

Mixed blessings on Anglican road to Rome <i>Andrew McGowan</i>	<u>1</u>
John Safran the holy fool <i>Peter Kirkwood</i>	<u>3</u>
Fallen markets linked to fallen human beings <i>Andrew Hamilton</i>	<u>5</u>
Nominal Catholics' middle-class angst <i>Tim Kroenert</i>	<u>8</u>
Child mortality breakthroughs <i>Matthew Smeal</i>	<u>10</u>
Harry Potter and other killer serials <i>Brian Doyle</i>	<u>12</u>
Life after gold <i>Various</i>	<u>14</u>
Sex, schools and students <i>Fatima Measham</i>	<u>17</u>
Stop Sri Lanka, not its refugees <i>Michael Mullins</i>	<u>20</u>
Breastfeeding is not obscene <i>Catherine Marshall</i>	<u>22</u>
How to ad-proof your kids <i>Tania Andrusiak</i>	<u>25</u>
Aboriginality's urban outback <i>Pat Mullins</i>	<u>28</u>
Woody Allen's icky philosophy <i>Tim Kroenert</i>	<u>30</u>
Refugee hysteria breeding Pacific Solution 2.0 <i>Kerry Murphy</i>	<u>32</u>
Strange encounters on the Spanish Camino <i>Tony Doherty</i>	<u>34</u>
Why Obama deserved the Nobel Peace Prize <i>Tony Kevin</i>	<u>37</u>
How to talk to Aboriginal students <i>Myrna Tonkinson</i>	<u>39</u>
Turning all the nonsense upside down <i>Lerys Byrne and John Falzon</i>	<u>42</u>
Hey hey it's a human rights violation <i>Michael Mullins</i>	<u>44</u>
The homeless poet <i>John Falzon</i>	<u>46</u>



Eureka Street is published fortnightly online, a minimum of 24 times per year by Eureka Street Magazine Pty Ltd

Requests for permission to reprint material from the website and this edition should be addressed to the Editor.

PO Box 553
Richmond
VIC 3121
Australia

Responsibility for editorial content is accepted by the publisher.

Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned.

Tel +61 3 9427 7311
Fax +61 3 9428 4450
Eureka@eurekastreet.com.au

©2009 EurekaStreet.com.au

©2009 EurekaStreet.com.au

Mixed blessings on Anglican road to Rome

RELIGION

Andrew McGowan



There has been a wide range of responses, many of them emotional, to the announcement that structures for Anglicans who wish full communion with the Roman Catholic Church are being prepared. In Britain the stakes are particularly high, since the timing of the move will affect current conversations within the Church of England about women bishops and how to accommodate dissenters.

Most of the focus has been on Anglicans, particularly the conservative Anglo-Catholics who are likely to seek such unity. These have grown into a distinct strand of Anglicanism since the 19th century Oxford Movement, which sought a revival of Catholic piety and theology drawing on medieval English and later Roman sources, and led to the appearance of a movement focusing on liturgy and spirituality of great aesthetic and theological depth.

That movement however became deeply divided over women's ordination, and now also sexuality, despite the presence of many gay men among them.

Conservatives today view the more liberal wing of Anglo-Catholicism, embodied by the current Archbishop of Canterbury, with deep suspicion. Many of these are relieved to have the prospect of recognition and stability of their liturgical practice, within the fulfilment of a long-held hope for visible unity with Rome.

Other Anglicans however are hurt and bemused, especially those who have committed themselves to ecumenical endeavour while expecting the integrity of existing Anglican structures to be respected.

And last but not least there will be an odd and brief consensus among both more liberal and more evangelical Anglicans, who will share relief at the prospect of a 'rump' moving along and leaving the main game in the current inner-Anglican struggle to them.

This is likely to be the Australian experience, where most of those lining up to embrace the new structures either joined Anglican separatist groups long ago, or now huddle in a few embattled parishes.

But Roman Catholics will have their own mixed feelings too, sooner or later. One Roman Catholic colleague apologised to me at a meeting yesterday, obviously embarrassed by a gesture seen by many in both communions as undiplomatic at best.

Many other loyal Catholics will share unease at this step away from a long and costly process towards greater mutual understanding and cooperation within the existing forms of

Church we know. Christians in both Churches and others will wonder how to calculate the cost of unity-by-disunity.

Liberal Roman Catholics have particular reason to be perturbed at the influx of ex-Anglicans who are driven not so much by ecumenical zeal or real engagement with the life and faith of the Catholic Church, but by dogged adherence to positions on gender roles and human sexuality which tend to bespeak a broader conservatism.

Of course others, especially conservatives, are rejoicing. The conservative Catholic blogosphere, where the enthusiasm of the convert is often very much in evidence, is hailing the move.

They too, however, may have cause for circumspection when the new 'ordinariate' becomes reality. The prospect that these quondam-Anglicans can not only have married clergy but train new married seminarians, and maintain a liturgy related to the Book of Common Prayer, may be a mechanism in which some detect a ticking sound.

Unlike the Uniate groups like Eastern Catholics of various kinds, the Anglican ordinariate will breathe the same cultural and social air as standard Western-rite Catholicism, and the boundaries will be highly porous.

Will there not be Roman Catholic aspirants to ordination who find life in the Anglican ordinariate a more attractive prospect than clerical celibacy? Will there not be aspects of the Anglican Prayer Book tradition whose *lex orandi* continues to lead such Anglican-rite Catholics to different understandings of Church, ministry and sacraments than their Roman Catholic brethren (let alone the resurgent 'extraordinary use' sub-group)?

One of my late Jesuit teachers, Noel Ryan, told his classes he believed the conversion of John Henry Newman (pictured) — leader of the Oxford Movement which had such an impact on Anglicanism, before his change of allegiance — had a significant effect on the history of Roman Catholicism, including on the spirit of Vatican II. Roman Catholicism will itself be affected by these moves, perhaps for better, perhaps for worse, but most likely both.

John Safran the holy fool

VIDEO

Peter Kirkwood

On Wednesday ABC TV aired the first episode of John Safran's eight-part satirical series, *Race Relations*. It's timely and provocative, as race, and its portrayal and coverage on the media, have become hot-button issues.



The inauguration of Barack Obama early this year as the first black American President was much-heralded around the globe as a major stepping stone in overcoming race-based prejudice and hatred. But since the heady days of his election win and inauguration, there have been disrespectful and negative sentiments expressed about him in Washington street protests, and even in Congress.

Many observers, including former President Jimmy Carter, have denounced these as slurs based on race, slurs that would not have been aimed at a white president. But Obama himself, in what seems to be a move to defuse the situation, has played down any notion that criticism of him has been based on his race.

A race-based controversy erupted on Australian television, ignited by *Hey Hey's* clumsy blackfaced lampooning of the Jackson Five. And there was heated debate in the UK this week over the BBC's decision to include racist leader of the far-right British National Party, Nick Griffin, on the panel of current affairs show, *Question Time*.

The BNP's constitution states it is only open to white people, and one of its key platforms is to rid Britain of migrants, particularly Muslims. Griffin was one of a swag of ultra-right politicians recently elected to the European Parliament. Critics of the BBC argued that allowing him on *Question Time* would give legitimacy to his racist views.

So, with *Race Relations*, Safran enters highly vexed and contentious territory.

The premise is simple: Safran is Jewish, and there are family pressures to 'marry in' — to hitch up with a nice Jewish girl — but he is more attracted to Eurasian women. This leads him to ask, in matters of love, 'should you stick with your tribe, or escape your tribe?' — a worthwhile question in these fractious times.

He sets off on an international quest to examine 'cross-cultural, interracial and interfaith love'.

In the first episode (watch video [here](#)), a Eurasian ex-girlfriend who is a scientist tells him of an experiment in which female students were found to be more attracted to the male body odour of other races. So Safran steals the used knickers of female Jewish and Eurasian friends and devises his own experiment involving random panty sniffing.

This is followed by visits to Israeli and Palestinian sperm banks where he and his Palestinian sound recordist hoodwink the clinic supervisors and make a Palestinian sperm donation to the Israelis, and vice versa.

Is *Race Relations* part of the problem, or part of the solution? Certainly Safran's stunts are cringe-making, in your face, and potentially creepy. But they are put in the context of a cogent and pithy argument that has serious intent. I think he gets away with it.

And without wishing to put him on a pedestal, for those who have qualms about Safran from a religious point of view, it is well to keep in mind the tradition of the 'holy fool' — people who can see through cant, hypocrisy and pomposity, and, using cutting stories, actions or parables, tell uncomfortable home truths. Usually they are eccentric or slightly weird figures, often at loggerheads with authority and despised by the mainstream.

In Christianity the notion is famously described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:10 with its exhortation that Christians should be 'fools for the sake of Christ'. In Russian Orthodoxy it is expressed in the figure of the *yurodivy*, and Muslims have their *malamiyya*, usually translated as 'people of blame'.

Certainly Safran's sometime collaborator, parish priest of South Melbourne, [Fr Bob Maguire](#) (who appeared with him in the chat show *Speaking in Tongues* on SBS TV, and on Triple J radio) fits this mould. And it's safe to call Safran a holy fool of secular culture. So it's worth strapping on the seatbelt and going on the journey for the rest of *Race Relations* even if it's a bumpy, uncomfortable and confronting ride.

Fallen markets linked to fallen human beings

APPLICATION

Andrew Hamilton



I enjoyed [Neil Ormerod's reflections](#) on the global financial crisis. I found challenging his argument that lack of knowledge rather than greed was its primary cause.

But while agreeing with Neil on the importance of knowing more about the economy, I would still argue that we should focus first on greed. The essential knowledge we need — about how fallen human beings behave, and about how to control the effects of such behaviour — we already have.

