

EUREKA STREET

A MAGAZINE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS,
THE ARTS AND THEOLOGY
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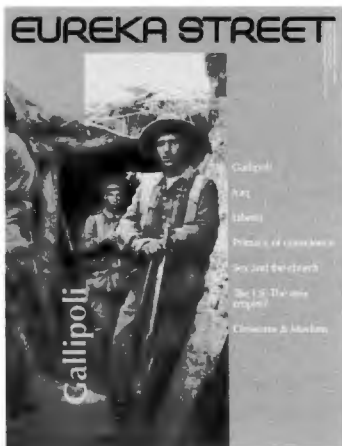
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Hysterical flu

The June *Eureka Street* drew attention to a number of the social, economic and public health issues associated with the recent outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS. What it did not give, however, was a critique of the hysteria surrounding this outbreak. Indeed, the hype around SARS overwhelmed all our media outlets; the only critical comment I've seen has been an email drawing attention to the counter-epidemic of Severe Loss of Perspective Syndrome or SLOPS.

In what is increasingly becoming the decade of fear, SARS can now be added to the rousing threats of terrorism, rogue states and (so-called) illegal immigrants. Like these, SARS exposed the fault-lines of our communal psyche, drawing on our fear of dangerous strangers. At home ABC radio bombarded me with the latest news on this mysterious disease. At work I was officially warned of the 'very low risk' posed by travel to Canada, China and other affected places, while some staff lobbied for the compulsory quarantine of travellers from these areas.

Sometime in the middle of this 'crisis' there was a glimpse of sanity when the World Health Organization reported that more than a million people die each year of malaria—that is more than three thousand a day, which is more than three times the number of deaths so far attributed to SARS. Yet on the following day SARS was once again a lead item and the concern over malaria had disappeared.

We need to have the international infrastructure and resources to cope with deadlier epidemics, but what is of greater concern is that we do very little to stop the preventable deaths of millions of people a year. We know that malnutrition is the biggest risk factor for untimely death, and that the really dangerous diseases such as malaria, HIV and tuberculosis can be greatly limited if we choose to fund the necessary initiatives.

The email on SLOPS linked its spread to 'the end of the war in Iraq and the need for Western leaders to give the public

something to worry about'. Perhaps now that the SARS crisis is officially over (at least for this year), we can look at developing a more responsible international health program, a program driven by the desire to save lives, rather than fear.

Matthew Klugman
Moonee Ponds, Vic

Little credit

I wish to provide a disappointing update to your readers regarding information in my recent article 'Capital investment' (*Eureka Street*, June 2003).

I have recently been informed by AusAID that government aid funding for microcredit, whilst increasing steadily over the last few years, fell from \$13 million in 2001–02 to around \$8.5 million in 2002–03. This represents a 35 per cent cut in funding.

Unfortunately it does not appear to be a priority within the aid program to seek out the evergrowing number of smaller, high quality microcredit programs desperately seeking funds to expand in order to reach self-sustainability. The use of some of our aid dollars for microcredit has enormous support within the Australian community.

The Australian Government also committed to work towards fulfilling its commitment to achieving the 1997 Microcredit Summit goal of reaching 100 million of the world's poorest families with microcredit by 2005. Appropriate to that commitment would be a funding level of around \$40 million per year.

It's time to give credit where it is due.

Maree Nutt
President, RESULTS Australia
Mona Vale, NSW

State of mind

Andrew Hamilton's 'Comment' (July–August, p4) is more chilling than he may have intended.

Much is made of individualism these days, but the decline of social sense has led, as Hamilton points out, to the denial of any intermediary between the individual and the state. It needs to be remembered that this denial is constitutive of totalitarianism.

Totalitarianism has never countenanced such intermediaries—whether genuine trade

unions, or churches, or anything else. As Giovanni Gentile said, 'the state becomes a reality only in the consciousness of individuals.'

Odd, is it not, that Western liberalism should lead in a direction that it theoretically abhors—one espoused by fascism and communism? As Hilaire Belloc foresaw, we have become a mass of contented slaves controlled by a few billionaires and their political servants.

Fr John Hill
St John the Baptist
Woywoy, NSW

Mind matters

Tim Thwaites' article ('Mind and Matter', *Eureka Street*, July–August 2003) was a timely reflection on the power of the mind to cure. Whether or not psychology can help one's physiology is still controversial; a less contentious but currently unpopular idea is that thinking can help mend society.

Gandhi once evoked the role of the public intellectual: '[W]hen there was no rapid locomotion, traders and preachers went on foot, from one end of the country to the other, braving all the dangers, not for pleasure, not for recreating their health (though this followed from their tramps) but for the sake of humanity.' Their actions were distinguished by their selfless nature. Critics of the prevailing political conservatism can easily lament the altruistic instinct our society has recently thrown overboard, but criticism alone encourages despair at the expense of dreaming. We need to recall the work of many Australians who have used their minds to heal our society, rather than merely lamenting the state of it. Their experiences can move us to do the same.

By sharing the stories of people who set out on journeys for the sake of humanity, perhaps *Eureka Street* could give us more to dream about?

Emily Millane
Box Hill North, Vic

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Sexuality and ministry

CHURCHES TODAY RUN into trouble on gender and sexuality. Public discussion reveals passionately held differences within churches and between churches, and culture. A Uniting Church Synod decision to license the ordination of candidates living in homosexual relationships, the Anglican debates about ordaining practising homosexual bishops in England and the United States, and a Vatican statement in response to legislative recognition of homosexual marriages are recent cases in point. Each was followed by controversy.

