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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.

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Responsibility for editorial content is accepted by the publisher.

Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned.

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Sex and power in football and politics

REVIEWS

Barry Gittins and Jen Vuk

***Night Games: Sex, Power and Sport*, by Anna Krien. Black Inc., 2013.**

[Website](#)

Barry

Sick of hearing about footballers using women as disposable items? A young writer has crash tackled the ugly questions of non-consensual sex, coercion and the male privilege and misuse of power that can flow from sporting success.

Feel the power of Krien's prose: 'suddenly sobering, she realises she is not one of the guys, that all this, that guy who is taking pictures with his mobile phone, the other guy who is waiting his turn, has nothing much to do with her ... She's the ball and everyone gets a touch — that is, if they're 'hungry' enough ...

'Treating women like shit shades into a culture of abuse, which in turn can shade to rape ... I feel like a slut. I thought it was you ... Don't let them leave yet, don't let them leave ... Can you finish me off?'

I'm sure you'll agree, Jen, that Krien's *Night Games* is a confronting, jarring piece of work. There were many times when, sickened by cruelty and indifference, I had to put the book down and walk my anger off.

Men taking liberties with women's bodies with seeming impunity is an old, old story but Krien has weaved this tale together during a new and increasingly diligent age of awareness. As hundreds of hirsute, highly-paid gladiators wade mid-season through our four major professional football codes and tens of thousands more romp through amateur comps, she pulls a big opponent to the ground and trounces him with relish.

This may well amount to a cultural game-changer. Part-speculative journalism, part court reportage, part meditation on human sexuality, *Night Games* centres around a recent court case alleging rape.

She consistently, sincerely poses big questions. When is something 'group sex', as opposed to a gangbang? Is it consensus, or coercion, when a woman enters into sexual activity with one young man, then finds his mates queuing up for their go?

Does the potent commingling of alcohol, drugs, testosterone and fame make everything up for grabs? Does consent have to be obtained for any and every act? If not, is it then a case of outright rape or a grubby encounter set to be legally dismissed as a 'he said/she said' game, to be abandoned after each tawdry melee?

Jen, I think Krien makes a devastating case for male contempt and abuse in this country. We need a re-examination of sexual etiquette. Better yet, a national

discourse on simple humanity.

I recognise the efficacy of the technique deployed, but I'm uncomfortable with Krien's 'projecting' into and onto the thoughts of others in her legal coverage. Still, discomfort is doubtless her worthy intention. That device, from the realm of fiction (alongside other New Journalism techniques such as immersion and self-disclosure) accomplishes its purpose.

Ultimately Krien's researched and reiterated 'reveals' — of footballers as aspiring Lords of all they drunkenly survey, of policing as a flawed currying of favours, and of the judicial process as self-serving horse trading — makes for an eye-opening, daunting and timely read.

Jen

What with the steady denigration of our female (now former) prime minister, the Australian defence force under investigation for the disseminating of explicitly sexual and sexist emails and *The Footy Show* still somehow on the air, it's not been a great month for gender relations.

But perhaps the most galling and incendiary news was that of AFL footballer Stephen Milne facing charges of four counts of rape following Victoria Police's review of a 2004 case.

No mere coincidence, Barry? Milne or, at least, the case against him certainly makes an appearance in *Night Games*. In recent weeks Milne spoke about the sledging from spectators during games and the toll this took on his young children, another reminder that in the shadowy world of *Night Games* the victims have many faces.

And it's these faces — or perhaps their silent voices — that Krien coaxes out in her exhaustive investigative work. Yes, Barry, I, too, felt my blood boil, but I couldn't put the book down. I liked that Krien held my hand even when dragging me through the mud of some of the most debased human behaviour on record.

Krien is nothing if not intrepid. There she is, a young, dare I say, attractive, female journalist knocking on the doors 'of Sam Newman, Ricky Nixon, Matty Johns and the Cronulla Sharks' with her dictaphone at the ready.

But this isn't a book blithely waving its feminist credentials in the hope of bringing down a blokey house of cards. It's human to take sides, especially when the aggrieved party is vulnerable or outnumbered, but, as Krien reminds us, in the often clouded aftermath of sexual assault, clarity, too, can be a casualty.

'Is this the grey zone I'm trying to put my finger on, that glacial space between a man's action and a woman's reaction?' she writes. 'And in that slow underwater place, is it a race? To see how far, how much he can get before she surfaces? Or is he also underwater?'

For me, the court case of a young, unknown footballer and his damaged yet

cosseted alleged victim is the perfect foil for Krien to glean out the greater issues: from the potent quasi-sexual allure that lies at the heart of mateship to the legal alternative of 'restorative justice' with its focus on redress and redemption.

And perhaps her greatest achievement is having us stand in the corners of both the injured party and the accused in order to better recognise our own moral position.

I can't agree more, Barry. When it comes to our football codes — let alone our political arena — a conversation needs to move beyond gender name-calling or the 'us and them' polemic. As a piece of journalism *Night Games* is undeniably raw, unflinching and objective, but its real influence may well lie away from the page.

Dawn of a human rights revolution

INTERNATIONAL

Pat Walsh

Twenty years ago this month, I was privileged to attend the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. The conference was designed to catch the wave of change generated by the end of the Cold War and surf it to the beach of a new global consensus on human rights. It was the largest ever gathering on human rights. It demonstrated the extraordinary growth in civil society organisations across the world and their collective influence, and addressed some of the major ideological and organisational challenges affecting the UN human rights system.

The romantics among us also felt that Vienna's reputation for music and the finer things of life made it the perfect place to create something inspiring and lasting.

The conference has receded into history. Opinions on its success at the time varied from euphoric to cautious. The French declared the Vienna Declaration that came out of the conference to be a 'human rights revolution' and 'a triumphant 20th century legacy to the 21st century'. NGOs said it was 'above our fears but below our hopes'.

Looking back on it now, I believe Vienna made a lasting and fundamental contribution, and represents a turning point in the defence of the international system that was set up following World War II to uphold and promote the rights of the most vulnerable. It was not perfect nor a quick fix. Human rights violations continue in many parts of the world. But by rebuffing the two principal threats that at the time were threatening the fundamentals of the system, it maintained the stability, unity and consensus that the system required to be more effective.

The first threat had its origins in the power struggle between the socialist and capitalist systems. The Cold War not only divided Berlin. It divided human rights into two politicised and hostile camps. Socialist nations championed social and economic rights over the civil and political rights prioritised by capitalist nations, and some on both sides used human rights as a proxy battleground. For example, Cuba criticised poverty in the US while the US criticised political repression in Cuba. Such point scoring made no difference to the suffering of ordinary people.

The Conference rejected this demarcation of boundaries. It declared, after hearing the views of over 170 governments, that the holistic character of human beings and human development necessitated that human rights were indivisible, complementary and interdependent. In case anyone thinks this is just empty talk, it should be noted that Foreign Affairs in Canberra said before the conference that it never discussed economic rights in its policy considerations, but now Australia's aid program mainstreams all human rights.

The second threat was articulated most forcibly in our Asia-Pacific region. It increased the challenge to the system by adding a North-South dimension to the East-West split. China and some newly affluent nations in Asia like Soeharto's Indonesia, Lee Kuan Yew's Singapore and Mahathir Mohamad's Malaysia argued that civil and political freedoms should wait until their societies reached a level of development comparable to western nations, and that Asians had a different concept of human rights.

The Vienna Declaration rejected this relativist notion of human rights and reaffirmed the classic concepts found in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It declared that cultural and other differences could not justify derogation and that human rights are universal, and are the intrinsic entitlements of all human beings regardless of geography, faith, politics, gender or race. This was a major triumph for Asian and Pacific NGOs who'd caucused in Bangkok prior to the conference and made it clear that governments espousing those views didn't speak for them.

The benefits of this reaffirmed consensus are obvious for those in our society who are vulnerable to discrimination on grounds such as gender, race and disability, not to mention new democracies like Timor-Leste and Indonesia, which have now embraced the international human rights system in total.

The conference failed to deal with north-south inequality, debt and the democratisation of development, and to get undertakings that would ensure universal ratification of key human rights instruments. Nor did it adopt measures to establish an International Criminal Court, a High Commissioner for Human Rights and more donor aid for human rights. However, these proposals were workshopped at the conference and have since been implemented.

The conference acknowledged the vital role of NGOs, and that human rights are the legitimate concern of the international community. These too represented indirect rebuffs to the revisionist states that Asia-Pacific NGOs had confronted in Bangkok.

As delegates dispersed from Vienna, I learned that Austrian TV had prepared a short video of the conference. It was dedicated to the NGOs who had fought the good fight. 'You are the conscience of the world', it said. They were right. But it's one thing to be a conscience in the relatively cordial and secure surrounds of a congress centre in Vienna and an altogether different and more difficult thing to play that role in a repressive society. The memory of Vienna will be sullied if we do not look after NGOs in those circumstances around the world.

Rudd's second coming

MEDIA

Ray Cassin

So the Labor caucus finally took Malcolm Turnbull's advice. The Liberal frontbencher's much-quoted remark about the strange phenomenon of a party whose hatred of a deposed leader was stronger than its instinct for survival pithily summed up the last three years in Australian politics.

But last night that long-repressed survival instinct welled up and surfaced as Kevin Rudd reclaimed the Labor leadership with the support of 57 out of 102 members of caucus. The question is whether the instinct has taken hold too late to make any difference to the result of the federal election.

There will be many, not least the 45 ALP MPs and senators who voted for Julia Gillard, who will see this as a contemptibly cynical analysis of the ousting of Australia's first woman prime minister. Already a narrative is emerging, especially in social media, of the martyrdom of St Julia. Some say Rudd's return is entirely to be attributed to sexism and misogyny. Others blame media obsession with opinion polls, apparently believing that voters have no view until a pollster's questions prompt — or even guide — them in forming one.

Of the latter claim, suffice it to say that it oozes the elitist disdain for ordinary voters of those who utter it. Lest we forget, one consequence of compulsory voting is that a long-term trend in the polls almost always indicates the election result. And what they have been indicating is that Labor is headed towards the greatest defeat in its federal history, with its numbers in the 150-seat House of Representatives likely to shrink from 71 to as few as 35, and with nine ministers likely to lose their seats.

Yesterday that dismal prospect even focused the mind of Bill Shorten, one of the factional chieftains who manoeuvred Gillard into the Lodge in 2010. Announcing he'd abandoned his oft-declared support for her, Shorten said people close to him would resent his decision. He did not only mean longtime associates such as the Australian Workers Union boss Paul Howes, another powerbroker of the ALP right who helped propel Gillard into power. Doubtless he also had in mind his wife, Chloe Bryce, leader of the Women for Gillard campaign.

As for the role of sexism in Gillard's downfall, her own comment during her press conference last night got it right. She said that sexism partly, but not wholly, explained the political obstacles she has faced.

Of course she has suffered insults and humiliations that male politicians in 2013 typically do not encounter: most recently and notably, the offensive remarks about her body included in the menu for a Liberal candidate's fundraiser and the asinine questioning of her partner's sexuality by a radio shock jock. But to see the attitudes expressed in such behaviour as the sole explanation of her massive

unpopularity among voters — women as well as men — is to have a very selective memory indeed.

