John Howard, the following message flashed on to the office telex machine under the heading 'Trainlove'.

Sydney, Feb 13 AAP – A Sydney commuter train was held up for 20 minutes tonight after a guard found a naked couple making love in a guard's compartment. A passenger on the 6.08 train from Town Hall to Hornsby said the train stopped suddenly near Meadowbank, in the western suburbs. The passenger, Jim Harrison, of Eastwood, said the guard later told him he had found a couple copulating on the floor of a guard's compartment. "He

told me the couple had no clothes on" Mr Harrison said. The guard said he had given the couple three minutes to get dressed and get off at the next station. But the man had pulled on his clothes, punched the guard three times, and made off up the train. Mr Harrison said he saw the man knock the guards two-way radio out of his hands. The train continued to West Ryde station, where it was delayed for about 15 minutes while police conducted a search. The man suddenly leapt out of the train and ran off, pursued by police, Mr Harrison said. The woman apparently got off at West Ryde with other passengers, he said.

What relief (no pun intended). There are two train lines from Sydney to Hornsby. The first goes via the inner west (Strathfield), north-west (West Ryde) to the northern suburbs (Hornsby). The latter heads across the Harbour Bridge, through the affluent Lower North Shore (Wollstonecraft), past that holy of (Establishment) holies the Killara Golf Club and on through Sydney's Bible belt to prosperous Warrawee and only then on to Hornsby. The message seemed pretty clear. Horny travellers to Hornsby tend to take the north-west line. Especially at 6.08 pm. But I digress. Or perhaps not. There is, after all, a question of justice. According to contemporary reports - following the 1986 coitus interrupted at Meadowbank - a young man was charged not only with assault but also with a number of offences under the Railways Act of New South Wales. Apparently, the lady in question had a valid ticket and was allowed to disembark (post hocking) at West Ryde. You buy your ticket and you take your ride. Only some, apparently, are charged with exhibitionism in private.

Certainly, Bob Hawke's exhibitionism has always been of the up-front variety. Brought up to believe he was one of the (political) elect, Hawke made no excuses whatsoever for demanding that he receive the glittering prizes for which he was destined. And so it was that an abiding affection for the id came to prevail over what, to others, would be life's hurdles. Some exhibit in private, others in public.

### **Self-Love - and the Public Option**

While working on *The Loved One* I noticed that the (then) current issue of *Australian Style* magazine featured a story on Bob Hawke by Mark Mordue along with photographs by Hugh Stewart. The subject was dressed by Polo Ralph Lauren and Mark Vasalo was the fashion director. All up, there were some eight photos of TLO -- including three in his bathers (or swimmers, in New South Wales parlance). Bob Hawke got his name on the cover under the heading 'icons' but the cover shot featured Australian super model Elle Macpherson. Inside there was a story on Elle by Catharin Lambert with photography by Graham Shearer. Ironically in some of the shots Bob (born 1929) had less covering him than Elle (born 1964). Fancy that.

But that's our Bob. He has always wanted to exhibit in public the brighter side of life to look on his own actions with unyielding affection. Take Bourkes Stores in Melbourne, for example. In 1970, as ACTU president, Hawke negotiated for the trade union movement to buy into Bourkes Stores. The acquisition was not without issue, for the ACTU used its link with Bourkes to force the abolition of retail price maintenance schemes then run by some leading Australian manufacturers. But, that apart, the deal was something of a financial disaster. Bourkes was a boring shop, dead boring, as those of us who lived in Melbourne at the

time will recall. So it was not surprising that Bourkes-ACTU (as it came to be called) soon folded. In *The Hawke Memoirs* the decline and fall is dealt with in just a few lines:

. . . Bourkes-ACTU in the longer run enjoyed no particular prosperity. for the lack of any special commitment to it by trade unionists and its relatively unfavourable location told against it. (Hawke 5:58)

Well, yes. But there was (much) more to it than that. One of my favourite cuttings of the early 1970s is taken from the *Age*. A young, unfashionably dressed, Soviet woman was pictured dancing in Bourkes-ACTU with the children's idol Humphrey B. Bear under the heading 'Cultural exchange at Bourkes'. The caption was as follows:

Some local culture for Russian union official Tanya Sokolova yesterday - a meeting with a lifesize Humphrey B. Bear doll. Mrs. Sokolova called in at Bourkes the ACTU store with a visiting Russian trade union delegation. 'It's very good,' she said. 'It compared well with stores in Moscow'.

You bet.

### **The Raft and Mick**

Throughout the making of *The Loved One* my particular obsession was to prevent 'Four Corners' producer Mick O'Donnell and editor Des Horne from running the film shot in the Botanic Gardens. It turned out that O'Donnell, too, had his particular obsession. On reading *The Hawke Memoirs* he had become fascinated with the author's description of the affection in which he was held by the Australian people including, apparently, the near to fifty per cent who did not vote for him. Turn to the text at Hawke 7:99.