It may be helpful to offer crude working descriptions of economics and greed. Economics encompasses the particular set of human relationships that are involved in buying and selling, in commercial exchange. Greed is the desire to make maximum profit in transactions without thought for how others directly and indirectly affected by the transaction gain or lose by it. There is no thought for a larger or a common good.

Knowledge about economics is more like historical knowledge than like the natural sciences. Because it deals with human behaviour, it can never be more than provisional. Human beings are not predictable in their relationships. Nor are their motives for acting fully discoverable. So although the collection of data and analysis of patterns are important, ultimately they need to be brought together in a theory that is necessarily laden with judgments about human beings.

Greed is endemic in relationships that involve commercial exchange. That is to say that everyone is sometimes tempted to it, and that many people are consistently motivated by it. It is a fact of life. The need to regulate it is recognised in laws on weights and measures, on contracts, on printing currency and on other ways in which people try to maximise profit at others' expense. But greed itself, of course, is not illegal. Nor are those driven by the desire for wealth monsters. They belong to us.

As financial transactions become more complex and abstract, they encourage a culture of greed. People whose central desire is to become wealthy are attracted to courses and institutions that explain how money works and how to manage it. The most ambitious succeed, and join firms that have a reputation for being millionaires' creches, where making money without regard to its social context is the object of the firms.

There they work in an environment in which greed is taken for granted and endorsed. If successful, they can look forward to high salaries and bonuses, become partners in their firms and later take their places on boards and advisory bodies and as lecturers in business schools.

When responsible for their firms, they naturally shape them to expand the culture of greed. They focus not on the contribution that the firm makes to society, nor on building loyalty between clients, workers and management, but on the unremitting pursuit of profit and the return to shareholders. And people entrust their money to these firms in hope of larger returns.

The culture of greed shapes what comes to be accepted as economic knowledge. Theories that reward greed are publicised and held to be true. They are given publicity by financial journalists and canonised in economics classes, and become the accepted wisdom of bureaucrats. The results can be seen in the acceptance of *prima facie* daft theories of efficient markets and of the benefits of extending private ownership of public utilities and services. These theories soon became financial orthodoxy, and greatly increased private wealth at a social cost.

The part played by the culture of greed in the global economic crisis was to weaken the trust required for economies to function well. The immediate cause was the multiplication of instruments that diffused responsibility for debt. That may have been dealt with. But the culture of unbalanced pursuit of profit remains, and it encourages people to place the same trust in the markets that they would in loan sharks, and in governments that they would in compliant police. Trust grounded in mutual greed is precarious.

This is why the issue of corporate salaries is so important. Salaries are a statement of values. Only those who are thoroughly immersed in the culture of greed would believe that their firms will attract good candidates only if they are offered several million dollars a year, and bonuses to boot; only those thoroughly immersed in the culture of greed would be attracted by such demeaning invitations.

So in order to defend the trust that lies at the heart of the economy, governments should regulate salaries — at least in companies that enjoy an effective public guarantee because they are too large to be allowed to fail. Regulation, of course, is symbolic; its merit is to remind the government that its duty is to ensure that markets serve society.

It is important to accumulate knowledge about the economy, both to facilitate day to day economic management and to disprove self-serving economic theory. But the human reality of commercial transactions, and particularly the place of greed and its regulation, are more significant. Greed will always be ahead of the numbers, and will weave them into an alluring dress before deeper reflection can show this to be a raiment of cobwebs.

The relationship between knowledge and greed is worth dwelling on because the next economic crisis will surely be bound up with climate change, whose severity and imminence become daily more apparent. Here, too, the call for more knowledge, more certain science, can be heard.

But when our generation is judged, it will be for seeking our own narrow interests without

thought for those of future generations. The tranquillity of greed must not be left undisturbed.

Nominal Catholics' middle-class angst

TELEVISION

Tim Kroenert

***Tangle* (M) Starring: Ben Mendelsohn, Justine Clarke, Kat Stewart, Catherine McClement, Matt Day, Joel Tobeck, Blake Davis, Lincoln Younes, Georgia Flood, Eva Lazzaro, Lucia Mastrantone. Thursdays, 8.30 pm, Showcase.**

Tangle is one of those deliberate titles that is itself a tangle of meaning. It refers to the tangle of its characters' lives with each other, via familial or circumstantial association. And to the fact that an individual life can be a tangle of obligations, self-interest and other forces. Then there's tangle in the adversarial sense, as in 'to tangle with' — yep, that applies too; there's plenty of conflict to be found among this knot of middle-class suburbanites.



Tangle, screening on Foxtel's Showcase, is the type of finely crafted Australian drama that fits the high-end, HBO-style model to which Showcase aspires. It's a thinking-person's soapy, complete with a talented and accomplished cast. The writers deftly mete out the snags and strands of this convoluted yarn with the dexterity of a sleight-of-hand artist. Watch closely:

At the centre of the mess is a jogger, who took a fatal tumble down a steep embankment during a morning jog. Fatefully, the jogger's route, around the iconic Yarra Bend (itself a sweeping tangle of tarmac) in the affluent Melbourne suburb of Kew, is shared by arrogant builder Vince (Mendelsohn). And the corpse comes to rest in a discreet, bushy location that is frequented by Vince's loner teenage nephew, Max (Blake Davis).

Max discovers the body, then shares his morbid find with his obnoxious cousin, Vince's son Romeo (Younes), and their friend Charlotte (Flood). Rather than going to the police, the teens steal the man's ID and keys, and pay a visit to his house, which they swiftly appropriate as their personal clubhouse. This becomes a point of contention and a matter of pride between the two boys, both of whom are vying for Charlotte's attention.

Twisted, yes — and that's just the children. The adults, busy jealously guarding their own needs and desires, are oblivious to what the kids are up to. Charlotte's mum (Mastrantone) is having an affair with Vince, and his wife, Ally (Clarke) is infatuated with a Russian cosmonaut who lives on a space station (they talk daily via radio).

In addition to their children, Romeo and the eccentric Gigi (Lazzaro), Vince and Ally are playing host to Vince's best mate Gabriel (Day) — he's recently dumped his girlfriend overseas, because he's secretly carrying a torch for Ally. Ally's flaky, manipulative sister, Nat (Stewart), has also returned following a 15-year absence.

Nat is Max's biological mother, but his father, State MP Tim (Tobeck), and adoptive mother

(and Ally's best friend) Christine (McClement), are determined to keep her out of their lives. Nat is a threat to their equilibrium, especially since Tim's career as a public servant could be vulnerable should knowledge of seedy domestic dramas, such as a vindictive former lover or a son who hangs out in a dead man's house, become public.

Oh, and they're all Catholic. This fact plays a practical role in their lives (they speak dutifully of Mass and Confession) but does not seem to pervade deeply. The contrast between purported religious belief and unethical lifestyles seems less an indictment of organised religion than of purely nominal or obligatory faith practices.

'Tangle' is right. But don't be put off. As with any imposing knot, there's always a sense that a tug on the right thread will unravel the whole lot. In this case, the sensation reflects a feeling of impending doom. You'll want to keep coming back to see just how this awful tangle is going to unspool.

The cast is as good as any ever assembled for an Australian series. They get the humanity that makes ignoble characters relatable. Clarke and Day are attractive and affable in an everyday kind of way. And the only thing that makes the appalling Vince likeable is that Mendelsohn, at 40, still looks like a cheeky ten-year-old. He epitomises the way the adults' childlike self-absorption makes them at once pathetic and sympathetic.

Episode five of this ten-part series airs tonight at 8.30pm on Showcase. Check the Showtime Australia [website](#) for details on when to catch reruns of earlier episodes.

Child mortality breakthroughs

HUMAN RIGHTS

Matthew Smeal



In recent weeks we've seen just how devastating natural disasters can be. Lives that at one moment continued as they had for many years, in the next moment were irreversibly altered as a tsunami, an earthquake and continuing floods wreaked havoc in South East Asia and the Pacific region.

While these events are tragic and overwhelming in their destruction, other more subtle killers carry out their own devastation far away from our television screens and newsprint. But they leave a death toll far in excess of what we have recently seen.

In mid-September a joint group from UNICEF, the World Health Organisation, the World Bank and the United Nations Population Division, released the mortality figures for 2008 of children under five. The central statistic was that last year 65 children out of every thousand died before the age of five. That translates to 8.8 million children.

Although 8.8 million children is an enormous figure, there is some consolation in the knowledge that there could have been many more. In 1990, for example, the global child mortality rate was 90 deaths per 1000 live births or 12.5 million children. Comparing the two figures we see that today 10,000 fewer children die every day than did nearly 20 years ago. Still, it is frustrating to know how easily preventable most of those 8.8 million deaths were.

Reducing child mortality is one of eight Millennium Development Goals established by the United Nations as a benchmark for progress across specific humanitarian areas.

For child mortality, the goal is to reduce 1990's rate by two thirds by 2015. The reduction currently sits at 28 per cent and while seemingly a long way off target, the rate has continually decreased and is now reducing rapidly.

But another Millennium Development Goal, the eradication of hunger, has become a possible harbinger for a tragic future. Hunger, like child mortality, was also on a continuing decline. Not now. In 2008, it reversed for the first time since 1990. Current estimates suggest that 100 million people have been forced back into poverty, and subsequently hunger, as a direct result of rising food and fuel prices and the onset of the global financial crisis.

While the child mortality figures are believed to be the lowest in world history, it is feared that next year's figures will tell a horrifying story. Food and fuel prices have backed off but remain high, and the full impact of the global financial crisis is yet to be felt. With poverty and health so inextricably linked, there are obvious grounds for fear.