The reality, evident to anyone willing to acknowledge it, is that there has always been a simmering distrust of her because of the circumstances in which she replaced Rudd in 2010. When voters heard her respond to the undermining of her own leadership by pleading for loyalty and party unity, she simply lacked credibility. Add in a succession of misjudgments in office and you have the mix that led to yesterday's events. Voters had simply stopped listening to her, giving Tony Abbott and the Coalition a free run.

The misjudgments were truly staggering, and started early. Remember her promise in June 2010 that she would resolve the three problems — increasing boat arrivals, attacks on the mining tax and the botched emissions-trading legislation — that seemed to be dragging Labor to defeat in that year?

The first of many boat-arrival 'fixes' was the East Timor solution; except she forgot to ask the East Timorese government before announcing it. The mining tax was saved by making concessions to the biggest three miners that gutted it as a revenue measure. And carbon emissions? The breaking of her pledge in the 2010 campaign that there would never be a carbon tax has dogged her ever since.

Can Rudd now fare any better? He is a formidable campaigner and consistently rates well above either Abbott or Gillard when poll respondents are asked who is their preferred prime minister. What is more, Labor has a success story to tell about the economy, which in considerable part derives from his support for stimulatory spending during the global financial crisis.

Thus far, however, the Government has failed to sell that story, because Gillard and her deputy and Treasurer Wayne Swan, who last night chose to follow her to the back bench, have allowed the Coalition to pretend the state of the economy and the state of the budget are the same thing. Yet nearly all other OECD countries wish they had Australia's low net public debt, and most of them wish they had its growth and unemployment rates.

Rudd tells this story without illusions. At his press conference last night he acknowledged that whoever governs after the election must deal with the fact that the resources boom is over. And he repeated his longstanding view that he does not want to be prime minister of a country that no longer makes things. (The lame, muted responses of Gillard and Swan to the collapses in Australian manufacturing have steadily fuelled the sense of abandonment in Labor's heartland.)

So Rudd can campaign on Labor's economic stewardship, as well as the fundamental social-democratic reforms that will be Gillard's legacy: disability insurance and the Gonski restructure of education funding. Against all this the coalition will remind voters at every turn of the hatred that many of Rudd's caucus colleagues have for him. The result could still be that voters, weary and disgusted

with Labor's divisions, will sweep the Government away regardless of their preference for him as prime minister.

And if they may get a chance to do it sooner than the declared election date of 14 September, if the second Rudd Government cannot win the support of at least five of the seven crossbench MPs in a no-confidence motion. That would not result in a constitutional crisis, as some ill-advised Canberra journalists have claimed. On the contrary, it would be a matter of constitutional conventions working as they are supposed to do.

Whatever happens, the common misquotation of Bette Davis in *All About Eve* will apply: 'Fasten your seatbelts. It's going to be a bumpy ride.'

Pilgrim's misguided tilt at TV fame

REVIEWS

Tim Kroenert

***Reality* (M). Director: Matteo Garrone. Starring: Aniello Arena, Loredana Simioli, Raffaele Ferrante. 111 minutes.**

This funny and disturbing Italian drama opens with a long aerial shot, of a resplendent horse-drawn carriage travelling incongruously along a city street. It zooms in, to follow the carriage onto the grounds of an exquisite estate and into the midst of an elaborate wedding. It considers the revellers *en masse* before eventually singling one out for special attention. This magnificent bravura sequence evokes from the outset the sense of a divine gaze picking out an individual life from the sprawl of reality, and for a while watching it in intimate detail.

It underlines the film's central existential and ethical theme, regarding how we behave differently when we are being watched, and how the identity of the watcher affects the motivations of the watched. In this instance, the one who the divine gaze picks out is preoccupied by other gazes. Luciano, a garrulous Neapolitan fishmonger, enjoys being the centre of attention. He appears at this family wedding dressed in drag, a kind of irreverent performance art for which he is apparently renowned and beloved by his extended family.

This reputation for playful exhibitionism later prompts his family to encourage him to audition for the Italian *Big Brother*. Initially reluctant to do so, Luciano becomes gradually obsessed with the temptation of wealth and fame. After he passes two rounds of auditions, his obsession is fuelled by his certainty that the producers want him for their program. Instead of waning into disappointment, this conviction grows even as the date for the series launch comes and goes. His obsession causes him to neglect his wife (Simioli) and their children.

Luciano is a religious pilgrim on the wrong path. He doesn't want to know God; he wants to *be* God. His aspiration is epitomised by super-celebrity former *Big Brother* contestant Enzo (Ferrante), who appears irregularly in Luciano's life, always surrounded by slavering admirers. In one scene Enzo appears to fly from the rafters of a nightclub amid coloured, flashing lights and blaring music, as his worshippers (Luciano among them) chant and swoon below, conflating celebrity with divinity.

Of course, you can see the ropes that suspend Enzo from the ceiling. His divinity is artifice, a combination of marketing and special effects. Earlier in the film, he had appeared at the aforementioned wedding, and performed a well-received benediction. Moments later, he was glimpsed at another wedding uttering the same 'heartfelt' words. The celebrity Enzo is a god whose blessing can be bought and sold. That this is what Luciano aspires to speaks of the

vacuousness of his quest.

Eventually Luciano's obsession manifests as a paranoid conviction that the producers are testing him; that his life has become an audition. For this reason he begins giving away his belongings to the poor. This is contrary to his natural inclinations; earlier in the film he had rudely turned away a homeless man who asked him for help (he may be gregarious, but he's not very nice). It is a charitable act of biblical proportions, except for the question of motivation: it is good-deeds-by-rote, performed only to secure fame and fortune for himself.

Reality finds dark humour in Luciano's delusion. So acute does his paranoia become, that even an unusual insect earns from him a sly, knowing glance. He pleads with two startled widows at a funeral, who reassure him that he is on the right path to getting into 'the house'; while they think they've offered comfort to a troubled seeker, he thinks he's received an inside tip from *Big Brother's* spies. The dissonance between his pursuit of the god of fame, and the humility and comfort found in the deep religious faith held by others in the film, is profound.

This comes to a head late in the film, when Enzo joins his devout cousin for a candlelight vigil at St Peter's Square. There is hope and relief on offer here for Enzo if he chooses to embrace it, and even viewers who are skeptical of organised religion might at this point pray for him to do so. The scene precedes a tense and unsettling finale in which Enzo must choose to stay his path or correct it. It lays bare the aching gulf between how we behave because Big Brother is watching, and who we are in the eyes of God.

Spare a thought for luckless Gillard

AUSTRALIA

Moira Rayner

The history of Australian politics will be kinder to Gillard as a PM than her friends.

Now that a most gracious acknowledgement of personal defeat has been given by the first woman to step up to the hardest political job anyone could be asked to do, we must find the time, whatever the outcome of the looming election, to consider and learn from what we have witnessed about how the country is run.

Political leadership in our age of instant polls and opinionated media attention is now a matter of fright and flight. Today, I am particularly sad to participate in not only the funerals of two friends over the next 24 hours, and to acknowledge my profound sorrow at the way parties deal with perceptions of magic. Anyone who knows how it feels to lose a career in mid life will understand how both Gillard and her political friends and colleagues are feeling today. That same media attention shows every human frailty in outsize detail.

Gillard is a strong, articulate woman who comes into her own when she is assailed on every side. That strength was not only clear to all who saw her congratulate the man who sought her destruction, but whenever she spoke in the Parliament. It grieves me that she could not make herself heard when she spoke about her Government's policies, potential and remarkable achievements.

This hung parliament has undertaken some of the most profound changes in social policy since the 1980s, from the beginning of a national disability insurance scheme to a brave new scheme for improving the education of every Australian child, removing discrimination against aged people in need of care who happened to be lesbian, gay, transgender or transsexual, and the implementation of a farsighted attempt to give a far-flung people access to the 21st century means of information and communication.

Gillard did what political leaders have to do: make decisions, some of them wrong but many of them right. She did so in the most toxic environment that could be imagined, under constant sexist attack, as well as criticism from those whose social values she shares.

She could not connect, and it will take time to fathom why, and what that means for the future government of this country. She did not have that magic by which a passive population judges that they are willing to trust and be loyal to the one who speaks for them internationally and within our own country. Her vision for education, equality, justice and opportunity was clear.

Napoleon's choice of military leaders was, famously, based on whether or not the man was 'lucky'. Gillard's luck was out. In the end, it is luck that determines

whether or not 'the people', in sufficiently large and influential numbers, are willing to follow any leader.

But luck is affected by information, and in that regard our mainstream media have let the people down. Any man and his dog has a point of view to be manipulated, and our radio, television and newspaper/online commentators have managed to affect not only 'the people's' opinions, but also the fears and apprehensions of those who have won seats in Parliament.

Two weeks ago I [bewailed](#) the nasty, trivial and unkind state of our political discourse, focusing on the sexist and sexual harassment of our PM. I also predicted not only that Rudd would maintain his vendetta, but that the side effects of such conduct would lead to a massive rejection of the referendum proposal to 'add' local government politicians to our Constitutional arrangements, albeit in a minor way. The time is not right, for our cynicism and revulsion against revolting political and public behaviour is overwhelming.

I maintain that — as Gillard said — her sex was not everything in her political experience, but it was something.

Now, Rudd is to seek to achieve his personal goals. Like Gillard, I wish him well, not because of who he is or what he has done, but because I still need to trust that good government is achievable. Can he raise our eyes to a vision for Australia that could just possibly be healthier than the prolonged negativity and viciousness shown from the other side of the House?

I just don't know. A political office is, after all, only sat on by a man.

Politics of remembering

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton

During refugee week there was an [exhibition](#) of art works made by asylum seekers. It coincided with further revelations about the collection of information by security agencies in Britain and the United States. The juxtaposition of these incommensurate events offers food for thought about the importance of remembering.

A highlight of the exhibition was a young Afghan asylum seeker's painting of a brilliant red flower. When asked what it represented, he said it recalled the flowers he used to pick for his mother on the hillsides near his village. As he shared this memory his hearers no longer saw him as an asylum seeker but as a person who was seeking protection from them. They now saw him in his freedom, connected with a rich world and making a claim on his hearers through their connection with him.

That is a small example of the power of remembering. When Polish Jews were herded into the closed Warsaw Ghetto, Chaim Kaplan kept a diary. He died but the diary survives to ensure, as he promised, that 'in our scroll of agony, not one small detail can be omitted'.

The Russia poet, Anna Akhmatova, recalls how during Stalin's purges she stood in a queue of women outside the Lubyanka prison, all seeking news of their disappeared husbands and sons. She was asked if she could describe all this. She answered that she could, and she did. The call to remember was a trust she held for the nation and humanity, not just for herself.

Remembering and recording, whether through words, paint or music, are the most personal and private of activities, requiring space and silence.

They are also a deep affirmation of human freedom. To remember says that you can rise above the things that are done to you, that the story of your life and destiny cannot be controlled, and that you are intimately connected to other human beings and to your world. You are a free person and not a thing to be manipulated.

In its effects remembering is also the most public of activities. That is why the powerful try to control the telling of history. In the Warsaw Ghetto and Stalin's Russia it uncovered the true character of a state that, in the name of security, tried to make people nameless and disconnected, with the value only that the state gave them. The freedom of remembering exposed the emptiness of an apparently all-controlling state.

Remembering also recovered the responsibility for their actions that people had ceded to the state. It reaffirmed that the jailing, torturing, killing and exiling of

human beings had been done by other human beings, and that other human beings had yielded to their fears and been beguiled by the dream of security, had consented, turned their eyes away and remained silent.