As I mixed with Australians from all walks of life and of every station, they came to reciprocate the sincerity of my feelings, they respected my talents and could identify with my weaknesses, they recognised that I had been given opportunities to equip myself in an extraordinary way but appreciated my identification with their aspirations and interests. I felt comfortable with the Australian people. I understood them, and out of the rapport between us, I derived both strength and the certainty that I could speak for them.

Of even greater interest to O'Donnell was Hawke's view of his role in the (political) firmament. In *The Hawke Memoirs* the author quotes from a story told by ALP politician Jack Pollard (1894-1981) about the one-time Labor prime minister John Curtin (1895-1945) who had related a tale told by the American novelist Jack London (1815-78). The relevant part of this TLO epistle is at Hawke 11:161.

Curtin then related a story by Jack London in which the sole survivor of a shipwreck scrambles from a raft onto a rock and thence to shore on a desert island. He looks all

around him, and there's not a soul in sight. So he stands erect and pushes his chest out and slaps his hand upon its 'Alone I did it,' he yells. As his cry echoes around the jungle, a booming voice replies, 'Ah! But who made the raft?'

And so, alone, certainly I did not do it. The sweat of Opposition provided the raft of policies upon which we won government, and freakish coincidence and changing social circumstances provided the talented ministers whom it fell to my good fortune to lead. But like Curtin, who led the party during war, when history and tradition and the times combined to place maximum stress on institutions and personalities and on the party itself, my own contribution to the raft was in holding it together when it could well have splintered, broken up, and drifted off into irrelevance.

The problem was that, through archival digging, O'Donnell's assistant Victoria Hollick had come up with old movie footage from the film *The Most Dangerous Game*. Mick was intent on using this on air. Scene 1 - a ship explodes and sinks. Scene 2 - there is a man alone upon a raft. Scene 3 - the sole survivor scrambles ashore. Scene 4 - the hero is pictured safe on a desert island, thanks to the raft. Come what may, obsessive O'Donnell was intent on getting his obsession run on 'Four Corners' His immediate challenge turned on what words could go with the actuality.

Solution -- get Hawke to read from his own memoirs. The first lengthy quote could be used as a voice-over to film of TLO's on-going affection for the Australian people with shots of him still meeting the masses even though in retirement. The second extract was quite long - just lengthy enough, in fact, to run O'Donnell's favoured shipwreck scene uncut. The remaining task was to get the author to read from his book on screen. No problem. O'Donnell's wish was Hawke's command. And so a day or so after the Northbridge interview, Hawke read at his office for 'Four Corners'. Ad nauseam.

Soon after Brendan Shaw, one of the young camera operators attached to 'Four Corners', asked me about Hawke. How was it, he enquired, that a person who had achieved such high office could be so naive. Shaw expressed genuine surprise that Hawke would read, without question, sections chosen from his book by O'Donnell. Moreover Shaw was amazed that the former prime minister would respond positively to every request that he adopt a new posture or face the camera in a certain way. How come? The only explanation to be found turned on an absence of political minders and an all-subsuming affection with the self. Bob, the chosen one, believes that he is all but predestined to do no wrong. In short, there is a fine line between crass naivety and gross arrogance. Quod Erat (Hawkum) Demonstrandum.

### **Hazel Protests (Sort of)**

After the locking-of-horns at Northbridge there were some additional interviews - with Max Walsh, John Ducker, Hazel Hawke, Susan Ryan, Jim McClelland, Kim Beazley and Gareth Evans. In *My Own Life* Hazel Hawke had related her discussion with writer Ruth Park prior to writing her memoirs:

I said that if I wrote my autobiography I would feel defeated if it read as a tract. Ruth Park described just such a book: 'When you cut out all the "I"s there is nothing left'. There are many reasons for writing an autobiography, Ruth said. Sometimes a motive is vindictiveness, which is unforgivable, especially when it is aimed at someone who cannot defend the case, for instance the dead. Self-justification or even self-promotion may be another – this would quickly become clear to the reader, although some of it always sticks and becomes part of the public's perception.

In other words, Ruth Park's advice was unequivocal. An autobiography should not be littered with the first person singular. And it should not be the occasion for vindictiveness, self-justification or self-promotion. The problem with *The Hawke Memoirs* is that it errs on all four counts. The problem with the author is that at the time of writing he was in such a state of self-affection as to completely miss Ruth Park's warning.

The 'Four Corners' crew turned up at the Hawke abode for the second time on Friday 29 July. TLO was not present since he was at work in his Sydney office. Hazel Hawke was relaxed and friendly although once again, there were no refreshments of any kind. Hazel indicated that she would have to leave immediately after our interview. This meant that all of us would be alone in the house. Mick O'Donnell, having previously complimented the Hawkes on their collection of fine paintings, commented that he knew of one occasion when visitors who had been left in a house stripped the abode of all of its art forms. To her credit, Hazel was unfussed. Instead she advised us all how to leave the house without disturbing the elaborate security system. It was not very sophisticated – out the back entrance, open the automatic double garage door, then close it and run so as to escape before the door descended. A rather undignified exit but, in view of all the circumstances, perhaps not inappropriate.