But amidst the speculation, simple, low-cost measures like vaccines, insecticide-treated mosquito nets and Vitamin A supplementation continue to show just how easily preventable many, if not most, child deaths can be.

Countries like Malawi are a perfect example. In 1990, Malawi had an extremely high under five child mortality rate of 225 deaths per 1000 live births. That rate has now dropped significantly to 100 per 1000.

Correlative to those figures is the knowledge that in 2000 only three per cent of Malawi's children aged under five slept under a mosquito net — a key means of preventing malaria. By 2006 that had increased to 25 per cent. With limited resources, Malawi focused on a simple intervention that saved countless children's lives.

As expected, Australia's under five child mortality rate is among the lowest in the world at 5.8 deaths per 1000 live births (Save the Children figures show the indigenous rate at 12.5 deaths for every 1000 live births), but our neighbours, although making significant gains, still have extraordinarily high death rates for children under five.

East Timor, having already halved its 1990 child mortality rate, still has a mortality rate of 92.9 deaths per 1000 live births — the highest rate within the region and similar to that of Pakistan and Myanmar.

Papua New Guinea at 69.2 deaths per thousand and Indonesia at 40.5 per thousand have also significantly reduced their child mortality rate with a 24.2 per cent and 52.9 per cent decrease respectively.

But while great gains are being made, it is still inconceivable that a child can die of hunger in a world so full of waste. That a child can die from a lack of low cost preventable measures like vaccinations that cost mere cents or mosquito nets that cost a few dollars, is unconscionable.

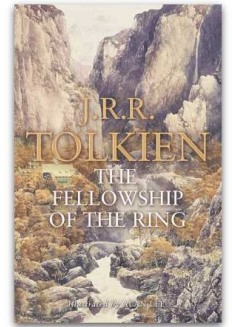
Climate change notwithstanding, natural disasters are largely out of people's control. But when it comes to child mortality, the power exists to effect great change. These recent figures should therefore be seen as a milestone along the road to ending preventable child deaths. With the right approach, it could be a short road.

Harry Potter and other killer serials

NON-FICTION

Brian Doyle

Just finished a headlong dash through the 11 novels of C.S. Forester's legendary Horatio Hornblower series, and even as the addled mud of my mind swirls with cannon fire and sea mist and the epic clash of British ships against the brooding tyrant Napoleon Bonaparte (that cruel diminutive first draft of Hitler), I pause to contemplate the pleasures of reading series of books, the parades of linked stories that ultimately compose vast novels of thousands of pages.



Are there not many subtle pleasures in series prose? The realisation, at the end of Book One, that you have stumbled on a gripping tale, beautifully told, and there are many alluring islands ahead to be visited; the happy workmanlike feeling of being in the middle of the series, and having a firm grasp of the cast of characters, and knowing there are books enough waiting for you that the summer will whiz past like a nighthawk; the dichotomous sense of hungrily wanting to know what's going to happen while mourning quietly that there are only a few pages left in the whole saga; the sigh of satisfaction at the very end, not only that you have actually read 12 consecutive novels and savoured every moment of the journey, but that you now have, let's say, Captain Hornblower, or Legolas, or Lyra Belacqua, or V. I. Warshawski, or (God help us all) Sir Harry Flashman as a shadowy friend the rest of your life, as yet another example of the mysterious awkward grace of the human animal, because the best fictional characters are utterly true, isn't that so?

Braces of books like John Steinbeck's undeservedly uncelebrated masterpieces *Cannery Row* and *Sweet Thursday*, trilogies like Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, quartets like Paul Scott's haunting account of the end of the British Raj in India or J. R. R. Tolkien's masterpiece *The Lord of the Rings* (in which *The Hobbit* is really the opening book, yes?), sprints of seven like C.S. Lewis' Narnia novels or the tale of Mr H. Potter of 4 Privet Drive, sprawling piles like the late George MacDonald's 12 hilarious Flashman novels, or incredible mountains like the more than 50 Inspector Maigret novels by Georges Simenon — it's a fascinating subgenre of fiction, the series.

And while many series are carried along by a single (and singular) character, others have immense circles of casts, layers of voices, hints and intimations of endless more tales to be told.

And maybe this too is a secret of great literature, that the best novels are those that give a reader the sense of seeing and hearing only part of the world created within those covers. In a really fine book, especially an enormous novel like Fraser's collected *Flashmania*, you get a powerful sense of the tumultuous thrum of people beyond the margins of the page, characters

walking away to live their lives unaccounted by the present author, a thousand stories beneath the one on the page ...

Another virtue of the series, it seems to me, is that very often this is where young readers enter the seething and delightful universe of books, in a way that sets them up for life as readers. The many wonderful books you read as a small child are not read with quite the same intent fervour that my teenage daughter, for example, has consumed a book a day when she is on a tear through one of the many series of teenage romance novels she appears to be reading — I am never quite sure of their titles and authors, as they vanish so fast that all I see is their shocking pink and yellow covers. All teenage romance novels have covers in nuclear colours, why is that?

Anyway, I sing the pleasures of seriesousness, from modest twins (even if slightly forced into companionship, like Truman Capote's terrific *The Thanksgiving Visitor* and *A Christmas Memory*) all the way to the inexhaustible ocean of, say, Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller Christie, who sold more books than everyone in history except the anonymous geniuses who wrote the Bible and the retired actor from Warwickshire.

To dive into a series, and find yourself absorbed, and flip back to the frontispiece, where you discover there are eight more novels like this — that is yet another of the quiet but delicious delights of the world of books, a world that at its very best reveals the deepest bones and sweetest songs of this world, don't you think?

Life after gold

POETRY

Various

The fish that drank the ocean

The expanding bag is webbed around hope.

It is made of string and governments fall
through its fingers like stones.

The bag is a boat and a car and then a gull and then a spiral;
Earth.

The afterimage of settlements are forgotten when the fire is stamped
into black stick dirt and the black stick dirt is carried by hand to the
bag of our hopes and left there to fall again through the holes in the
mesh.

Holy day, feast day, birthday, battle.

It's always happening again,

Soon we will form a line and slip
through a gap in the rocks.

There is water there and vivid, plangent light

—*Jesse Shipway*

Cusco

Old women sleep on footpaths next to cauldrons of boiling corn,
the cobs with kernels as big and pale as teeth. They walk the hard
roads with bundles of cans or sticks on their backs like humps for
lorries, oblivious to the ubiquitous mountains. Children in hand
and lambs on frayed ropes, they offer themselves for photographs
with their poppy-mouthed skirts and disease-reddened cheeks.

The street walls and foundation stones, born of an age of earthquakes

and labyrinths, do not want for mortar or miracles; they have the science of the circling stars and the conquistadors' gods on side. In the church, Black Jesus, bathed in petals and candle smoke, grows smoother and darker each year, and the Blessed Virgin stands mountainous in a triangular dress, her spiked halo the Andean sun. 'Capitalism is misery and suffering,' laments the white paint on the wall of an adobe house, outside which a family with oxen and plough work the blood-soaked earth of the mountains that spewed up so much resilient and spectacular rock. They are watched by dogs, black and bald as pigs. Returning from the markets, busloads of tourists, clad like cheer squads for Peru, take blurred photographs of the passing view. The air congeals in our lungs. In a restaurant, a woman passes out after vomiting her steak in a side-dish. Her blonde Canadian friend offers it to the quiet waitress, asking for ketchup for her fries. Guinea pig is served here as at the last supper re-painted for the local church half-a-millennium ago, when Judas wore a brown face with a melancholy and knowing gaze. Back at our quake-proof hotel, we are swallowed by our tomb-like room.

—*Maria Takolander*

Daytrip to Walhalla

uneasy in its valley of ghosts
this gold town lives on beyond bust
graves cut steep and deep through stone
some folk buried here standing up
this gold town lives on beyond bust
its bandstand caged by scaffold
some folk buried here standing up
parrots blood-bright at feeding bowls

its bandstand caged by scaffold
lyrebirds scratching in path-side moss
parrots blood-bright at feeding bowls
weekend cabins flush with gloss
lyrebirds scratching in path-side moss
trout darting from pool to ledge
weekend cabins flush with gloss
padlocked gates on a private bridge
trout darting from pool to ledge
this creek as clear as sulphuric
padlocked gates on a private bridge
footings blown from terraced rock
this creek as clear as sulphuric
acid seeping from long-tunnel mines
footings blown from terraced rock
gravity pressing as trees incline
acid seeping from long-tunnel mines
that fire station athwart the stream
gravity pressing as trees incline
braces angled from pier to beam
that fire station athwart the stream
graves cut steep and deep through stone
braces angled from pier to beam
uneasy in this valley of ghosts

—*Rodney Williams*

Sex, schools and students

EDUCATION

Fatima Measham



Few would disagree that, at some point, children ought to understand how the human reproductive system works. It tends to be the case that children initiate this exploration, often prompted by increasing awareness of their private parts or the anticipated arrival of a younger sibling.

But discrepancies can arise between parental preferences and school delivery of such information. That was the [case](#) at Holy Name Catholic Primary School in Toowoomba, Queensland. Appalled that his children, aged seven and nine, were shown genital diagrams and a birthing video, Greg Wells transferred them to a state school.

The story highlights the contentious and complex nature of sex education: how much ought to be revealed at which age and by whom? The fact that sexual norms vary among communities naturally makes such curriculum problematic. In fact, there is no comprehensive syllabus being applied consistently across Australian states and territories. Inevitably, schools are being accused of either doing too much too early or not enough.