Remembering made clear that they were free to do or to decline to do these things.

Finally, remembering makes a claim on later hearers to recognise that as free human beings they are connected with those who remembered and who were remembered. In the name of freedom they are called on to resolve, 'Never again'. One day surely when the stories of people who sought protection in Australia are remembered, another generation will also wonder and say, 'Never again'.

The remembering and recording involved in the collection of information by the United States and Great Britain is of a quite different character. It is an act of the state, conceived and carried out in secrecy, in the name of public security. It is private, not personal, but it has public consequences.

In contrast to the remembering by the young African man, Chaim Kaplan and Anna Akhmatova, this kind of recording does not express personal freedom and connection, but rather their denial. It appropriates the personal connections that underlie human freedom and makes them a possession of the state. It treats people as things and not as free human subjects and encourages society also to take that view.

This secret remembering also conceals the true character of the state and transfers to it the responsibility that human beings have for acting on its behalf. This is profoundly inimical to freedom.

This kind of remembering, too, makes a claim on its citizens to accept the control of the state and to deny their human connection with those of whom it disapproves. It takes us into the world of Dostoevsky's parable of the Grand Inquisitor, that kindly, sad man who offers people security and material prosperity as ultimate goals. But he takes from them knowledge of the ways in which their world is built and responsibility for it. They are made into children, their freedom rendered trivial.

The young Afghan man and the Security Agencies of the United States and Great Britain are all in the business of remembering. One invites us to celebrate human freedom, the others to despair of it.

Disrupting sexism

AUSTRALIA

Fatima Measham

The cultural shape of sexism was underlined by this video statement released last week by Chief of Army Lt Gen David Morrison. Incandescent with rage over the discovery that a network of defence officers had systematically exploited women, he vows to be ruthless in ridding the army of such personnel.

He alludes to the permissions that hold together and propel our society, and the ones that let it come undone. 'The standard you walk past,' he says, 'is the standard you accept.' By this token, his response to individuals who harbour sexist attitudes is unequivocal: 'Get out'.

If only we could similarly extract them from other areas of service and public life. In the same week that Morrison spoke so forcefully against the denigration of women, a Liberal party fundraiser [menu](#) was leaked in which Prime Minister Julia Gillard's body was the subject of vile mockery. Within days, a high profile columnist inaccurately stated that she showed too much [cleavage](#) in Parliament.

In light of Morrison's [statements](#) regarding the 'systemic problems with (Army) culture', it bears wondering how such sexist language and behaviour are perpetuated. Humans are creatures of conformity — so where are they getting the signals that it is permissible to demean women?

According to Nicole Hunter, acting manager for Community Wellbeing at Knox City Council in Victoria, these signals often emanate from rigid and archaic stereotypes. As part of a team that seeks to address domestic violence, she works to counter these stereotypes.

Last year, her team launched a local campaign centred around the slogan, 'Real men don't hit chicks'. It was a highly targeted communications strategy that set out to provoke conversation around masculinity. In other words, it sought to disrupt the cultural signals around aggression and violence. This is the sort of interference that needs to play out on a larger scale.

Hunter emphasises that there are structural dimensions that need to be addressed. 'It goes back to deep-seated views,' she says. These germinate from a child's observation of parental roles and adult relationships, which is later reinforced by the community within which he matures, such as the local sporting club. Societal cues via the media may entrench such views. 'In order to reverse it,' she says, 'you have to work all [three levels](#).'

It is a useful framework for considering the ways in which permission is given to denigrate women. But it also emphasises the enormity of the task.

For one thing, it means overturning a very long history of women's exclusion from masculinised domains. It is telling that, today, they meet the most vigorous

resistance in the same areas where they are underrepresented.

They comprise only a [third](#) of the Australian Federal Parliament, and only [14 per cent](#) of the ADF permanent workforce. Even in business, where 45 per cent of MBA graduates are women, only [3.5 per cent](#) of companies listed on the Australian stock exchange are led by female CEOs — one of the lowest rates in the Western world.

Such underrepresentation must be addressed if we are to disrupt the persistent worldview that women do not belong or are inherently incapable.

Framing sexism and misogyny in terms of permission should also sharpen the way we respond to abuse of women. Such behaviour is reinforced when it is met with silence and paralysis, or even laughing approval. Impunity not only benefits the perpetrator; it sets the culture of our community.

However, the same compulsion to conform presents us with opportunities to overturn tacit permissions. Social media campaigns, for instance, are increasingly disrupting sexist signals from radio shock jocks, destabilising the platform of approval upon which their business model rests.

The fact that Lt Gen Morrison immediately suspended the three officers at the centre of the latest allegations of sexual misconduct is similarly disruptive. Resoundingly so, given the contrast to the initial decision by the St Kilda Football Club to allow Stephen Milne to play after he was charged with four counts of rape.

Perhaps we need to consider how we can disrupt such signals in our own home. What permissions are we giving, for instance, when we excuse unacceptable behaviour with a flippant, 'boys will be boys'?

The socialist with rosary beads

MEDIA

Ray Cassin

'Public intellectual' has become a tired, even debased term. It now too often describes someone who is adept at contriving appearances on television panel shows such as *Q&A*, rather than a person who has made a substantial and original contribution to the understanding of human beings and the world they have shaped.

But Paul Mees, who died last week from cancer at the age of 52, was a public intellectual in the best sense of the term. Paul was a scholar and teacher with an international reputation in the field of urban studies. He was an activist who never shrank from a fight, whether with politicians, bureaucrats, or academic hierarchies.

And he was also a man of deep faith, evidenced not least in his contributions over the years to *Eureka Street*, and before that to the defunct *Catholic Worker*.

Many who admired Paul ignored this last aspect of his life or regarded it as an eccentricity. 'The socialist with rosary beads' is an affectionate tag he acquired during his years as an undergraduate at the University of Melbourne and as an industrial-relations lawyer in the 1980s.

Those who knew him best, however, understood that his faith was as much a part of who he was as his relentless campaigning for the improvement of public transport in Australia's sprawling cities.

But neither was he the sort of political Catholic whose attitude to involvement in public life was always to take his cue from the pronouncements of bishops, or to seek conformity in every respect between the teachings of the Church and secular law. Paul understood what was God's and what was Caesar's. Indeed, he insisted that the distinction between the two should not be blurred.

During the '90s Paul gave up practising law to complete a doctorate in urban transport planning at the University of Melbourne. His thesis, subsequently published as *A Very Public Solution*, challenged prevailing orthodoxies and laid the foundations of an academic career that took him briefly to ANU, then back to the University of Melbourne and ultimately to RMIT University.

Along the way his name became familiar to Victorian newspaper readers in his role as president of the Public Transport Users' Association, a position he held from 1992—2001. And he lived what he preached: Paul possessed a driver's licence because it was a useful form of ID, but never owned a car.

Paul was a gadfly who frequently annoyed and embarrassed transport and planning authorities with his incisive analyses of Melbourne's ailing rail and tram networks.

His readiness to speak frankly about transport bureaucrats eventually embarrassed the University of Melbourne, too, and the university began disciplinary action against him. The action was dismissed after an investigation but led to his departure for RMIT and remains a touchstone for debates about academic independence.

Had he imperilled that independence by his prominence in public controversy? Many would say, on the contrary, that his informed, relentless advocacy *was* an exercise of academic independence.

Paul's arguments, set out in *A Very Public Solution* and more recently in *Transport for Suburbia: Beyond the Automobile Age*, contested the common assumption that only by moving to higher-density living could Australian cities have public transport systems that would provide affordable and effective alternatives to the car.

He turned this theory on its head, citing international examples such as Zurich and Toronto: it is not higher population densities that make good public transport possible, but effective transport planning and provision that make lower densities sustainable.

In a *Eureka Street* article published in the same year as *Transport for Suburbia*, 2010, Paul again [sketched](#) a comparison between the unreliable public transport networks of Australia's east-coast cities and the smoothly operating network in Zurich. The Swiss city had a low population density by European standards and much lower public funding per passenger than Melbourne. So what made the difference? Paul wrote:

Zurich has achieved public transport success by combining efficient public enterprise with a liberal dose of 'subsidiarity'. The canton-wide public-transport agency only has 36 staff, who concentrate on financing, marketing and planning services. Their job is to knit trains, trams, buses and ferries into a network that offers the same kind of 'go anywhere, anytime' convenience as the car.

Readers acquainted with Catholic social teaching would have recognised the resonances in the term 'subsidiarity', the principle that authority should be devolved to the lowest agency capable of wielding it effectively. Paul did not routinely invoke Catholic teaching in public debate, but would have rejected suggestions that it could make no contribution to the debate.

Left-leaning progressive though he was in politics, Paul's views, especially in theology, were never easily pigeonholed. He was a trenchant critic of those within the church who, he believed, were so eager to accommodate Catholicism to modern (and postmodern) mentalities that they were in danger of leaching all substance from its teachings.

In a letter published in *Eureka Street* in 1992, he took issue with an article in the previous edition of the magazine by the biblical scholar Frank Moloney. What

did Moloney mean by saying that what happened to the disciples at Easter was more important than what happened to Jesus? If Moloney was offering a Catholic version of the demythologising project of liberal Protestantism, Paul maintained, it was doomed to failure.

The Church, he wrote, needs a faith that avoids the Scylla of liberalism while shunning the Charybdis of fundamentalism. Paul was an exemplar of such a faith, and of faith in action in the public sphere. There will be many who will mourn his passing, but we are all the richer because he shared this life with us.

Paul is survived by his wife, the journalist and education writer Erica Cervini.

Faith, apples and Peter Steele

CREATIVE

Susan Fealy

Faith is green

'I'll settle for a sprig or two —

*The savour gracious, the leaves brimmingly green —
as if never to say die.'*

—Peter Steele, 'Rehearsal'

Where were you?

Not in the dark car
inside that shrunken space
on its slow glide to the boneyard.

Perhaps in the white lineage
of your brothers at the altar,
or traced on your crucifix —
your DNA, your trust.

Perhaps in the chapel glass,
the green shadow of tree,
the silhouette of wind —
the monkey that will not leave
its back: so many times,
in the pattern, your substance
of things: the wine, the wine,
the communion bread, forever
full and aloft as the moon.

After the silver cup,
the procession,
the soft blood of roses,
the car, the cold,
the stone steps, and your white brothers —

a force of herons or anxious angels,
pacing a spell
to portal you, or bring you back —
perhaps in the outdoor altar, its borders,
its fathom-green.

Not in the impossible grey of the sky
resistant as God's overcoat —
its flannel collar turned up.

Where are your sprigs of mint?

Behind the wall,
under the ground,
unseasoned

in the garden?

There is a tyranny
of elm,
my footsteps,
and listening
for other
audible patterns.

What memory is like

Officially, memory
is a cardboard box
sent to your home address.

But anyone who's received a memory
knows that it is also untidy
as a fledgling's wing
crystalline as creme brulee
and sometimes as acidic
as an ant's nest undone by rain.

And sometimes as welcome

as the neighbour's dog —
the one that meets you behind its fence
just as you reach your door.
Yet in it
is the ruby marble
you thought you'd lost
when you played for keeps.
Anyone who's received a memory knows
that you opened a window
into a tracery
of transparent wire.
Sometimes it will stain your hands.
Anyone who's received a memory
knows that its weight
is never more
than the insistent green
of an opened leaf.