Indeed, there was only one issue on which Hazel expressed disquiet. Yours truly was in the good books possessing a personal copy of *My Own Life* – albeit the paperback edition. Not so Mick O'Donnell, 'Four Corners' had acquired a library copy of Hazel's memoirs. It stuck out as a book on loan with HAW written on the base of the spine. From this Hazel immediately deduced that a copy of *My Own Life* had been borrowed from the Hawthorn Library (in suburban Melbourne) and, in the process, indicated disappointment that the ABC had not purchased one. This surprised the Sydney-based 'Four Corners' crew (since its copy had been borrowed from the Lane Cove Library). Then, suddenly, Mick O'Donnell solved the query. The initials HAW stood for Hawke not Hawthorn. How about that.

### **Obsessives Prevail and Olleduck Floats**

Then camera operator Brendan Shaw won through with his particular obsession. Shaw had found out that in Canberra's Old Parliament House the staff conduct torchlight tours of the building late at night. So following the interview with Gareth Evans, we travelled from new Parliament House to its predecessor. By the time of arrival it was dark and the obliging staff of the National Museum of Australia, led by Guy Hansen, had switched off the lights in the former Cabinet room and prime ministerial office suite.

For take after take Guy Hansen led his obliging supporters in torchlight procession down the corridor once trodden by the likes of John Gorton, Gough Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser and Bob Hawke and into the Cabinet Room. Meanwhile Brendan Shaw filmed in the darkness while sound operator Rob Mackay recorded it all for posterity. For a while it looked as if Guy would become the star of *The Loved One*. It was not to be – but he certainly got a good run on the night. All this was done so that Brendan Shaw's prophecy could be fulfilled, namely that he could shoot vivid pictures at night without the assistance of electricity generated light). It was yet another example of the id prevailing.

Then it was time for final editing and the like back at Gore Hill. The ABC at work resembles something akin to a sociology or politics department at a modern university, a phenomenon which is readily understandable to readers of David Dodge's campus novels. There is a tendency to dress down, to sound deep even when proclaiming the most mediocre of thoughts, to attend boring social lunches, to gossip at length and to sell cheap raffle tickets for equally cheap prizes. In the latter category I acquired a purple duck with red lips and dark glasses – I called it Olleduck.

By now a sense of comradeship – cum affection – was in the air. It was very much a case of Ian and Mick and Des and Harry and Gerard – with a little help from Susannah Spittle (the assistant film editor who supervised the voice-overs). In other words we got on and, as such, catered for the various obsessions of team members. One by one the obsessives won out as Des Horne worked towards the final version. Yes – Mick O'Donnell obtained a lengthy run for his man-on-the-raft scenario. Yes .. Brendan Shaw would get up enough of his shots of Old Parliament House by torchlight to keep him happy. Which left yours truly with the long-walk-with-Blanche-in-Botanic-Gardens actuality. At the last moment it, too, was junked by mutual agreement. The day after the program was shown the film sequence starring d'Alpuget and Henderson was sent anonymously to my office. Thank you Mick.

*The Loved One* went to air on Monday 15 August 1994 – the main competition coming from Channel 9 which was showing the first time television release of Steven Soderberg's *Sex lies and videotape* Starring Andie MacDowell, Peter Gallagher. Laura San Giacomo and James Spader. Over on Channel 2 there was self-affection, politics and film.

### **Last Stop Wollstonecraft**

Perhaps Mary Wollstonecraft was right. Perhaps affection is cemented by time. Within months of the screening of *The Loved One* it all seemed a long time ago – as if, once upon a time, Bob Hawke and 'Four Corners' entered my life-through 'one door and, after a brief stay, walked out the other'.

Judas Iscariot sold out for a mere thirty pieces of silver. Or so that publican turned apostle Matthew reckons:

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests. And said unto them, what will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And the covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14–15).

And I junked my simmering row with ABC TV – just to cover the self-affection of Bob Hawke and the handing down from the mountain of *The Hawke Memoirs*. There was a fee to be paid in accordance with ABC

costing procedures. As far as I could work it out, the longer you took the more you were paid. Needless to say, my observation that such a procedure encouraged inefficiency met with blank expressions. Ah, Aunty.

Sure we all had a lot of Fun having Fun with *The Loved One*. But the program is unlikely to have had much of an impact on Bob Hawke himself. He still sees himself as perhaps the only member of the elect ever to become one of the fallen – per courtesy of Paul Keating. Hawke is not likely to forgive or forget. Which demonstrates that affection is anything but a universal virtue.