What is the place of sex education in schools, anyway? The answer lies in the context in which children and teenagers live today.

The latest report from the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society [reveals](#) startling trends in the sexual behaviour of year 10 and 12 students. Its fourth National Survey of Secondary Students and Sexual Health, which involved nearly 3000 young people from 100 secondary schools, showed that 78 per cent have experienced some form of sexual activity.

There are also significant increases in the proportion of sexually active students reporting three or more partners in a year (rising from 20 per cent in 2002 to 30 per cent in 2008), as well as young women reporting unwanted sex (increasing from 28 per cent to 38 per cent).

According to Associate Professor Anne Mitchell, one of the authors of the survey, the reality is that 'puberty comes earlier these days and marriage or life-long partnering occurs much later, so young people have quite a long period in their lives where they are likely to be sexually active with different partners, exposed to STIs (sexually transmissible infections) and not wanting to become pregnant'.

In this light, she says, schools are best placed to cover sexual health not only because young people are a captive audience, but because it is where they can be supported in developing a mature sexual ethic. Outside of school, few such opportunities arise.

Christy Measham, an education officer at Family Planning Tasmania (who, incidentally, is the author's cousin-in-law), offers another argument — that children are already exposed to messages about sex from the media, most of which are misleading.

Thus, when parents protest that their child is not ready or doesn't need to know about 'such things', she often asks them if their child has a computer or owns a mobile. It may be that their child has already been exposed to inappropriate images and content without the mediation of an adult.

Mitchell agrees that the concern about protecting innocence can be misplaced.

'Parents do hold on to the fear that children will hear too much too early. This may have been an issue 50 years ago, but we only have to look around us — at the degree to which sex is used in advertising, at sexual explicitness in the media generally, and the wealth of opportunities that the internet provides to satisfy sexual curiosity — to appreciate that 'innocence' is destroyed very early.'

This sort of exposure can be offset by timely and appropriate information. According to Measham, for lower primary students, this means naming the human anatomy (with the aid of a basic diagram) as well as learning that there are rules concerning private parts and that it is important to talk to somebody about any concerns.

Evidently, sex education is no longer just about learning how the reproductive system works, how babies are conceived, STIs and contraception. While this may still be the case in some schools, there is now a distinct movement in sexual health literacy towards building lifelong, personal skills. These include paying attention to emotions, setting boundaries, acting within one's values, and using appropriate language.

Such skills are not necessarily associated with sexual intercourse, which tends to be the flashpoint. Instead, there is increasing focus on individual wellbeing and healthy relationship, which in the end is the correct context for talking about sex.

This, perhaps, can be the common ground upon which parents and schools agree. It is a collaboration that is essential for sex education to be effective, and is how Mitchell describes best practice. 'It should be based on a partnership between parents and the school', she says, 'each of them covering the territory that is difficult for the other.' She also advocates age-appropriate learning from kindergarten through to year 12.

Measham adds that sex ed is more than just the one-off 'talk' that parents feel obliged to give to their children. It is also more than the two lessons teachers think they can spare in a school year. 'Children learn about sexuality just from observing how adults relate to one another, and how they react to situations', she explains.

In this sense, it is worth wondering how Wells' reaction to the school's sex education methods will influence his children's understanding of sexuality.

‘Teachers and parents often forget how much of a role model they are,’ Measham comments. She remarks that it is nothing to be concerned about when children start giggling or making jokes about private parts, as was the case with Wells’ seven-year old son, because it is a phase that they normally outgrow.

As Mitchell says, what remains important is ‘that children and young people get reliable information to make sense of it all, and have a way of getting answers to their questions from someone they trust’.

Stop Sri Lanka, not its refugees

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

In 2007, then opposition leader Kevin Rudd outfoxed prime minister John Howard in a game of political one-upmanship that was dubbed '[me-tooism](#)'. Copying popular government policies was arguably the decisive factor that took Labor to victory in the federal election.



Once the election was over, Rudd moved on and proceeded to implement policies based on principle. We had the ratification of Kyoto, the apology to Indigenous Australians, and more. But now his government has been caught by surprise with the rapid upsurge in the number of refugee boat arrivals, and political instinct is once again determining how it acts.

Rudd [said](#) last week: 'Our job, and I make no apology for it, is to take a hardline approach in dealing with the challenge of illegal immigration.' The media juxtaposed this with Howard's infamous hard [line](#) from the time of Tampa: 'We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come.'

In intercepting refugee boats on the high seas to prevent them reaching Australia, the Rudd Government is pursuing the unprincipled strategy for which it criticised the Howard Government. Further, it has co-opted Indonesia. The people on the boats have a right to have their claims examined, and it should be a source of pride for us to honour them by listening to their stories.

On Thursday, *Crikey's* Guy Rundle [wrote](#) on 'the basic right to fight and kick and scream to find refuge'. He was encouraging public pressure, particularly from 'church groups who should be out loud and early on the matter'. After all, as Rundle said, 'you have to be a most un-Christlike Christian ... to believe that one can disregard the "when I was homeless you took me in" provision, whenever the visitors have brown skin'.

There are a number of positive measures the Government can take to assist these people in their fight for basic human rights. One is to make a strident attempt to seek answers from the Sri Lankan Government on why so many Tamils are fleeing the country, especially if the war is over and peace has returned.

It does appear that the Sri Lankan Government has fresh blood on its hands, and doesn't want the world to know about it. Last month, the Sri Lankan Government [expelled](#) UNICEF spokesperson James Elder (pictured), who was outspoken on the plight of civilians displaced during Sri Lanka's civil war. After receiving death threats, he left the country earlier than his 21 September deadline.

Elder is an Australian but, as far as we know, Foreign Minister Stephen Smith has only [responded](#) passively in a speech to Federal Parliament. To our knowledge, he has not even sought an explanation from his Sri Lankan counterpart Rohitha Bogollagama.

For his part, Kevin Rudd has said that Australia is merely 'monitoring human rights' in Sri Lanka. There is no talk of active questioning that could lead to an official fact finding mission that might subsequently prompt economic sanctions.

It is notable that this passive response to the Sri Lankan Government's apparent human rights violations is in stark contrast with the active interception of refugee boats. It is to be hoped that church and other groups who care about human rights do not follow the lead of their government and simply stand by where firm action is required.

Breastfeeding is not obscene

PARENTING

Catherine Marshall



Breasts are everywhere these days. They saturate our media in guises both trivial and sombre. Whether grotesquely augmented, stricken with cancer or tumbling unbidden from the frocks of soccer wives, breasts guarantee rapt attention and ongoing debate.

But never are these appendages more hotly debated than when they are being used according to their very purpose and design — that is, for the nourishment of babies.

Although the west's growing technological sophistication is inversely proportionate to its tolerance for organic activities such as breastfeeding, the negative attitudes are hardly new. History is littered with wet nurses to whom this distasteful activity was outsourced and modern mothers who dispensed with the biological process altogether in favour of Nestle's magical infant formula.

Buoyed by groups like the World Health Organisation, breastfeeding is creeping back into the public square, but western newborns still enter a world riven with dissent over their right to a ready meal.

It was refreshing to see the lactating Mexican actress and UNICEF ambassador Salma Hayek instinctively suckle a malnourished Sierra Leonean baby while visiting that country earlier this year. Hayek told reporters it was a compassionate act for a dying child, and that it came naturally to her to reach out to this baby when her own milk supply was plentiful. It was also an attempt to diminish the stigma of breastfeeding.

Not since Rose of Sharon breastfed a dying man in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* had breasts been used to commit such a revolutionary act. This Hollywood sex symbol wasn't just sharing her milk with a stranger's baby; she was doing so under the full public gaze.

How could it possibly be, then, that just last month in culturally diverse and thoroughly modern Australia a mother was asked by a flight attendant to conceal her breastfeeding activity from the puritanical eyes of fellow travellers? And that as recently as 2007 the NSW state government was forced to pass legislation making it illegal to discriminate against women breastfeeding in public?

Opinions around this issue are violently split between the supporters who believe babies should be allowed to feed wherever they please and the detractors who accuse nursing mothers of indecent exposure.

Could this really be happening in the same laissez-faire society where, not long before Kevin Rudd became Prime Minister, he was praised as being 'red-blooded' for visiting a New York strip club? Where young women flaunt their cleavages on city streets and semi-naked models stare out from the covers of men's magazines in service stations and news agencies across the country? Where prostitutes advertise their ware on the classified pages of suburban family newspapers?

Or, to put it more bluntly: is female nakedness culturally acceptable only when it is aimed exclusively at the arousal and satisfaction of men?

The reaction from some quarters to the Salma Hayek story seems to reinforce this hypothesis. As a presenter on the American talk show *The Young Turks* remarked, 'I wanted to be turned on by her breasts, but in that context I just couldn't do it.'

Of course, the reverse is true in traditional societies, where women tend to dress conservatively and the natural function of breasts is well-respected. In the many years I breastfed my own children, it never occurred to me that I might offend anyone. The fact that I lived in Africa contributed, no doubt, to the ease with which I was able to conduct this ritual.

In Africa breasts exist primarily as vessels of nourishment rather than as sexual objects. Women breastfeed their children on trains, buses and taxis, in restaurants and on park benches, in church and at work. Mostly they do so discreetly, but it's hardly newsworthy when they don't.

Using these African mamas as role models, I fed my babies on demand, regardless of where we happened to be at the time. The only person to object was a friend's mother, who believed vehemently that breasts were for sex, not babies. As if the two were somehow mutually exclusive.