Two Fujis

Its flesh is not the white of Mount Fuji;
dun-white, it breaks cleanly, juice flows
down your chin like warm, melted snow.
Its taste is not honey, nor spicy, its skin
is not starred with the secrets of insects,
nor meadow-yellow, haloed in rose
on its sunny side. This Fuji is fierce pink
wed to neon green. It started in 1930s
Fujisaki; a fusing of two American breeds,
stalled in '45 when bombs erased that city.
When its petals fall, clusters are pared to two.

The Catholic Church's toll on Aboriginal Australia

AUSTRALIA

Mike Bowden

Public confidence in the Catholic Church has eroded considerably. There are several reasons for this, but one for which it has failed to take much responsibility is its failure in regard to Indigenous affairs. Not just the part it played in the Stolen Generations, but also its role in the destruction of Aboriginal cultural integrity and language.

Present members of missionary orders, when writing up the story of their predecessors, tend to present these pioneer missionaries as enlightened men and women suffering hardship to spread the gospel. It is true, these men and women travelled into the unknown, poorly prepared, terribly equipped and unsuitably clothed — think of the nuns in their wimples and habits toiling under the sun — to share the story of the healer from Nazareth.

And today there is a vibrant body of Australian Aboriginal Catholics who delight in the gift of the faith passed on. The destructive effect of the approaches taken by some missionaries does not negate the good work of many others. But it is part of the story and should be told.

For two years in the early 1980s my family lived at Ernabella in the far north-west of South Australia. Ernabella was established by the Presbyterian Church in the late 1930s in an effort to prevent the destruction of Pitjantjatjara people in the region encompassing the lands abutting the Western Australian, South Australian and Northern Territory borders. It was a wonderful experience and I am still in touch with *anangu* from Ernabella

Dr Charles Duguid, who inspired the mission, told his missionaries to respect the local language and culture. According to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* he said there should be 'no compulsion nor imposition of our way of life on the Aborigines, nor deliberate interference with tribal custom' and that the vernacular language should be used, medical care offered, and responsibility passed to the local people as soon as possible.

He hoped the local people would see the gentle caring lives of the missionaries, recognise that their lives were based on the teachings of Jesus, and come to want to live like that.

Ron Trudinger, a young teacher and linguist from Adelaide, having been able to learn the language and develop Pitjantjatjara orthography quite quickly, began to teach the children in Pitjantjatjara. Photos and films of these early days show groups of laughing, naked *anangu* children attending school and singing and writing in their own language. Over many years Duigud's message worked — *anangu* became Christians.

Meanwhile the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSCs) were conducting a mission in Alice Springs. The first missionary was Father Paddy Maloney MSC, assisted by a lay missionary named Frank McGarry. As a community worker he worked side by side with the Arrernte men as they strove to build a mission that came to be known as the Little Flower Mission in Charles Creek, a kilometre from the centre of Alice.

McGarry's message to the Arrernte men was different from Duigud's. His story is recorded in the book *Francis of Central Australia*, by Frank O'Grady. O'Grady quotes McGarry ordering the children that they 'were not to speak *Arunta* [sic] in church or in school otherwise they would be sent home without tucker'. McGarry also sought to 'work quietly towards the elimination' of adherence to Arrernte cultural practices.

Soon the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH) sisters arrived. Their impact was powerful. They forbade the girls to speak Arrernte within the school or dormitory. I have heard many older Arrernte Catholic women attest to their pain at having their language drummed out of them in the name of the Church.

The mission was moved to the abandoned gold mining centre at Arltunga 100km to the east of Alice during World War Two, then again to Santa Teresa (80km south-east of Alice Springs) in the early 1950s. It is today known as Ltyentye Apurte. It is a vibrant Catholic Community where until very recently the Marist brothers ran the Catholic School. The MSCs and OLSH sisters, suffering from a decline in numbers, have left the community.

I worked with the Arrernte people of Charles Creek, where the first Little Flower Mission stood, in the 1990s and early 2000s. Many of the Arrernte children I taught at the Catholic high school in Alice Springs could not speak Arrernte and their understanding of Arrernte culture was deeply fractured. And of course they were in serious trouble with the 'whitefella' law. Although nominally Catholic, they had very little connection to the Church.

Many missionaries tried to do better. Fr Tom Dixon MSC is famous for his intervention in the Rupert Max Stuart murder case, where his knowledge of English and Arrernte was crucial in confirming that the 'confession' signed by Stuart could not have been relied upon because it was written in a form of English that Stuart did not use. Fr David Reilly MSC used Arrernte as widely as he could in his relatively short ministry at Santa Teresa.

In the 1990s Fr Pat Mullins SJ in Alice Springs sought to recite the Eucharistic Prayer at Masses with the Catholic Arrernte community in Arrernte, and all the hymns were in Arrernte. Today these skills and attitudes are again lost and the Mass for Arrernte is distinctly English.

Today the clergy in Santa Teresa and Alice Springs are Divine Word Missionary priests recruited from a variety of overseas countries. These good-hearted men, coming from very different cultural heritages and having little understanding of the

impact of settler colonialism on the Arrernte, have little appreciation of the struggle Arrernte have faced and make little effort to incorporate Arrernte language and cultural practices into liturgy.

Whereas the Presbyterians valued and assisted the maintenance of Pitjantjatjara and did not seek to undermine *anangu's* practice of the *tjukurpa*, the Catholics in Central Australia often achieved quite the opposite.

Today I received a Facebook message from a friend in Ernabella written in Pitjantjatjara and speaking both of her sadness at being in 'sorry camp' and of being consoled by her faith in her Christian God. Alice Springs Catholic Arrernte want the same experience but find themselves blocked to achieve it.

In Alice Springs the Ngkarte Mikwekenhe Community (NMC) (Mother of God community), largely the product of a symbiotic relationship between several local Arrernte women and Catholic religious, still does not have a viable centre. And in 2012, Irrkerlantye Learning Centre, a Catholic Arrernte education centre, was closed.

It is time for the Catholic Diocese of the Northern Territory to truly take on the 'mission' to the Arrernte, which might entail an apology, a rewriting of the history, a renewed effort to get the message right including placing Arrernte language at the core of practice, and significant financial inputs into the building of new worship and education centres, with a view to handing responsibility for them to the local Catholic Arrernte elders.

When you have a lot to answer for you are left with a lot to do.

Australia and Indonesia's deadly games of pass-the-parcel

AUSTRALIA

Tony Kevin

Next week's public inquest by the WA Coroner, Alastair Hope, into *SIEV 358 (Kaniva)*, which capsized halfway to Christmas Island on 21 June 2012, drowning 90 people, is welcome.

The *SIEV 358* case encapsulates key questions as to why these tragedies (18 in the past four years, resulting in over 950 deaths) too often happen at interfaces between Australia's border protection system, Australia's maritime search and rescue system, and the under-resourced Indonesian maritime search and rescue system.

It raises issues of Indonesian and Australian Search and Rescue (SAR) responsibilities in the so-called Indonesian SAR Region, and of coordination of Australian Border Protection Command (BPC) and Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) responses to a notified SAR emergency.

Readers of my series of *Eureka Street* articles on asylum seeker boat sinkings will know that, in my assessment, mass deaths occur when the rescue responsibility baton is passed too late, fumbled by the recipient agency, or should not have been passed at all.

Australia's two official agencies most concerned in rescuing at-risk asylum seekers — BPC under the authority of Customs, and the AMSA Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) — routinely get it right. Many lives are regularly and without fuss saved by BPC ships. Just over the past week, Jason Clare issued four 'BPC assists vessel' media releases for events that probably occurred within the so-called Indonesian Search and Rescue Region (SRR).

Often, AMSA RCC is not involved at all. But sometimes, BPC declares a SAR situation, and AMSA then becomes the lead Australian agency. Sometimes AMSA is the first to know of distress. AMSA then has to decide whether to pass the baton to its Indonesian counterpart BASARNAS, a vastly less well-resourced agency.

There is a large official documentary trail on *SIEV 358* in the [public arena](#). The official Customs report awaits public release. But FOI searches late last year uncovered many apparently complete official [chronologies](#) and [talking points](#) prepared for possible use in Senate committees.

It seems there are three kinds of possible systems failure the Coroner might examine.

First, there is the apparent initial failure by AMSA to launch a full-scale Australian SAR response as soon as it received the first located distress call at 0130 AEST Wednesday 20 June from the boat, then in international waters 38 NM south of Indonesia. Second and third, there are questions of whether BASARNAS

and BPC each took effective SAR action in the ensuing 37.5 hours.

Over the first 9.5 hours, AMSA negotiated a transfer of the SAR coordination responsibility to BASARNAS. Indonesia handed this back to AMSA 36 hours later: some 7.5 hours after a routine BPC surveillance flight had detected the capsized boat halfway between Indonesia and Christmas Island. During this time the boat had limped forward some 70 NM towards Christmas Island before capsizing.

There was one reported Australian sighting, from a routine BPC Dash 8 surveillance flight, at approximately 1700 AEST on 20 June — 15.5 hours after the first located distress call. The vessel was reported, at a location not yet publicly disclosed, to be travelling south at 4 NM/hour and with no visible signs of distress.

It is normal for BPC to photograph such incidents, and the Coroner could ask to see images. Were people waving from the deck? Might this have indicated some kind of distress that should have been investigated by a BPC ship? Survivors might remember this overflight and how much later their boat capsized.

At this stage, it is not clear what AMSA did, and what BASARNAS did, to alert shipping — including BPC ships and aircraft in the vicinity — during the 37.5 hours leading up to detection of the capsized hull. BPC seems to have only done its routine surveillance.

Did AMSA or BASARNAS send out Panpan or Mayday SAR signals to shipping? Had AMSA, BPC or BASARNAS judged the distress calls not to be genuine? Why did AMSA pass the rescue coordination responsibility to BASARNAS for 36 hours, and what did BASARNAS do while Australia continued to receive distress phone-calls?

Strange things happened during the final morning. ABC reporter Matt Brown has obtained in Indonesia a series of [faxes](#) from AMSA RCC to BASARNAS. One dated 21 June said RCC had received information that 'at approximately 0730 AEST a maritime vessel in a position approx. 110 NM NNW of Christmas Island may be taking on water with persons on board fearful of their safety'.

This appears to be the same information referred to in the FOI briefs, that 'at 11.07am AEST BPC received additional information that raised concerns about the safety of the vessel. The information was passed to RCC Australia at 11.37am AEST who then passed the information to BASARNAS.'

If the Coroner should find this ABC-sourced fax from RCC to BASARNAS to be authentic, it would mean the boat may have capsized in that location soon after 0730 — 7.5 hours before a BPC routine surveillance aircraft detected its capsized hull from the air at 1500. This seems to suggest more puzzling delays in BPC's and AMSA's SAR responses, late in the development of this emergency.

The issue of the Indonesian SRR hangs over this whole story. Indonesia has not adhered to at least one SAR convention, nor has it accepted its internationally designated SRR.

We know BPC routinely intercepts and provides rescue assistance to SIEVs in the Indonesian SRR, under three international SAR [conventions](#) signed by Australia, which require any country that receives the first distress call and has resources to respond, to do so regardless of which country's SRR the call is made from.

Yet there are [hints](#) that there may be an expectation by Australian ministers or officials that BASARNAS should take lead responsibility for SAR emergencies in parts of its SRR closer to Indonesia than Christmas Island; though they would also know that each time Indonesia has been persuaded to accept this responsibility, it has failed to organise effective SAR action, and people have died.

If this is an Australian-planned learning process for BASARNAS, it has been hugely costly: a deadly game of bureaucratic pass-the-parcel, with bodies floating in the water all too often the tragic outcome.

Lots for the Coroner to look into next week, if he so decides.

Liking Kevin

AUSTRALIA

Michael Mullins

There's a view, expressed by [academics](#) and [Mark Latham](#) alike, that Kevin Rudd's years in public life have been driven by a desire to create his own media celebrity.

His rise from backbencher to the ALP leadership in the five years to 2006 was facilitated by his sustained weekly presence on the high-rating 'Big Guns of Politics' segment on Channel 7's *Sunrise*.

It was here that he was able to create 'a persona seen as ordinary, trustworthy and familiar to the point of intimacy'. But he lacked the ability to work with people behind the scenes to get things done for the ordinary Australians who regarded him as their 'mate'.

In the modern age of celebrity, public esteem has more to do with media construction than ability. It's questionable whether the winners of *MasterChef* and *The Voice* are as talented as we're led to believe. They are part of a long line of TV contests that gave us the [rigged](#) quiz shows of the 1950s.

Indeed there have been [questions](#) surrounding the legitimacy of Harrison Craig's victory in *The Voice* last week after the humble 18-year-old had overcome his stutter through singing and won over fans.

Whether it is the judgment of a celebrity panel, opinion polls, or the number of Facebook 'likes', we rarely see performances and actions evaluated on the basis of a well researched and developed argument. There are bodies set up to do just this, but they are often thwarted by powerful media players.

For example, on Thursday a desperate 2DayFM used a technicality to [apply](#) to the Federal Court for an order to restrain the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) from continuing its investigations into the 'royal prank' phone call that led to the suicide of nurse Jacintha Saldanha.

ACMA's preliminary findings suggest the radio station is in serious danger of losing its broadcast licence over the incident, but 2DayFM is claiming that ACMA is going beyond its remit. It seems the station considers it deserves its licence as long as ratings hold up, and listeners remained loyal to the station after the royal prank call.

Possibly Facebook's greatest disservice to the online community has been its 'like' button, which has become so ubiquitous that it has sanctioned superficial evaluation of individuals and their performances everywhere. I can 'like' or not 'like' a person or what they've produced without having to give a reason, let alone make an argument to justify my support or lack of support.

Collective likes or dislikes can and do have consequences for peoples lives, and they are often based on prejudice rather than rationality.

The rise of global surveillance anxiety

AUSTRALIA

Ray Cassin

Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus has mostly got headlines as one of the Gillard Government's better-performing ministers. Last week, however, he managed to trigger deep anxieties about the Government's attitude to the relationship between citizens, the law and those who enforce it.

Asked about the startling revelation at a Senate estimates hearing that federal police obtain phone and internet records without a warrant nearly 1000 times a week, Dreyfus was curtly dismissive. If warrants had to be sought before police could acquire the information, he said, 'law enforcement would grind to a halt'.

Whaaaat? Is the government's chief law officer really saying that judicial warrants, which protect privacy by authorising the interception of telecommunications only on suspicion of criminal conduct, are an obstacle to effective policing?

No, Dreyfus didn't quite say that. But his answer conveyed no recognition of the alarm that many people, across the political spectrum, will feel at knowing how easily police and other government agencies can obtain what they had presumed would be private information.

Those feelings of alarm may diminish when it is understood that the information police garner so easily is not the content of telecommunications but so-called 'metadata' — phone numbers, and the date, time and duration of calls. Warrants are not required to obtain metadata, which is why, on the Senate estimates testimony of Australian Federal Police deputy commissioner Michael Phelan, the AFP made 43,362 requests for metadata in the last financial year and 50,841 in 2010—11.

The unease, however, will not entirely disappear. It is not unreasonable for people to expect that whom they call, as much as what might be said during a call, is their own business and that police shouldn't have automatic access to their records.

The Greens agree, and their communications spokesman Scott Ludlum is sponsoring a bill that would impose a warrant regime for metadata requests as well as for direct intercepts of phone and email traffic. But the major parties have remained silent on the issue, apart from Dreyfus' untested claim that routine policing now depends upon being able to keep track of who is calling whom.

Unease at the AFP's admissions about metadata requests coincided with a greater, global anxiety about the activities of the US National Security Agency (NSA). In a series of stories published in *The Guardian*, Edward Snowden, a former employee of a NSA consultancy company who is now in hiding in Hong

Kong, described the NSA's PRISM project, through which it accumulates logs of emails, chat-room exchanges and other data from internet companies such as Google, Facebook and Apple.

Snowden's revelations were astounding not only because of the extent of the NSA's surveillance — there has been nothing comparable in human history — but because of its routine nature. Like the AFP's metadata requests, the PRISM program is not constrained by a requirement that grounds for suspecting criminal conduct must be demonstrated to a judicial officer before surveillance takes place. It is just what the NSA does.

The NSA story, and Snowden's role as whistleblower, have inevitably invited comparison with the saga of Wikileaks, its beleaguered founder Julian Assange, and Bradley Manning, who is on trial for having supplied Wikileaks with US diplomatic cables. Battle lines have been drawn as they were over Wikileaks, with familiar faces either hailing Snowden, Assange and Manning as heroes resisting the rise of Big Brother or condemning them as egomaniacal security threats.

So the debate rages. But, whatever parallels there might be between what Snowden has done and what Manning did, there is no counterpart to Wikileaks in the NSA affair.

We know about PRISM because a newspaper broke the story. More importantly, the implications of the NSA story are far more grave than anything revealed in the diplomatic cables. For all the rage that publication of the cables has provoked in some quarters, and all the glee it has aroused in others, they have mostly just shown diplomats and politicians saying and behaving as they might be expected to do when not in the public view.

The NSA story, however, has lifted the veil on the growth of surveillance practices so entrenched that even the governments that authorised them in the first place may not be fully aware of just how extensive the surveillance is, or fully able to control the agencies that conduct it.

The Obama administration's defence of the NSA's activities has been as lame as Mark Dreyfus's defence of the AFP's reliance on access to telecommunications metadata. In each case, it has amounted to an insinuation: that we might not feel safe without the surveillance.

But the greater worry, surely, is whether we can really feel safe with it.

The crying killer

REVIEWS

Tim Kroenert

James Gandolfini, 18 September 1961–19 June 2013

I begin this little tribute not with the great Gandolfini himself, but with his *Sopranos* co-star Joe Pantoliano. He appeared in 20-odd episodes of HBO's genre-redefining series between 2001 and 2002, as sadistic and smart-mouthed underling Ralph Cifaretto.

This character was introduced at the start of season three [**spoilers ahead**] and quickly evolved into its most despicable villain, epitomised by a violent act never outdone in this violent series: not to put too fine a point on it, he murders his pregnant teenage girlfriend by cracking her skull on a metal traffic barrier.

The unrepentant cruelty of this act made Ralph the kind of character viewers wanted to see end up on the gory end of a shotgun blast. But this superbly nuanced series — arguably the best television series of the last 20 years — rarely offered such easy pay-offs. Violence is a messy business, even when it is your 'business'.

This is particularly true of its central character; father, husband and mafia boss Tony Soprano (Gandolfini), to whom the conflicting demands of being both a family man and a 'family' man present numerous moral, practical and emotional conflicts that play out over the course of the series' six seasons.

The Sopranos is first and foremost a product of brilliant writing. But Gandolfini, a character actor with the presence of a leading man, should get much of the credit for cementing it as a keystone of dramatic storytelling. He takes viewers from the softest to the hardest potentialities of human nature, and everything in between.

His endlessly conflicted psychiatrist Dr Melfi (Lorraine Bracco) confides to a friend that her dangerous, charismatic patient can be 'such a boy'. Gandolfini dove deep into the soft belly of this childlike vulnerability, but could equally come roaring back with spitting — and equally convincing — murderous fury. [continues below]

His vulnerability is attractive because of its contrast to his brutishness. His charm and wit surprise and appeal because at times he is an oaf. His rage is terrifying because it comes from a place that is entirely human.

Back to Ralph. On the question of payback, the call falls to Tony. And he decides to let Ralph live, for whatever diplomatic reasons seem important at the time. In fact Ralph sticks around for another year and more, during which time the writers with godlike deftness manage to coax a decent amount of sympathy for the character.

When **[more spoilers]** the time does come for Ralph's card to be (ahem) punched, it is Tony's hairy fist that does the punching. His reasons are ostensibly self-interested and mundane: he is furious that (he believes) Ralph started the fire that killed their beloved racehorse, in order to claim the insurance money.

Yet when he roars 'How could you do that to that beautiful innocent creature?' you know it's not the horse he's talking about. Sure, on paper, it could be. But such is the quiet depth beneath Gandolfini's loud performance that for the past year, any time he has looked at Ralph, we know it is that murdered girl he is thinking of.

That was *The Sopranos* at its best, and *The Sopranos* was Gandolfini at his best. Few actors could hope to leave a more remarkable legacy.

History repeats for powerful Australian women

AUSTRALIA

Brian Matthews

The first day of the Federal Parliament's second last week before the election was Monday 17 June, an anniversary of some significance, depending on your literary, political or sporting interests.

It was, for example, the birthday of Venus Williams (1980) and German Chancellor Angela Merkel (1954) and of Igor Stravinsky (1882), a brilliant, controversial composer. And Shane Watson (1981), a sometimes brilliant, recently controversial cricketer. And Henry Lawson (1867), whose mother, Louisa, not born in June but commanding our attention by a few degrees of separation, would have found Australian political life during the past few weeks utterly fascinating and somewhat familiar.

Founder and editor of *The Dawn*, easily the most successful women's journal of its time, Louisa Lawson was a courageous, dynamic and indomitable supporter of women in all their aspirations. These included the vote, equal opportunity in the workplace, marriage law reform, independent as distinct from husband-governed access to medical treatment, and, as a prerequisite of all these, respect.

'Women must learn,' she wrote in *The Dawn*, 'that if they bear wrongs, other women must bear the same, if they do not claim personal respect neither can their sisters. If they are weak or oppressed how can their children be strong or noble? This habitual self-effacement leads to all manner of weakness.'

Louisa entered the world of men respectfully but firmly and, eventually, paid a personal price for having done so. But for a couple of decades she gave various entrenched male monopolies such a run-around as to establish her name as a pioneer of women's rights in Australia.

'Men legislate on divorce, on hours of labour, and many another question affecting women, but neither ask nor know the wishes of those whose lives and happiness are most concerned,' announced the inaugural *Dawn* on 15 May 1888. 'Here then is *Dawn*, the Australian Woman's journal and mouthpiece.'

As her influence grew and as *The Dawn's* reach stretched far beyond Sydney, various forces and organisations turned their attention to silencing this mouthpiece.

To produce *The Dawn*, for example, she employed only women, 11 of them. To her surprise this brought her into head-on conflict with the New South Wales Typographical Association which banned *The Dawn*, mounted a scare campaign against its sponsors and argued 'it is not in the interests of humanity that young girls or young women should be employed at an occupation 50 per cent of whose followers die of chest and lung disease'.

The ban threatened the journal with extinction, but Louisa joined battle with enthusiasm, using her editorial to fight back:

In the sacred name of humanity the composers step in to save unthinking women from sacrificing themselves on the altar of this fatal occupation ... women are not wanted in the trade, because it is a nice, easy, healthy occupation, where wages are kept at a good level, and therefore well suited to the tastes of the present possessors.