And herein, perhaps, lies the absurd conundrum facing Australian women, who live in a strangely dichotomous society which tolerates them lying topless on the beach but chokes on its collective latte when they expose their nursing bras. In its typically prurient way, Western culture has co-opted breasts and sexualised them so thoroughly that their basic function is no longer accommodated.

This primordial act, upon which every other mammal relies for survival, has been twisted from its nurturing premise into an act of awful obscenity.

Sadly, society's fixation on the 'perversion' of public breastfeeding obscures the inordinate benefits that flow from it: breast milk improves infants' health and intellectual outcomes and decreases their carbon footprints; its production results in elevated levels of oxytocin within the nursing mother's brain, contributing to her emotional equilibrium, and decreases her risk of developing ovarian and breast cancer.

Almost a decade into the new century, it's a disgrace that women are still made to feel

uncomfortable while using their breasts to nourish their babies. Breastfeeding is neither primitive nor obscene; it is an act of love and generosity, a forward-thinking deposit into society's depleted bank account.

How to ad-proof your kids

PARENTING

Tania Andrusiak

In 2000, Naomi Klein published *No Logo*, her book on brands, marketing and sweatshop labour. In it, she explored the activities of global sportswear company Nike and its use of 'cool hunters'. These are designers who scour the streets for the edgiest kids in order to identify forward trends, co-opt them, then sell them back to the kids and on to the mainstream. These 'fashion forward' kids were most often poor, young, African American men.



The 'cool hunters' also gave Nike merchandise to those at the cutting edge, knowing that they'd make the brand edgier, infuse it with meaning and increase its market value. In selling the 'swoosh' to mainstream America, Nike sold an image of the lifestyles of these kids as edgy and cool. But the reality for those living it every day was the edge of poverty. They were overwhelmingly forgotten and failed by the system.

Not long after *No Logo* was published, I interviewed the author and asked her if she saw it as a problem that Nike had integrated itself into the lives of these kids. Klein's reply still resonates today: the problem wasn't that 'cool hunters' were interested in poor African American kids. The problem was that nobody else was.

Every year, marketers and 'cool hunters' spend vast amounts listening to what kids want, not because they care about kids, but because every year the global 'tween' market (children aged six to 13) spends around \$328 billion of their own money, and influence another \$2 trillion of parental spending.

Marketers know that even toddlers develop brand loyalties, and that winning them over early means 'owning' them for life. They call it 'cradle-to-grave' marketing.

As a result, children are faced with more ads than ever. Advertisers reach them wherever they go, through radio, sports sponsorships, packaging and in-store displays; through supermarket checkouts, flyers, outdoor ads and licensed characters. They use celebrity endorsements, premiums and fundraising, product placement, stealth and viral marketing, magazines, newspapers and the internet.

On average, kids see tens of thousands of ads each year. And that's just on TV.

To reach our kids, marketers employ child psychologists, childhood development theory and medical technologies like fMRI to measure the brain's response to marketing. They follow them as they shop, infuse products with familiar scents and snoop through their bedrooms. Some go online to pose as kids and spruik their brands, while others recruit children to sell to unwitting peers under the guise of friendship.

This is a problem on so many levels. Through a concept called ‘Kids Are Getting Older Younger’, marketers sell children developmentally inappropriate products: highly sexualised clothing, heavily gender-stereotyped media, toys linked to violent movies they’re too young to watch, junk food, luxury brands and toys with limited potential for play — especially the open-ended, imaginative play kids need to become creative, happy adults.

Marketers also utilise ‘pester power’ to pitch kids against parents, knowing that only the most determined among us can withstand the kind of pressure they encourage.

But the most fundamental problem is this: people have the right to know when we’re being sold to. Our ability to resist commercial persuasion requires an awareness of the advertisers’ intention to persuade. And while marketers claim that kids are more ‘ad-savvy’ than ever, children under eight years old are not cognitively equipped to understand an advertiser’s persuasive intent: they take ads as helpful, truthful and independent information. It takes a while for kids to understand that advertisers present selective, biased information and leave us to figure out the rest.

Advertising influences our kids. It shapes their perceptions of gender and sexuality, their body image, food preferences, snacking behaviour and brand loyalties. So how can they learn to make independent consumer decisions when their preferences are manipulated well before they can think critically about what’s going on?

What’s the solution when families are more fragmented and under pressure, and governments are less inclined to regulate the activities of marketers and media outlets?

There are some things parents can do to help our kids: we can limit their exposure to commercial media. We can show them how to question media messages by becoming more media literate ourselves. Together, we can raise awareness of advertisers and manufacturers who target kids in ways that aren’t okay, and tell them to back off.

At a recent seminar on children and sexualised media, Alastair Nicholson, former Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia made recommendations to afford our children protection from this kind of commercial exploitation. These included the proposal that Australia incorporate principles of the United Nations’ ‘Convention on the Rights of the Child’ into domestic law.

It’s a start, but so much more needs to be done. Our kids need space to figure out who they are and what they value without these ideas being manipulated for profit. Our kids have the right to live in a culture where their innermost thoughts, feelings and vulnerabilities aren’t scoped out and sold off to the highest bidder.

Like the ‘cool hunters’ in *No Logo*, marketing, brands and advertising push themselves into our children’s lives to occupy voids once filled by community, government and family networks. Marketers like these aren’t interested in hearing what kids really need. But it’s time

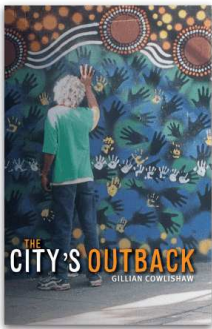
we made them sit up and listen.

Aboriginality's urban outback

BOOKS

Pat Mullins

Gillian Cowlishaw: *The City's Outback*. Sydney, UNSW Press, 2009. ISBN: 9781921410871. [Online](#)



Addressing the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People in 2004, Pope John Paul II [referred to](#) new waves of migration as the 'birthpangs of a new humanity'. Others speak of a new frontier similar to the migrant groups of earlier periods in Australia. Mt Druitt and surrounding areas, with its large numbers of different migrating groups, is one of the focal points of this new humanity. It is the new frontier.

Frontiers are times of opportunity but are also risky, raw and hard. Just as Pope John Paul II emphasised the opportunities of a 'new humanity' as well as the pangs of giving birth to new life, in *The City's Outback* Gillian Cowlishaw shows both the life and the pangs of this new frontier: the hope and the despair, the visions and the realities, of Aboriginal life in this youthful, growing, struggling and fascinating part of Australia.

Mt Druitt bears another similarity to earlier Australian times, when Aboriginal people were at the forefront of encounter with the first colonisers. In Mt Druitt lives one of the largest groups of Aboriginal people in Australia: more than 7000 in the Blacktown local government area. One hopes the outcomes on the new frontier are happier than those encounters with the early colonisers.

Cowlishaw's great contribution is to enable Aboriginal voices to be heard. She has laboured amid the difficulties of this ethnographic task to hear voices not normally heard, certainly not in the public forum; as Frank Doolan (an Aboriginal man and central character in *The City's Outback*) would say, to hear voices 'talking under water'.

In the earlier frontier times we got little directly from Aboriginal informants. We heard less regarding Aboriginal perceptions of the encounters with the new arrivals. Cowlishaw strives to redress this in our time.

Apart from this key theme, Cowlishaw organises her work around several other themes: the pain and bewilderment of life ('History hurts'), the stories of stolen and broken family life ('Writing reconciliation'), survival in the urban environment ('Living skills'), and the struggle for identity — who or what makes you Aboriginal ('Authenticity'). These themes are captured in real stories. One needs to read them to get the flavour and the feeling and above all to see things through the eyes of the interviewees.

The struggle for Aboriginality is an abiding theme. Norrine says: 'I wouldn't know how to define Aboriginality. I've never lived any other way.' Barney is sure and secure about his Aboriginal ancestry, but now it is education which is key; culture is an optional extra. Tina emphasises the bonding of Aboriginality: 'I miss that (bonding with Aboriginal people) because I came out of that ... I'm always searching to see if I can see a blackfella.'

Cowlshaw defines Aboriginality as an 'embeddedness in a social world' and this is surely right. Doolan asks further questions, such as what are the characteristics of this embeddedness, this bonding. For him there are some moral qualities: 'It's about your rightness ... of belonging' and your right to be angry about things.

There is also an identity question: 'you got to know where you come from'. It is a journey, 'a personal thing. It's up to the individual and you walk down a long road to find your Aboriginality. It's not just something you put on and wear easily. It's something you gotta grow into and there are different stages.'

It is about dealing with whiteness, like being a blackfella in a white school, and social protest, such as campaigns for land rights, dealing with police and with the housing department. It is about symbols: 'red, black and yellow, not red white and blue'. Finally, 'The only way to get out of the struggle is to renounce your Aboriginality, go underground.' It is interesting that few speak of traditional culture in the context of Aboriginality.

A contentious issue is Barney's characterisation of the 'gimme tribe', which he describes as 'cultural extended family abuse ... they eat you out of house and home ... and then move on to the next house'. The practice is referred to as 'demand sharing' in many parts of Australia. Cowlshaw describes Barney's account as extreme, that the behaviour is 'manners', and denies that it tends to keep people in poverty.

I believe demand sharing is more significant than Cowlshaw would have it. In the 1998 book *Economies and Personhood*, Gaynor MacDonald treats the question seriously among the Wiradjuri of central and southern New South Wales. Demand sharing is alive and well among the Wiradjuri long after cultural forms such as hunting, gathering and traditional languages have largely passed. McDonald and others argue that the importance of demand sharing lies not in its economic role of obtaining material goods but in its expression of relatedness and hence belonging. It is a core social value and a keystone of Aboriginal identity.