Louisa won her fight with the union and triumphed in numerous other skirmishes designed to show women they should not enter the male domain of public life and business.

When a cocky young, impeccably dressed journalist from a rival paper, *The Christian World*, entered the *Dawn* premises unannounced and uninvited and began to goad the busy staff, he was ordered out by Louisa. When he announced that he was 'not ready to leave', she threw a bucket of water over him. When still he stood firm, she picked up a bucket of lye, used for cleaning the type. A thick black scum jellied across its viscous surface.

'Do you see this?' she said, holding the bucket an inch from his nose. 'Do you think you might be now ready to go?' He left. Where he had stood defiant there remained only a large puddle.

Taking a holiday from the well-established *Dawn*, Louisa invented and patented a mail bag buckle which solved a long running problem of mail transport. She stood to make enough to finance her retirement and cope with increasing and debilitating health problems, but the Postmaster General, Patrick Crick, stole her invention. Her compensation of £300 was reduced on appeal, after a long and exhausting legal battle, to 60.

On the face of it, life for a strong, talented and ambitious woman in 19th century Australia was much tougher than it is now. Yet a brilliant and determined woman like Louisa Lawson, though grievously discriminated against and continuously derided, thwarted and undermined because she dared to excel, was never demeaned, degraded, or personally debased with the vile and scandalous detail that has been the lot of Julia Gillard.

Gillard, regardless of her failings, of which most of us are well aware, is our Prime Minister. She is my Prime Minister. Who licensed the Sattlers, Joneses, Brouchs, Pickerings and their cronies to ignore and trash our stake in the dignity of our country's leader? One feels helpless as the indecent tirade continues, punctuated by periodic, empty genuflections to the defunct Westminster System.

A few well-aimed buckets of viscous lye wouldn't go amiss — for a start.

Ethical torture porn in genetics research

REVIEWS

Tim Kroenert

***Errors of the Human Body (M)*. Director: Eron Sheean. Starring: Michael Eklund, Karoline Herfurth, TÃ³mas Lemarquis. 102 minutes**

During the opening scene of this unnervingly convincing science-fiction film, a man systematically removes a beard that appears to have been worn more through slackness than style. This is the image of a man literally restoring a face of civility, after an unknown period in the wilderness.

Even when he arrives fresh-faced and neatly dressed in the East German city of Dresden, his world-weariness is palpable beneath his determinedly cool facade. Eklund's carefully studied portrayal of molecular biologist Geoff Burton leaves no doubt that this is a character with a deeply troubled recent past.

It is not long before we receive a hint of the nature of the hurt he is harbouring. Burton arrives at the Max Planck Institute of Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics in Dresden (eerily, this is a real location). It seems he is a scientist of some repute, though lately fallen from grace, now being offered a second chance.

In his opening lecture, he speaks of a mysterious and agonising genetic disorder that claimed the life of his infant son. It is his subsequent groundbreaking research into the ethically fraught world of prenatal diagnosis and treatment that has prompted the Institute to invite him to join them. He insists that his research is not related to eugenics, but merely naming this potentially slippery slope doesn't negate it.

Errors of the Human Body poses this and other ethical concerns and gradually answers them with the physical, emotional, psychological and moral corruption of its characters. As answers, these are far from black and white; the film is not a straightforward morality tale but something akin to a kind of stylish ethical torture porn.

Writer-director Sheean spent more than two years at the Institute as an artist in residence where he was able 'to observe and participate in many amazing and strange experiments' in 'a world where the outcomes of birth, disease and death in lower organisms such as flies and worms are being shaped by our own genetic intervention'.

'In this arena, science-fiction is a redundant term,' he suggests. The evidence of *Errors of the Human Body* is that he considers both the practical realities of this research and the various, perhaps insoluble ethical conundrums that stem from it as innately disturbing and horrific. His film reflects this experience to its audience. Its achievements are largely visceral, rather than intellectual. It preys on the subconscious and on base gut reactions.

It is illuminating to consider one casting choice in particular. Rik Mayall plays the institute's senior stuffed-shirt, Samuel Mead. Mayall is not known as a straight man. He is famed for a string of seminal, manic characters in comedic films and series dating back to the early 1980s, from *The Young Ones* to *Bottom* to *Drop Dead Fred*.

These trademark outlandish performances will be burned into the emotional muscle-memory of many viewers' responses to this far more conservative character. It lends a surreal and sinister edge to a character who may or may not know about the possibly nefarious activities that are taking place on his watch.

Something similar can be said of the film itself. Its ultra cool and evenhanded exterior is a facade for a sort of repressed mania, consisting in part of the fraught ethical questions that buzz about barely beneath the surface, alongside its characters' secrets and insecurities. Stylistically the mania becomes more prominent, as the psychological and physical repercussions of characters' actions begin to manifest in visceral fashion.

The fundamental secret that pings among the fissures of Burton's own distressed psyche is the film's greatest ethical and existential horror, partly because compared to the film's more extreme conceits it is brutally mundane.

Australia's disgusting politics

AUSTRALIA

Moira Rayner

Australians' disgust with their elected representatives has never been higher, or better deserved. The last ten days have exposed the worst public behaviour of self-described 'leaders' to the rest of the world. My cup runneth over.

First I was amazed that two wonderful feminists, who didn't find the PM's speech (or the bits that the TV cameras chose to show) to her women-for-Gillard support group convincing, chose to criticise it, and criticise Gillard for it.

One told me Fairfax asked her and she had to tell the truth. Really? As a destructively-truth-addicted person myself I can still act on the advice that my dear old mum used to give that, 'If you can't find anything nice to say, say nothing.' And when I remonstrated gently with the other, she only said, 'Et tu, Brute?'

It also gave the go-ahead to a couple of ALP backbenchers and even senators for more personal criticism of Gillard over not only her speech and the 'feminist card' she supposedly played, but also over men's secret hurt that women have a special point of view, which such men bizarrely viewed as privilege.

And Rudd's head has been popping up for grabs, its occupant clearly relishing the prospect of another last-minute leadership change that might give him back his squandered status, and humiliate his many enemies.

Online trolls have been blaming the victim for 'provoking' her own abuse, or not being entitled to be offended, when a man who has been a Perth shock-jock for nearly 30 years [sexually harassed](#) the current Australian PM about her sexual relationship with her partner.

The bottom has been scraped.

Just so it's clear, 'sexual harassment' is unlawful throughout Australia. It has been since 1984. This includes in employment, delivery of goods and services and access to places. And even the Prime Minister is entitled not to be subjected to it in a radio interview or in public discourse.

Sexual 'harassment' is not sexIST but sexUAL if a person is subjected to unwanted sexual conduct, including questions, images, jokes and comments 'unintentionally' sexual, which makes that person feel threatened, intimidated, humiliated or embarrassed.

No reasonable person would claim that Gillard was unembarrassed by the Sattler questions, or the insinuations of [Piers Akerman](#), that unpleasant guest on last Sunday's *Insiders*. To ask a person about their sexuality or that of their acknowledged partner falls right into the 30-year-old law.

Gillard is the most prominent woman in our country. She has been repeatedly humiliated, disparaged and ridiculed for that very reason. Of course we may criticise her decisions, but always aware of the context, which is dangerously toxic. She has become a target and if I were her security staff I would be very worried.

Her courage under pressure is astonishing. I have and will continue to be critical about some of her policy choices but at this time I can only despair at her party which is willing itself into annihilation by adding more poison.

Senator Trish Crossin was, in 2012, a co-convenor of Emily's List, a non-ALP group which provides support and mentoring to endorsed ALP women candidates. She was dreadfully angry and hurt when Gillard favoured the preselection of an Aboriginal woman, Nova Peris, to the seat she has occupied since 1998.

Trish not only gave Gillard a massive serve in her farewell speech in the Senate last Tuesday, and was visibly hurting, but evoked an extraordinary dance of elephantine wrath from Senator Kim Carr who used the pretext of sympathy for Trish's deprivation of sinecure to attack Emily's List as 'involving itself in pre-selections'.

No, it doesn't. But it is a voice for women in a men-dominated political environment. How can these self-righteous men publicly rail against the injustice of the leader of their own party backing a fresh new face to the Senate team, with an election in the wings? Only by putting their personal feelings and preferences ahead of their party's.

I was disgusted. I am sure many women and men are disgusted with the whole mess.

I confidently predict that when invited to add a [third tier of elected officials](#) from local government to the rank of constitutional recognition, most of us are going to say, 'No thanks.'

The bloody wounds that have opened through these 'gender wars' have been self-harm, which as any psychologist knows, is a sign of a frustrated wish for power. But what I saw last Tuesday night in the Senate was the first throat-slitting of a modern-day Masada-like self slaughter.

A tale of two unsuccessful asylum seekers

AUSTRALIA

Kerry Murphy

The asylum seeker debate in Australia is dominated by simplistic slogans and rhetoric. Within this context it is illuminating to compare the cases of two unsuccessful asylum seekers, which illustrate the complexities of the issue, and how three-word slogans do not reflect the realities of refugee movements around the world.

One is the recruit to the Australia A cricket team, Pakistani born Fawad Ahmed. The other is, in Tony Abbott's words, the 'convicted Jihadist terrorist', Egyptian born Sayed Ahmed Abullatif.

On paper, Ahmed's case has *prima facie* merits, as there are reports of attacks by militant groups on those they believe are not proper Muslims. In his case, his sporting endeavours put him at risk.

It seems a review lodged to the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) was unsuccessful, leaving Ahmed with only one immigration option: a request to the Minister to exercise his ministerial discretion in his favour. Luckily for the 'failed asylum seeker' Ahmed, the Minister did intervene, granting him a permanent visa; not, it seems, due to his fear of human rights breaches in Pakistan, but due to Australia's desperate need for a good leg-spinner.

Even better luck for Ahmed was the recent change to the Citizenship Act that made it possible for him to become an Australian citizen without meeting the normal four-year lawful residency requirement including at least one year as a permanent resident. The urgency for him is the Ashes Tour to England, about to start very soon.

On the other hand we had the recent spat about the level of detention security for Abdullatif. This followed reports that Abdullatif was on an Interpol Red Notice. Senator Nash stated that Abdullatif was wanted in Egypt for terrorist offences and membership of Egyptian Jihad, an organisation alleged to be linked to Al Qaida.

It seems that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship was only later advised about these possible character issues, and then moved Abdullatif from low security in Inverbrackie to higher security in Villawood. Some concern was raised about the 'pool fence' security at Inverbrackie for an alleged 'Jihadist Terrorist'.

So far, it is not clear whether Abdullatif's application has been decided or not. Either way, accusations of serious character issues are dealt with in the protection visa process. In Australia there are three separate ways of dealing with protection visa cases raising security or character concerns.

Firstly, the Refugee Convention has a mechanism under article 1F for excluding protection for those who have committed serious non-political crimes. Also, the

Migration Act has a character test in section 501 which can be used to refuse a case of character concern. Finally, there is a requirement of meeting ASIO checks.

We have a process for assessing refugee claims, and there are several checks in it to flag cases of security concern, as has occurred with a number of Sri Lankan cases with adverse security findings. At least one security assessment was overturned by the new security review process. This is significant because a process of review makes the decision makers more careful, and less likely to rush a decision.

Now it seems there are serious questions about the 'conviction' in Egypt: it was *in absentia*, by a former regime which had serious problems with a fair judicial system. It is likely that such a conviction *in absentia* may be highly relevant to a refugee claim. Oppressive regimes are known for using the legal system to effect their persecution.

As more facts emerge, more complexity is seen. This is not a surprise for those working with asylum seekers. Refugee cases can be straightforward, but they are generally complex and cannot be lightly dismissed.

Attempts to short circuit a complex process leads to the risk of serious mistakes. Currently there is a fast screening process to check if those arriving by boat can be quickly assessed without the benefit of legal advice. Yet sometimes it can take extensive questioning to clearly identify whether a case fits the refugee criteria.

Making quick decisions only raises the likelihood of someone being sent back who has a well-founded fear of persecution. In refugee cases, sending someone back to persecution is the most serious mistake that can be made.

I hope Ahmed takes bags of wickets in the Ashes. He will be the second Pakistani born cricketer in the Australian side, and good luck to him. Other asylum seekers whose cases are unsuccessful are not so lucky. Abdullatif has possibly a more difficult road ahead.

My brother's hat mourns his death

CREATIVE

Brian Doyle

My brother died a year ago, and in that year people have asked me, here and there, always tenderly, always with real interest, which is a sweet gift, what do you miss most about him?

And for a while I would say things like his false gruffness, or the way his stern glare would suddenly give way to a shy smile like sun through a hedge, or the way no man on earth ever loved making sandwiches in the kitchen as much as he did, and nobody over the age of eight more enjoyed a glass of milk with his sandwich either.

But now I find myself saying things like the way his moustache was bristling and adamant under the prow of his nose, or the way his hair would not stay combed even though the man was in his 60s for heaven's sake, or the way his shoes as big as boats waited for him in the slanting sunlight of the mudroom of his house where hung also his caps and hats, and do we ever think about what a worn familiar old cap might feel, having lost the head that loved it for 30 years?

Do we?

If you were a worn familiar lovely old Irish cap, and you had waited anxiously all night every night for 30 years for the blessing of the morning when he would reach for you and knead you with real affection and something almost like reverence for the way you sheltered his tumultuous head for 30 years, and then fold you gently over his ungovernable hair and down over the prow of his nose, and away with the two of ye into the wind and the rain, voyaging across campus and through the woods and around the town, until the moment when he stepped back into the mudroom, and removed you, and shook the holy water from you, and hung you again on the poke of your peg, wouldn't you wonder where he was the first few days after he vanished, and then feel something like a silent sadness, and wonder if he would ever again knead you and don you and doff you and reach for you with real affection and something almost like reverence?

We are so sure that we are the only ones who feel things, but how very wrong we might well be.

His pens and pencils and notebooks; his vast collections and volumes and pressings of stamps and coins; his favourite socks and ratty shirts; the scissors moulded by the years to the heft of his hand; his spectacles and his belts, his binoculars and bird books; the chairs that knew his weight and wondered as that weight steadily declined, until by the end when he sank into them they thought they held a long child and not a burly man; I think of these things now when people ask me what I miss about my brother.

Many an essay, and greater ones too, can be written about the wife and daughter and son he loved, and the grandson he will never meet, now, the grandson named for him, the grandson with the same long-lipped face as his son, the grandson to whom he might well have presented his beloved cap one day, when the boy reached for it, curious but a good three feet shy of the peg; but right there is a good place to stop, with my brother kneading his cap with affection, and draping it on his grandson, the two of them laughing, the cap surprised and then delighted, and then away with the three of ye, voyaging into the wind and the rain.

A time when they shared their drugs

CREATIVE

Various

Whatever they want

There was a time when
they shared their drugs
and told each other everything.

Now he has broken
pieces wrapped in skin
torture has burnt his brave
down to a canyon of screams.
He is rubber to floor sliding in muck
focused only on fear.
An animal shackled
mashed to un-reason
there is only this fear
then the pain.
It destroys truth
where truth is not an answer
when you're innocent.
He tells them anything.

Susan Adams

Poem

'A man swims back to you like a friendly dog.
Asks you for spare change.
He hasn't eaten since Thursday and it's Sunday now in the city.
You empty your wallet of all its coins
\$2.70
The city is heavenly,
full of karma

A kid with a snake tattooed on his wrist gives you two cigarettes,
outside the markets,
trams going past us.
You see an old friend on the corner of Collins and Elizabeth Streets
A pot of gold is a hug and a kiss.
'There's treasure in the chemist shop,
where she found little gifts for all her friends.
But she never got to send them
Now there's teardrops in the chemist shop.
She was attracted to the light of my fluroscent smile,
the tiny ways to say I love you were smashed like insects.
It's bad,
it's worse than anything I ever had,
these Cinderella slippers that give me blisters
I wish she was still with us.'
'I'm a pet lamb according to my mum,
to be loved,
not slaughtered,
a twinkling star in her eye,
but I wish I wasn't fallen,
it took all my strength to get up,
on the stairs of Club xxx
I wanted to cry because it hurt,
but I know I don't have to go back and get hurt anymore.
It was one slip of my jellybean soul'

Peta Edmonds

Fitzroy Villanesque

Since ecstasy is no-one's given right,
mooching and drifting, waiting for the call,
you haunt this shabby suburb late at night.

Each small exuberance has taken flight,
night rolling in, a shrug, a dying fall,
and ecstasy is no-one's given right.
Lean forms slither, black and blue through light,
leave no redeeming palimpsest, no scrawl,
haunting this shabby suburb late at night.
Your muffled cries, your shuffling feet, ignite
only small flames, memories half-recalled,
since ecstasy is no-one's given right.
Waiting for that beloved shape, that light
which can draw you, specter, past these black walls,
you haunt this shabby suburb late at night.
You hear again — fingers trembling — how bright,
how warm that welcome voice, and its withdrawal.
Since ecstasy is no-one's given right,
you haunt this shabby suburb late at night.

Lyn McCredden

Obama no 'wuss' but at what cost to Syria?

INTERNATIONAL

Evan Ellis

After a British soldier was run down and beheaded on the streets of London, UK Parliamentarian George Galloway tweeted, 'This sickening atrocity in London is exactly what we are paying the same kind of people to do in Syria.'

Galloway was understandably shouted down. British policy toward Syria is not *exactly* analogous to killing an off-duty soldier with a meat cleaver. However in light of the Obama administration's move to arm Syrian rebels, a notoriously fragmented and diverse group of partisans, his comments shouldn't be totally discarded.

Syria is a weeping sore in the international community. The UN recently estimated that Syrians are being killed at an average rate of 5000 per month, bringing the total deaths to around 93,000. Continuing one of the great demographic trends of the 20th century, civilians make up an overwhelming proportion of these figures.

Interventionists argue that something must be done. After all, didn't a UN inquiry find that 2500 adequately trained military personnel with a coherent mandate could have prevented the Rwandan genocide, thereby sparing 800,000 people from the machetes?

One wonders if this weighed on Bill Clinton's mind when he recently [warned](#) Obama not to look like a 'wuss' on Syria. Not that he mentioned Rwanda, focusing instead on Kosovo, where he did lead a military style intervention.

Indeed interventionists argue, as a chastened Kofi Annan would later, that 'The state is now widely understood to be the servant of the people, and not vice versa.' History appears to be on their side.

And yet when I heard Obama's decision to start providing arms, I couldn't help but picture the character of Pyle, sauntering through the pages of Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* and out onto the streets of Damascus, dog-eared copy of York Harding in one hand and plastic explosives in the other.

Let's be clear. Adding arms to a pressure-cooker environment is an enormous risk.

Last year *The New York Times* [suggested](#) that the CIA was managing this risk by operating in Turkey, 'vetting' the rebel groups, distinguishing those with al Qaeda or anti-Western affiliations on one side from those more suitable to Western interests on the other. However, former CIA-field officer Milton Bearden, no stranger to arming rebel groups, remains skeptical about separating the 'sheep' from the 'goats'.

Bearden was one of the point men who oversaw the \$US3 billion covert program to arm the Afghan mujahideen and bleed the Soviets out of Afghanistan. When questioned over arming Islamic fundamentalists, he quipped, 'Well, I don't know how many Presbyterians there are over there.'

Hardly a peacenik, he said in a recent [interview](#) that rebel interests and American interest may overlap but are not identical. 'It's their rebellion. They have their agenda. Our agenda now is to turn up the heat on Bashar al-Assad. [The rebels] have an agenda that goes beyond that, and certainly beyond what they understand on Capitol Hill.'

Consequences matter in all this. As Michael Doyle, professor of US foreign and security policy at Columbia University notes, 'it makes no moral sense to rescue a village and start World War Three, or destroy a village in order to save it'.

Criteria for evaluating Obama's decision can be found in an unusual context. The Australian historian Inga Clendinnen explored state interventions to tackle Indigenous disadvantage in her essay 'Plenty Humbug'. She noted: 'we 'naturally' favour clean, across-the-board solutions, and ... have a mighty urge to intervene'.

Sound familiar?

Clendinnen's case studies expose the potentially disastrous results of good intentions. She emphasised that the solutions that did work drew heavily — even exclusively — from local initiatives, because 'local Aboriginal initiatives are sufficiently informed by local knowledge of the particular historical experience and the particular balance of pressures and personalities in a particular place, at a particular time'.

And there it is. Has the decision to arm the rebels been sufficiently informed by local knowledge? Does it take into account the particular historical experience of those involved? How will it affect the balance of pressures and personalities in Syria at this time?

The fictional character of Pyle had no real answers to these questions. He saw things in broad brushstrokes, summarising war-torn Vietnam into the three dot points of Colonialism, Communism and his Third Way. The weapons he provided got people killed. Nothing more.

It is important both for the people of Syria and for Western credibility that Obama's decisions are better informed than Pyle. There is nothing at all fictional about the human suffering currently unfolding there.

Humiliation at the heart of homelessness

AUSTRALIA

John Falzon

According to [data](#) just released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics the past year has seen a 4 per cent increase in the number of people placed in full-time custody in Australia's prisons. The Northern Territory, which also has the highest rate of people experiencing homelessness per head of population, has the highest imprisonment rate (889 prisoners per 100,000 adult population), followed by Western Australia (263) and New South Wales (175).

The ABS goes on to report that:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males in custody increased 7 per cent and females 12 per cent from the March quarter 2012. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners represented 28 per cent of the total full-time prisoner population in the March quarter 2013. The total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population aged 18 years and over at 30 June 2011 was 2 per cent of the Australian population.

Based on daily averages, the highest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment rate for the March quarter 2013 was recorded in Western Australia (4059 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners per 100,000 adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population), followed by the Northern Territory (2951) and South Australia (2620). The lowest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment rate was recorded in Tasmania (547), followed by the Australian Capital Territory (1339).

'Prisons', in the words of the American activist Angela Davis, 'do not disappear problems; they disappear human beings.' Prisons do not address the causes of poverty and inequality. They are not a solution to homelessness.

In his 2009 Social Justice Report, the then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Dr Tom Calma [called](#) for an alternative to this increasing rate of imprisonment of members of the First Peoples:

Justice reinvestment is a localised criminal justice policy approach that diverts a portion of the funds for imprisonment to local communities where there is a high concentration of offenders. The money that would have been spent on imprisonment is reinvested in programs and services in communities where these issues are most acute in order to address the underlying causes of crime in those communities.

Justice reinvestment still retains prison as a measure for dangerous and serious offenders but actively shifts the culture away from imprisonment and starts providing community wide services that prevent offending. Justice reinvestment is not just about reforming the criminal justice system but trying to prevent people

from getting there in the first place.