Australians need to hear the articulation of Aboriginal people to the nation. We need to hear of the perspectives of Aboriginal people. The majority needs to engage in its own struggle for an identity which is embraced by the Aboriginal identity.

Although many might wish to forget or deny the realities of Aboriginal history and contemporary issues, others find this inescapable because we cannot understand ourselves without relationship to Aboriginal people in this land. *The City's Outback* is good for all of us.

Woody Allen's icky philosophy

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***Whatever Works* (M). Running time: 88 minutes. Director: Woody Allen. Starring: Larry David, Evan Rachel Wood, Patricia Clarkson**

American actor Jason Alexander half-jokes that, early in the life of the 1990s sitcom *Seinfeld*, his portrayal of the hard-luck George Costanza transformed from a Woody Allen impersonation to a Larry David impersonation. He learned that aspects of the character's story had been lifted directly from the life of David, the show's co-creator. Thereafter George's nervy neurosis took on a belligerent, narcissistic dimension; a cheeky tribute to David.



David was kinder to himself when, later, he came to play himself in his other great sitcom, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. *Curb's* Larry David character shares traits both with George and with *Seinfeld's* title character, Jerry, but he has redeeming qualities not possessed by either of those entirely self-serving personas. Usually (though not always) he means well. He attracts trouble through his ignorance of, or contempt for, the minutiae of social etiquette.

In Woody Allen's *Whatever Works*, the character chain closes on itself, as David portrays a more acerbic version of Allen's trademark neurotic heroes. He is Boris Yellnikoff, a lovable misanthrope, physicist and self-proclaimed genius (he was 'almost nominated' for a Nobel Prize). Following a divorce and a failed suicide, Boris walks with a perennial limp and a nasty attitude. He has no patience for ... well, for anyone. He earns a buck berating the child prodigies to whom he teaches chess. In short, he is like *Curb's* Larry on a really bad day.

Boris expounds a blackly comic, fatalistic philosophy, particularly in the realm of romantic love. When dimwitted runaway Melodie (Wood) drifts into his gruff orbit, she provides him not so much with an object for affection, but a bottomless hole into which to pour his endless existential bile. Melodie mistakes his obstinately bleak outlook for true genius and, wouldn't you know it, they fall for each other. Unlikely, sure, but what charm the film has comes from its contrasting Melodie's dumb cheer with Boris' OTT misery.

On the other hand, as a filmmaker, Allen is at his worst when he's being too clever. There is a recurring conceit in *Whatever Works*, that Boris, because of an expanded world view, is aware of something the other characters are not: that there is an audience watching their every move. His monologues to camera, directly addressing this 'audience' (to the bewilderment of his fellows), are initially humorous, but the joke wears thin.

That's especially true, given that one can't help but feel that Boris is a mouthpiece for Allen.

Boris' views on the undefined nature of romance — 'whatever works', as the title suggests — is fine as far as it goes. But it seems a tad icky, and even takes on an air of personal apologetics, when you recall that Allen has been frowned upon for his affair with and subsequent marriage to the adopted daughter of his former lover, the actor Mia Farrow.

It is probably unfair to judge it on these criteria, but a film that is so blatantly self-aware, even self-indulgent, invites such associations; in this case, to its detriment.

In truth, that's a minor sticking point. There is fun to be had here. When Melodie's conservative religious mother (Clarkson) storms in from Mississippi and discovers the kind of man her daughter has shackled up with, she is outraged. Her loathing for Boris does not dissipate, even as city life and a burgeoning artistic career gradually expand her mind and her horizons. She makes an amusing foil to his unrelenting narcissism.

That said, *Whatever Works* demands a strong constitution. Those who find Allen's filmic idiosyncrasies unbearable will know already to steer clear. But David, too, can be an acquired taste, and if you've found yourself unable to sit through an episode of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, then imagine enduring 88 minutes of his gravelly, spitting rants. The man is a comic genius, but it is a genius that polarises. So will this film.

Refugee hysteria breeding Pacific Solution 2.0

POLITICS

Kerry Murphy



In 2001 and 2002, the then Minister for Immigration, Philip Ruddock, made several references to '10,000 asylum seekers coming to Australia'. 'Whole villages' were on their way, we were warned. They never arrived, but the former government claimed this was due to the success of the 'Pacific Solution'. Objectively this is almost impossible to prove — how do you ask people why they did not come to Australia?

In a nod to the past, the Opposition are again talking about '10,000' asylum seekers on the way. It is not clear if it is the same 10,000 as in 2001. Some facts in the debate are needed.

The UNHCR estimates that there are more than 50 million refugees and internally displaced people in need of protection and solutions, and only a few returning home. 'While more than 600,000 refugees voluntarily repatriated in 2008', said Anonio Guterres, the UN High Commisioner for Refugees, 'this was 17 percent fewer people than the year before and with the exception of one year, the lowest number in the last 15 years.'

Guterres also criticised the act of 'excising' territory, as Australia did in 2001, because this places greater burdens on the poor countries where most refugees are living.

'Some developed countries are limiting access to their territories in ways that do not respect the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees under international and regional law', he said. 'Pushing asylum-seekers back to where protection is not available or further burdening developing countries who already host the vast majority of the world's refugees is not acceptable.'

The increased movement of people is due to a number of factors, one of which is the conflict in home countries, especially Iraq, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. Every few days were hear of deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Brookings Institution notes a rise in violence in Afghanistan from August 2005. Civilian, US and NATO deaths were 42 in August 2005 but there were 176 in August 2009.

Meanwhile, the defeat of the Tamil Tigers did not bring peace to Sri Lanka. Thousands of Tamils are being held in 'camps' in northern Sri Lanka. Around 250,000 are still in official closed camps, awaiting screening in a process outside normal legal frameworks, without the usual legal protections. Unknown numbers of others are in unofficial closed camps and, according to Amnesty International, are at risk of human rights abuses.

Many Tamils fear that an actual or imputed link to the Tigers will put them at risk of persecution.

Australia is experiencing a small number of arrivals compared to the thousands arriving in Europe, particularly in Italy and Spain. Globalisation means we are unable to cut ourselves off from the economic, political and environmental events taking place beyond our shores. Australia needs to keep helping provide solutions for asylum seekers and refugees through resettlement and fair processes.

In order to be granted protection in Australia, applicants arriving by boat have to pass a preliminary assessment of their case, then a full in-depth interview, as well as security and health checks. If the cases do not meet the strict legal criteria, they would not get past the first screening.

We must take care that a hysterical response to the arrival of boats in Australia does not undo the progress we have made away from unjust policy. Most have already experienced serious trauma. To return to a temporary visa regime will separate families for years and cause anxiety. The trauma from uncertainty for your future and fear of persecution can have serious long term affects on health. This is not treating people with dignity.

How someone comes to Australia should not affect the way they are treated. We have left behind the days of long, traumatic periods in desert detention centres. A new 'Pacific Solution' – which, of course, is neither pacific nor a solution – is not going to help the asylum seekers. There are still reforms needed in the system, but the last two years have seen a return to treating people with more dignity, rather than as undesirables.

While there continues to be political and sectarian violence, there will be refugees. Protection in Australia is part of Australia's contribution towards addressing this global phenomenon.

Strange encounters on the Spanish Camino

SPIRITUALITY

Tony Doherty

Brian Doyle, a frequent contributor to *Eureka Street*, left me with one of his characteristic [flashes of wisdom](#) which has been rattling around in my mind like some half-remembered song: 'There are no great stories, only small stories told with great attentiveness.'



Recently I returned from walking the Spanish Camino to the medieval town of Santiago de Compostella, the legendary resting place of the Apostle James. Returning pilgrims are faced with the same questions, I imagine: What did it mean? Has it changed you? Was it the significant spiritual experience that people speak about?

Well, I must confess I'm not making a great fist of answering these friendly enquiries. By the time I clear my throat and fashion a few clunky words, there is often a slightly embarrassed gap and, often as not, I find the conversation has moved in some other direction.

Let me try to make sense of the experience through the lens of one small story. About the half way point in the 350 km of my pilgrimage my companion and I were coming to the end of our walking day, looking forward to the evening's stop at a village called Alto de Poio. The map told us we were a few kilometres from our destination.

A large house appeared on the track, with rows of washing on the line, a reliable sign that we had reached the *refugiowhere* we would find a dormitory full of exhausted pilgrims on their beds recovering from the six or seven hour walk of the morning. Taking the steps up to the verandah, we opened the front door and confidently walked into the house expecting the usual warm hospitality unfailingly offered to the weary pilgrim.

Wham, bam, alakazam — a rather small ancient man barred our way and attacked us with a venom normally reserved for carriers of some ancient plague, shouting in a pitch beyond fury, snarling like an enraged guard dog. We retreated as though our backpacks were on fire.

The householder's response was understandable, when you think about it. He had been confronted with two men armed with heavy wooden staffs, wildly bearded, no doubt seriously on the nose, mumbling in some unrecognisable language, invading his very lounge room.

This was not the expected place of hospitality and refuge where we could throw our weary bodies for the night. In shock, we stumbled back on to the path.

But the story doesn't end there. A hundred metres down the track we faced several hundred metres of sheer gut-wrenching climb. More Matterhorn than Camino. Forget the

pilgrim staff — ice picks and ropes were needed. My companion was not happy. In between sucking in the oxygen, I began to recall with some alarm a recent conversation I had with my cardiac physician. But worst of all I was not at all sure we were going the right way.

Suppose the house at the top of the hill was owned by another attack dog jealously guarding his turf. Suppose he was to hurl our weakened frames bodily down the hill. Suppose after all this life-threatening effort we had to retrace our steps and search further down the track for food and bed. I was not, as they say, in a good space.