Justice reinvestment is a model that has as much in common with economics as social policy. Justice reinvestment asks the question: is imprisonment good value for money? The simple answer is that it is not. We are spending ever increasing amounts on imprisonment while at the same time, prisoners are not being rehabilitated, recidivism rates are high and return to prison rates are creating overcrowded prisons.

This is a responsible and responsive alternative not just for Indigenous Australians but for all who, by extension, experience varying degrees of marginalisation, poverty, internal colonisation and disempowerment.

After this year's Budget I made the statement, in reference to the bipartisan refusal to lift the Newstart payment, that people experiencing unemployment had been [deliberately humiliated](#) by successive governments by virtue of the decision to keep their incomes so low.

Journalist Stephen Crittenden subsequently drew my attention to the beautiful statement by former Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero that 'a decent society is one that does not humiliate its members'. Taking this further, the real test is what a given society does to those who are arguably not its members; in other words, to those whom it has either cast out and cast off or refused to admit and include in the first place.

An interesting dialectic is at play here, because these practices of systematic exclusion are really 'best practice' forms of historical and structural humiliation.

In the words of the prophet Isaiah: 'What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?'

It is time we looked at homelessness in this vein. It is time, as a society, that we named homelessness for what it is; not a manifestation of poor behaviour, poor choices, hard luck or blind economic forces but rather a systematic form of humiliation, a means, sometimes as part of a continuum with incarceration, of producing outcasts, of manufacturing shame, of marking and scarring people. Our mission should be simple: to stand against shame.

As Chilean poet and Nobel laureate, Pablo Neruda, put it:

Rise up with me against the organisation of misery

... stand up with me

... against the system that distributes hunger ...

The shame that people are subjected to is deliberate and systematic because it can be avoided, prevented and replaced with an experience of respect and dignity.

It is done to people because they are members of the First Peoples or because they are living with a disability or are functionally illiterate or have been abused as

children or as adults or are asylum seekers on Bridging Visas or are living in severely overcrowded conditions or are living with a mental illness or are unemployed and unskilled or are struggling to survive as a single parent or have been incarcerated on and off since they were children or have been separated from their culture and language and spiritual home, or anything else that you can imagine as being, according to the perverse logic of who is in and who is out, a cause for humiliation and shame.

Humiliation begets disempowerment. Or rage. We can condemn and humiliate people for not being able to get up the steps or we can build a ramp.

What would our economy look like if the people pushed to the margins were listened to instead of being pathologised and criminalised? What would the law, which is a reflection of economic and social realities, look like?

Could it be that we would be building more social housing instead of more prisons? Could it be that the First Peoples of Australia would be running our universities instead of filling our jails? Could it be that the St Vincent de Paul Society and other charities would be needed only to fight loneliness instead of homelessness?

St Vincent de Paul Society is holding its annual [CEO Sleepout](#) across the nation's capitals this week. We continue to be magnificently supported by the Australian community in our fight against homelessness.

We are specifically calling this year for both sides of politics to embrace a bipartisan support for the 2008 White Paper target to halve homelessness by 2020 and to offer a place to call home for all who are sleeping rough. At this stage we are yet to have this commitment endorsed by the Opposition.

The steps towards halving homelessness, let alone eliminating it, must include a guarantee of the basic human right to housing; a strong investment in education, especially focussing on students from disadvantaged backgrounds; and pathways to secure and sustainable employment, including an adequate, rather than impoverishing, income support system for those who are outside the labour market.

The theologian Karl Barth wrote: 'God always takes his stand unconditionally and passionately on this side and on this side alone: against the lofty and on behalf of the lowly.' The poet Audre Lorde says 'our visions begin with our desires'. What is *God* if not this burning desire for justice for all who are humiliated by the history of dispossession; a vision that has what it takes to set fire to our hearts?

Talking the talk with Aboriginal students

AUSTRALIA

Mike Bowden

In 2005 I had the privilege to be appointed as acting principal at Ngukurr School in the Roper River district of the Northern Territory.

Ngukurr was established by the Anglican Mission in 1905 as a refuge for the remnants of the Aboriginal language groups of East Arnhem Land who had been violently dispersed by pastoralists. Slowly a collection of tribes had regathered at a landing place on the mighty Roper River, but because they had been dispersed and lived for many years away from kin and country languages had been lost or fallen into disuse, and the people in the new settlement could not communicate well with either each other or with the new white missionaries.

Gradually the Aboriginal people and the missionaries developed a new language now known as Kriol. Based on English vocabulary it uses Aboriginal syntax and grammar and can rightly be called an Aboriginal language even though it sounds like English.

Having lived with Pitjantjara people at Ernabella in the 1980s and with Arrernte people in Mpwarntwe (Alice Springs) in the '80s, '90s and early 2000s, I was well aware of the power of language when working with Indigenous people. I had learnt conversational Pitjantjara from daily interaction with Anangu in the Pit Lands and had formally studied Arrernte in my role as educator of Arrernte kids from the Alice Springs Town Camps from Veronica Dobson and the other non-indigenous linguists at the Institute for Aboriginal Development.

It was the tradition at Ngukurr for the school to close at midday on Friday. At lunchtime an assembly was held, awards conferred and the principal addressed the school. I participated in this process for a couple of weeks and delivered a short address in English. I quickly noted the keenness of the children to escape to home or the pool as quickly as possible.

After about three weeks I asked one of the Aboriginal staff if she would translate my prepared speech into Kriol so that I could deliver it appropriately. She agreed and then tutored me in pronunciation and delivery.

So I began weekly to address the assembled students and staff, who were joined by a small contingent of parents come to collect their children.

The response was amazing. The kids stopped fidgeting, looked up — and listened! The parents moved closer to get within hearing. The Aboriginal staff smiled almost invisibly, and the non-indigenous staff looked bewildered.

I continued this practice for the rest of my six months appointment at the school. Each week more and more members of the local community came to the Friday afternoon assembly to listen to my very limited attempts to speak to them

in their own language.

In the last few weeks of my stay Ted Egan, then Administrator of the Northern Territory, visited the community. Ted graciously agreed to address the assembly. Ted is a gregarious and generous man, famous for his entertaining songs and stories as well as his historical research and education of the wider Australian community.

Ted didn't need a translator. He spoke Kriol fluently having spent many years working with Aboriginal people across the Territory. The locals laughed, smiled, and visibly opened to him, clearly honoured by his effort to meet with them in their country on the basis of equality and respect. I felt vindicated in my earlier efforts to similarly demonstrate my respect for these people and their way of knowing and communicating.

The debate about bilingualism in Northern Territory education is complex and multi-faceted. In schools it usually revolves around effectiveness — the effectiveness of Aboriginal children learning English. The theory is that if children are taught first in the vernacular they will learn concepts faster and better, and then they can ultimately transfer more easily to English. It is about 'transfer literacy'. The real object is the transfer.

The underlying idea is that kids have to learn to read and write English to become effective members of the English speaking world. And this is true.

It was a misguided understanding of this idea that led the NT Labor Government in 2008 to order that Aboriginal children in remote community schools be taught solely in English in the first four hours of school every day. As a reluctant concession it allowed the local language to be taught and used in the last few lessons.

Why was it misguided? Because if the teachers can't communicate with the vernacular-speaking students, and if they lose their trust and confidence, then no learning will occur.

In my view the greatest possible use of the vernacular in education is even more important than what has been debated endlessly by academics about the various benefits of 'two-way learning' or a 'step method'. Learning the vernacular, and learning *through* the vernacular, establishes in the student a sense of pride and power that comes with competency in language.

It links children to key adults, it encodes knowledge, it affirms linkages to place and country, and it enhances a sense of identity while confirming relationships.

That is the true power of language

Australia's morality drifts with asylum seeker bodies

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton

Sometimes events take on a significance beyond their historical context. They come to define an issue. That was the case with Gallipoli and the Eureka Stockade. It may also prove to be the case with the bodies left in the water after an asylum seeker boat sank, the delay by the Australian authorities to take responsibility for their recovery, and the eventual decision to search for them.

There were no doubt pressing economic, logistical and legal reasons for the initial hesitation. Watching out for the living may have been given precedence. But unburied bodies have a powerful significance. Families who do not have the opportunity to bury their dead relatives speak of how the inability sharpens the agony of their loss.

Australians have recently shared the grief of Daniel Morcombe's family and seen the importance for them of finding his remains.

In many cultures, too, there is a compelling religious obligation to bury the dead because their next life depends on it. So we can only imagine the torment of the relatives of those lost at sea if they knew that the bodies of those whom they loved might have been recovered for burial, but the attempt was not made.

In texts foundational for Western democracy, too, the burial of bodies has a central place. Sophocles, Athenian dramatist and general, explores Antigone's burial of her rebel brother in defiance of the king's order to leave him unburied. Reasons of state to do with public order conflicted with the claims of humanity and moral order. The conflict led to tragic results for all the protagonists. Many playwrights, including Jean Anouilh at the time of the Vichy government of France, have returned to the story.

The symbolism of the asylum seekers' unburied bodies goes to the heart of the conflict between reasons of state and compassion so evident in Australian discussion of asylum seekers. They are worth setting out unpolemically.

The reasons of state can be expressed in the unchanging determination of Australian Governments to ensure that Australia decides whom it accepts into the community. They have always wished to set its refugee policy within this order. The practices and rhetoric of successive governments have been designed to vindicate this order in face of the threat seen in on-shore asylum seekers.

The practices of mandatory detention, denial of work rights, introduction of temporary detention, excision of Australia from the immigration zone and opening of detention centres outside Australia are some of the devices used to deter people from coming by boat to make claims on Australia.

These measures have been associated with such prejudicial descriptions of

asylum seekers as queue jumpers and illegals, with the focus on people smugglers rather than the asylum seekers themselves.

In the political debate, too, the more radical proposals canvassed have to do with restoring order. They include pushing back boats, withdrawing from the refugee convention, sending back asylum seekers to camps from which they fled, making summary decisions about their cases, and denying them permanent residence in Australia.

From this perspective unburied bodies are a small thing. But Antigone's resolute gesture of simple compassion for her brother and insistence on fidelity to a moral tradition offered a different perspective. It called into question an order that violated human dignity. This protest is part of the Western democratic and also Judeo-Christian inheritance. It motivates those who defend asylum seekers.

It leads critics of the Australian Government policy to explore what respect for the humanity of asylum seekers demands of society. They argue that those who flee from fear of death and persecution make a just claim on us for protection by the fact of being human beings. They argue that these claims should be fairly assessed.

They argue that it is lacking in respect to treat innocent people badly by condemning them to prolonged detention with its proven harm to mental health in order to discourage others. Respect means allowing them to live decently while their cases are being heard. It is not compatible with pushing away boats.

From this perspective unburied bodies matter because persons matter. And the order the state upholds is credible only if it is based on respect for the humanity of all the human beings whom it touches, including asylum seekers.

The ambivalence of the Australian authorities to the bodies of asylum seekers left floating on the sea is a graphic symbol of the tension between the narrowly defined order that Australia wants to impose and the moral tradition it has inherited. The latter is enshrined in the United Nations Convention to which Australia is a signatory.

The decision to search for and collect the bodies was a welcome acknowledgment of the claims of humanity. These need also guide and moderate the reasons of state. The drama of Antigone shows what can be at stake for a society in the resolution of such conflict.