Two moments in a 15 day adventure. Two moments of blood sweat and tears — attacked by locals then attacked by the track itself. Why do I choose these two stories for great attentiveness? In a funny way because they were so atypical.

There were dozens of other moments, lyrical experiences of meeting fascinating fellow searchers, finding songs to sing with people who had no common language, sharing meals that you didn't want to end, walking through vineyards heavy with fruit, contemplating starry starry nights (this was the way to Compostella 'the field of stars', after all), and experiencing the heady freedom of simply depending on your legs to take you forward.

Pilgrimage is about letting go of so many of the taken-for-granted props we have grown to depend on — cars and buses and trains to carry you from one place to another; the knowledge of where you will sleep this night; the ready availability of clothes and food. The journey of a pilgrim can depend on none of these.

When planning for the great Camino adventure, I anticipated long hours on the road occupied in meditation, remembering things past, reflective prayer. What I didn't anticipate was how intensely focused I would be on my body. The many hours of walking, having your feet binding you to the earth — the sheer physicality of it all.

Talking about this to a young woman at the conclusion of the pilgrimage, she said: 'You pray with your feet, you know.' I never heard a better description. I even had to let go my very rational notion of prayer.

Has the Camino changed me? Yes. No. I don't quite know. Perhaps I should leave the answer to others.

'We would rather be ruined', W. H Auden claims, 'than changed'. I'm not completely sure about that. My experience is that most life-change happens in small steps. Rather like a long walk — stride after stride, kilometre after kilometre. To live is to change. And there is something about the physicality of walking the Camino which touches the essence of that slow process of change.

Historically the pilgrim's lot was never easy. And it is in the difficult times that illusions can be shattered. Bodies can be stretched. The hour on the road to Alto de Poio was just such a time. It demands great attentiveness.

But putting aside the question of whether genuine long-lasting change has happened or not, there are two undeniable truths which I carry locked in the memory of this small story.

Never presume on warm welcome if you sport an unkempt beard and carry a big stick. And the longest hills always come to an end if your heart doesn't give out first.

Post script: You will be pleased to know that there was light on the top of the hill. Our desperate climb was rewarded with cold beer, hot food and, more crucially, a bed to receive our shredded bodies.

Why Obama deserved the Nobel Peace Prize

POLITICS

Tony Kevin



The Nobel Peace Prize award to Barack Obama has provoked widely diverse reactions. I noted in Australia appropriate polite congratulations from Kevin Rudd and Malcolm Turnbull, but jarringly rude mockery from Alexander Downer.

Internationally, German Chancellor Angela Merkel applauded the award, saying: 'Obama has set a new tone in the world'. Former prize-winners the Dalai Lama and Shimon Peres were also pleased.

On the other hand, there were bitter denunciations from the Taliban, obviously. The Republican Right, Rush Limbaugh and his ilk, Foxnews and the *Wall Street Journal* opposed the award, arguing that Obama hadn't achieved anything to deserve it: it was a prize for mere aspiration. In Israel, there was cynicism from all sides.

Yet the Norwegian Nobel committee explained its rationale clearly. Obama has done more this year for world peace than any other possible contender:

'through his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples ... Obama has as President created a new climate in international politics. Multilateral diplomacy has regained a central position ... Dialogue and negotiations are preferred as instruments for resolving even the most difficult international conflicts ... Obama [has] captured the world's attention and given its people hope for a better future.'

I can comfortably support all these arguments. For comparable reasons, *US Time Magazine* nine months ago made Obama their Person of the Year.

So why in the US Republican Right does Obama remain a polarising figure of hate and derision? He is anathema to the Right, precisely because he rejects the idea of the US imposing its interests, views and values on the world by superior force.

The Right's argument that Obama hasn't achieved anything yet is essentially a smokescreen for their bile at knowing that Obama got this international award precisely because, truly, he is 'not Bush' — that Obama has launched an international healing, after the great damage worked by his predecessor. These critics cannot bear the world's relief and thanks that Obama is not Bush. This humiliates them, and they are rationalising their rage.

There are areas of concrete peacemaking achievement already. In US-Russian relations, the provocative NATO missile shield project in Central Europe has been cancelled, the Georgian adventure set to rest, and the Russian government has visibly warmed to the West in

response. Nuclear disarmament negotiations are moving again.

On the other great world security crisis — disruptive climate change — China's President Hu Jintao dramatically pledged in the US last month to cut China's carbon dioxide emissions relative to GDP by a notable margin. I believe China's rapid move to the forefront of international climate negotiations was encouraged by purposeful high-level US bilateral diplomacy this year.

In the Middle East, at least the cruel Israeli bombardment and blockading of Gaza has ceased.

Even on the world's 'small' security crises — not small for people suffering from them — the Obama style of extending a hand of friendship to the clenched fist of adversaries is reaping rewards. Following the US decision to re-engage with Burma's military junta, Aung San Suu Kyi is again playing a more active political role in the search for a political settlement there. These things are connected.

In diplomacy, the distinction between words and action, aspiration and achievement, is subtle — too subtle for some. If well-chosen inspirational language (like Obama's highly symbolic and allusive speech in Cairo, directed to the Arab world) improves the climate of negotiation in long-standing angry disputes, this is an achievement in itself. I find the claim that Obama hasn't achieved anything yet in international peacemaking a caricature of reality. He has already achieved much, and he brings hope for more.

At another level, what do Papal Encyclicals achieve? Does their moral guidance actually make anyone do anything? Yet no reasonable person could argue that Papal Encyclicals don't have impact. To exhort to good action, to speak a credible language of moral inspiration and hope to the world, is an achievement in itself. Thank goodness we have an American President who is prepared to do so — and to try to back up these aspirations with US assets, appropriately deployed.

Afghanistan remains my biggest problem with Obama. I grieve the pointless sacrifice of the lives of Afghanis and the intervention forces. I pray that Obama is preparing an honourable exit strategy, which will have to bring Taliban elements into government; that he will find a way through his Afghanistan dilemma, and quickly.

How to talk to Aboriginal students

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Myrna Tonkinson

Across the country, Indigenous students are far behind in literacy, numeracy and educational outcomes. The [results](#) of the second National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy Tests demonstrate the enormity of the gap. There is agreement about the urgency of improvement, but divergent views as to how to achieve it.

The Australian newspaper recently [reported](#) the success of Indigenous opinion leader Noel Pearson's Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC), which was established to improve educational participation and outcomes in four Cape York communities.

The FRC approach includes withholding welfare payments from parents whose children do not attend school, and is labelled 'tough love'. Figures tabled in the Queensland parliament suggest it is working, if attendance is the goal, although it is far too early to measure its educational effectiveness.

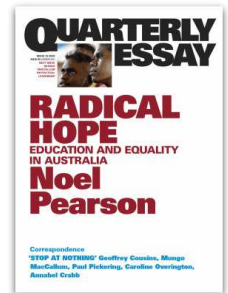
On the other hand, Aboriginal educator Dr Chris Sarra recently convened a [Stronger Smarter Summit](#), showcasing his approach, which has seen success at Cherbourg and has been embraced by a number of other schools. Sarra advocates 'positive engagement with children and communities', 'respectful partnership', and quality teachers.

While approving of some aspects of the FRC, Sarra questions whether its results justify its \$48 million funding, when his achievements are comparable at a fraction of the cost. He deplores the punitive aspects of the FRC.

During the Summit, Education Minister Julia Gillard argued that teachers posted to remote schools should be 'prepared for community life and ... have strong skills in teaching English as a second language'. These words are heartening because, in remote schools at least, ESL teaching skills are vital, but often absent.

The language issue was highlighted in a recent ABC *Four Corners* program, prompted by the Northern Territory Government's decision to abolish bilingual education. It [focused](#) on Lajamanu, a desert community where Warlpiri is the dominant language. Since 1982, Lajamanu has had bilingual teaching, and in 1989 children there scored highest among NT Aboriginal schools in tests of English, and showed improvement generally.

Despite such successes, the gap between Indigenous pupils and others endured, even widened. Some inquiries cast doubt on the efficacy of bilingual education, and critics like Helen Hughes and Gary Johns, who blame the use of Aboriginal languages in schools for



students' poor performance, have been more influential than linguists and educational specialists who endorse bilingual approaches.

Last year, the NT Government made instruction in English for the first four hours of each day mandatory from the start of 2009.

Supporters of this measure expect a transformation in performance. Interviewed by *Four Corners*, NT Chief Minister, Paul Henderson claimed the affected children will do as well as native speakers in year three tests, once standard Australian English (SAE) is the sole language of instruction. This conflicts with expert opinion; in addition, schools using SAE exclusively have not produced better results.

Though a full bilingual curriculum may be unachievable, there are undeniable benefits in school-based support for the maintenance of local languages and cultures, and in avoiding placing teachers where the children do not understand them, and where they understand the children even less.

Aboriginal Education Workers assist teachers with communication, but there is seldom structured or consistent use of children's first languages as an educational tool. At least, ESL training for teachers in the early grades should be a requirement. It is disgraceful that this is not already the case.

If Aboriginal children were non-English-speaking immigrants they would have access to ESL-trained teachers, intensive English classes and appropriate resources. Teachers in remote schools are often unaware of basic language obstacles, like the fact that some Aboriginal languages do not distinguish the unvoiced and voiced consonants 'b' and 'p', 'd' and 't', and 'g' and 'k', thus children may not 'hear' these distinctions that are so significant in English. Albeit belatedly, Gillard's emphasis on ESL must translate into action.

Language is, of course, only one reason for Indigenous children's poor performance. Hindrances include absenteeism (often ignored by parents), hearing and vision problems, inadequate nutrition, overcrowded housing and more.

At the Summit, Gillard listed 'five key elements': 'students are ready to learn; attendance; quality teachers and inspirational school leadership; a focus on literacy and numeracy; parental and community engagement'.

Implied here are two crucial factors: motivation and models. Motivation is essential, for parents as well as children; they must be willing to delay gratification, make sacrifices, in anticipation of future benefits.

There are historical examples of how motivation drives education. Eighteenth century Scottish Protestants had a passionate desire to read the Bible, and this made literacy a major goal. Historians credit this as a driving force that led to the high educational achievement for which Scotland is famous.

Finding ways to motivate Indigenous parents and children, and to sustain their motivation is crucial.

Educational models, some from overseas, are often invoked, but personal models are also important for school attendance and success. Often, children have few or no such models. High mobility, spontaneity and untrammelled personal autonomy are incompatible with consistent participation in school.

Here lies a conundrum: success at school relies on embracing mainstream values, but values cannot be imposed. They must be internalised, seem natural. This process will be facilitated by schools helping to inculcate and reinforce dominant values and norms.

Coercion by the state and its agents was applied in the past, with some success. Parental authority was virtually irrelevant, and children, sometimes housed in dormitories, were obliged to attend school.

However, it is striking that so few who experienced such regimes now insist on their own children's regular school attendance, or consider school a priority. A multiplicity of measures is required, but ESL teaching, along with local language maintenance, is surely an achievable provision that could benefit children in remote schools.

Turning all the nonsense upside down

POETRY

Lerys Byrne and John Falzon

Something you treasure

Bring something

you've treasured

... and think what you

might have brought.

Might have brought books,

(sought books, abandoned books).

Might have brought sea things,

smooth stone, nautilus.

Perhaps just words,

spoken words, secret words,

with their connections,

influence, inference.

Or music,

its power, resonance;

koto, percussion,

captured experience.

Might have brought

fabrics,

remembered touch,

photographs.

Could come

without any thing,

holding

the thought of things.

—*Lerys Byrnes*

Upside down

Our children taught us how to hide

and seek the coloured birds and human tears. They're beautiful. With gentle thoughts our fighters tempt the violence of the word. We're learning, friends, elliptically. We're bloody on the tongues.

We drink. We dance with openly dark angels, strain our ears and wings to listen to the wisdom of the broken and the lost. We will discern the sudden dust we've come from beatifically.

We're turning all the nonsense upside down.

Where on the edge?

Where on the edge are the poems buried: sweet, ripe, evasive and unreal?

Here, here, here and here.

Friend, come and see the blood

stains

on the beaten body

of the world.

We're building something new and very good

with the stones from the streets here. This

is where we ripped them up

to bury little whispers of our poetry and blood.

—*John Falzon*

Hey hey it's a human rights violation

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins



Hours before the National Human Rights Consultation Report was [released](#) on Thursday morning, I was listening to talkback radio in a rural area. The topic was the infamous Black Faces performance on Channel 9's *Hey Hey It's Saturday* the previous night.

Four out of five callers could not understand what the fuss was about. But one caller, who identified herself as a Koori, expressed alarm. She felt her hard won equality with other Australians was questioned by the Black Faces segment, and its apparent acceptance by the large majority of Australians.

A basic understanding of a human rights charter is that it shifts the human rights law making centre of gravity from politicians to the judiciary. Depending upon how it was formulated, a charter might give more grounds on which judges could decide whether proposed legislation was consistent with other legislated rights. Currently this is the task of political leaders, who would still be responsible for the drawing up of legislation that would be subject to judicial scrutiny.

It is worth considering, in general terms, the fate of a hypothetical proposed law that would impose sanctions on the licence of a broadcaster putting to air offensive material such as the Black Faces segment.

Politicians would base their decision on whether to support the law, on what the majority of Australians wants. That is their job. They would listen attentively to the radio talkback and do their best to follow the wishes of the four out of five callers who were indifferent to the Black Faces sketch or who thought it was funny. They would reject the proposed law.

Under a human rights charter, scrutinising judges would pay closer attention to views such as those of the Koori caller. They would cross examine representative Indigenous Australians to ascertain if the Black Faces performance did in fact contribute to the erosion of their right to be considered equal to all other Australians. They might then approve the law that would penalise Channel 9.

In such circumstances, there would of course be pressure on the judiciary to follow public opinion, or that of politicians. One possible illustration comes from another television comedy act that was deemed to have breached standards, the Chaser's Make a Wish Foundation skit from last June.

The ABC's own review processes approved the segment before it went to air, though management and the Chaser failed to anticipate the public response. The Chaser team

maintains to this day that it was misunderstood by the public. It was intended as a parody against unthinking charity. The withdrawal of the segment, and the ABC's apology for it, was a capitulation to the public outcry. The socially constructive statement was lost, and unthinking charity won the day.

The implication for any version of a Human Rights Charter that could be introduced in the wake of the Consultation is that judges would need to act courageously and keep public opinion in perspective. The quality of judges Australia has had in recent years gives us cause for optimism.

The homeless poet

COMMUNITY

John Falzon

Earlier this year an extraordinary story came out of Japan about a man who was experiencing long-term homelessness and who was regularly sending the most exquisite poems to a popular newspaper. There is nothing extraordinary about a person experiencing homelessness producing great poetry. Yet the scenario was regarded with astonishment.



In a similar vein, I recall, a couple of years ago, being interviewed on *Sunrise* on the issue of homelessness. There was a sense of shock about a story reported the day before, about a person experiencing homelessness who provided excellent medical assistance to someone, before disappearing as the ambos turned up.

Such surprise can only be explained by the strongly ingrained presupposition that anyone experiencing homelessness must be completely lacking in any kinds of skills; that their entire being, history and function is captured by the term 'homeless'. Quite the contrary!

According to a recent OECD report Australia has among the lowest unemployment benefits in the developed world. Macro-economist, Professor Bill Mitchell, observes that 'since the mid-1990s, the unemployed have been increasingly disadvantaged relative to average weekly earners and the aged pension recipients'.

'This has been a deliberate strategy of the successive federal governments,' he says, 'to make life increasingly harder for that group and reflects their conceptualisation of the problem as being of an individual nature rather than a systemic failure.'

Social, economic and political exclusion is a systematic action that is done to people. It is not something that people happen into by means of bad luck, bad choices or bad karma. It is manifested in individual lives as a unique intersection between personal narrative and the axes of history and structure.

The dominant discourse on the persistence of exclusion is one that fundamentally un-knows people, especially in terms of their collision with unjust structures and de-humanising histories. It is this un-knowing that leads to the much-vaunted belief that the term 'homeless' or 'unemployed' captures the entirety of a person's story and that, therefore, they are denied the multi-dimensionality that comes as a class-privilege to others in society.

Let us return to our unknown Japanese poet. His poetry is as beautiful as it is incisive in its social analysis:

'Used to living without keys,

I see through the New Year.

Of what else must I rid myself?

In these three dense lines he provides us with a window into his exclusion, teaching us that dispossession is literally imposed on him as a material and, therefore, spiritual reality. He is aware of himself as a living ensemble of social relations in a specific historical context.

There is, of course, no solution to any social problem except one that follows from the very conditions of the problem. Approaches to social exclusion that are derived from a magisterial view of a purported moral underclass are destined to deliver the possibility of compliance but never the reality of social justice.

Such is the problem, for example, with the Federal Government's piloting of punitive measures such as suspending the welfare payments of parents whose children are not attending school. As Aboriginal education expert, Dr Chris Sarra, points out, this approach does nothing to address the problems within the school gates.

In the novel *A Sun for the Dying*, by Jean-Claude Izzo, we find a rich narrative of the social relations of structural exclusion and demonisation in Marseilles. In one scene the main character describes feelings of rage about a St Vincent de Paul soup kitchen in which people receive favourable treatment at mealtime if they first subject themselves to a gruelling hour of being preached at by the priest.

This imposition of religiosity is no different to the other forms of moral imposition by the market and by the state. The mistake made by all of these apparatuses is that they imagine that any form of compliance means that the battle has been won; that the real story has been erased, that the heart, the mind and the body have been conformed to the will of the powerful.

The soup kitchen scene is a potent example of this myth. It is a relation of power that is institutionalised and morally embedded. When any of us experience it we either flee its haunting significance or we engage with it.

I would like to suggest that if we engage with this uncomfortable reality we leave ourselves open to the most powerful potential for social change, fought for, like all things worth fighting for, under the guiding stars of struggle and hope.

Izzo puts it this way in describing his narrator's feelings for another person on the margins of society: 'He was thinking of another kind of fraternity. The kind that unites somewhere between rage and despair, those who have been rejected. Excluded.'

As I read this book for the first time I remember feeling that it was bursting at the seams with sadness and recognition. Sadness is important as a way of engagement with social inequality and injustice, especially when this sadness translates not into condescending pity or constructed powerlessness but rather firms up into shame, a revolutionary sentiment if ever

there was one.

Who can forget the shame we felt over the reality of children being detained behind razor wire? I recall my own sense of shame the first time I was taken by a colleague into Villawood Detention Centre some years ago. Who can deny the sense of deep shame we feel over the Stolen Generations, a shame that gave birth to an apology; a shame that needs to give birth to a repeal of the racist aspects of the Northern Territory Intervention?

During Anti-Poverty Week we are all invited to think carefully about the entrenched inequality in our midst and whether we, as a nation, possess the political will to do better. As Italian theorist, Domenico Losurdo, put it: 'Democracy cannot be defined by abstracting the fate of the excluded.'