The starting point for the discussion within churches is their claim to form the body of Christ. The image suggests that Christ welcomes people into the church, and that they commit themselves to honour and aspire to his way of life. Christians therefore do not enter a church on their own terms. They are chosen by Christ through the church.

The image of the body naturally raises questions of boundaries. At what point do disparities between people's lives and Christ's way of life exclude them from church membership or from ministry? Even to ask this question is culturally unfashionable. Most Australians, including reporters, would assume that people have a right to church membership and to ministry, and therefore that those who exclude others must be narrow and intolerant. So for churches the question of boundaries is a question of identity, fraught but unavoidable. It is the more fraught because churches accept the authority of Jesus who criticised many forms of exclusion.

When it comes to excluding people on the grounds of sexual behaviour, however, churches have a problem. Historically, they have often drawn on a purity code to justify such exclusions. Purity codes reflect the natural analogy between the physical and the social body. In forming personal identity, it is common to be concerned about the boundaries that distinguish our body from what lies outside it. What is ambiguous becomes the object of fascination and revulsion. Bodily excretions, for example, can be seen not merely as different but as disgusting. Activities in which the boundaries of the individual body are blurred, such as eating, excretion, sexuality or pregnancy, can be seen as impure or dirty. In many religions, they mark a distance and rupture with the pure God. So, sexual abstinence was once required of married priests before celebrating the Eucharist. The influence of the purity code on the debate about homosexuality is evident when some critics describe it not simply as wrong, but as filthy or disgusting. It is

then taken to justify excluding homosexuals from the social body of church or society.

The confusion in church discussion about whether homosexual Christians should be excluded from ministry arises from the fact that the purity code is alive and well in church congregations, but has no warrant in the Gospel. It is common to hear Christians describe homosexuality as abhorrent, depraved, abominable, dirty and unclean, and refer to homosexuals as disgusting. Jesus, however, criticised the working of the purity code in his own society. He relativised dietary laws, sought the company precisely of the people judged to be unclean in his own society—the sick, prostitutes, the unwashed and tax collectors. So to exclude homosexuals from the church or from ministry on the grounds of presumed uncleanness is incompatible with Christ's way of life. Most churches recognise this by commending, at least in theory, the acceptance of homosexuals within the church.

IS THERE ANYTHING else to which churches can appeal, when excluding from the ministry those living in homosexual relationships? Because ministers must encourage and teach how to live Christ's way, all churches agree that there needs to be at least a rough fit between the desires and convictions of the minister and life according to the Gospel. Ministers, and particularly bishops in episcopal churches, also represent symbolically the church and Christ's way of life. So, before ministers are ordained, those responsible ask if they are worthy, if there is a substantial match between their lives and the way of life that they represent. Radical inconsistency, such as that shown in paedophilia, promiscuity or a passion for power and money, would disqualify a candidate.

These barriers to ministry relate to moral behaviour. The exclusion of homosexuals from ministry, however, is not on the basis of behaviour, but on the basis of public relationships that suggest homosexual practice. Indeed, some candidates universally praised for their zeal, spiritual depth and theological solidity have been excluded from ministry because they were open about gay relationships.

This exclusion on the basis of public relationships has precedents. The relationship to the state implied, for example, in the office of public executioner has been a barrier to ministry. The exclusion emphasised the radical lack of fit between Christ's way of life and chopping off heads, even for the best of reasons.

The grotesquerie involved in comparing the

practices of homosexuality and of execution, however, only makes more pressing the central questions: whether a publicly acknowledged homosexual relationship is inconsistent with Christ's way of life, and whether any inconsistency would be so serious that it would disqualify a candidate from ministry. Churches have historically asserted that there is such a serious inconsistency, either on the grounds of Biblical evidence or, in the case of the Roman Catholic Church, on the grounds of the confluence of Scripture and continu-

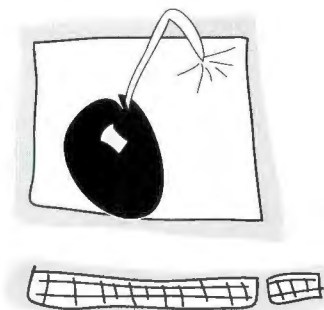
ing reflection on human nature. But in Western cultures, at least, this is an unpopular position. It is now assumed that moral positions reflect culture and not nature, while homosexual orientation is determined by nature and not by culture.

These questions are going to be long discussed within the churches. The conversation will need to be patient and multilateral and reflect fully Jesus' bias against exclusion. Within society the privilege to be given to marriage in legislation and in the allocation of resources

will also be debated. The churches can contribute much to these discussions, though we may ask how effective a contribution it is to put Catholic politicians under the hammer. It would be a pity if the churches came to focus too narrowly on the areas covered by the purity code. Ultimately Christ's way of life must commend itself by its attractiveness. In the Gospels, the most powerful threats to it are not rooted in sex but in greed, power and violence. ■

—Andrew Hamilton SJ

snapshot



Just browsing?

Even Google cannot find the alleged stash of Weapons of Mass Destruction. A visit to Google's UK site www.google.co.uk, entering Weapons of Mass Destruction in the search field, and clicking on 'I'm feeling lucky' reveals the following message: Cannot find Weapons of Mass Destruction.

These Weapons of Mass Destruction cannot be displayed. The weapons you are looking for are currently unavailable. The country might be experiencing technical difficulties, or you may need to adjust your Weapons Inspectors mandate.

Please try the following:

- Click the **Regime Change** button, or try again later.
- If you are George W. Bush and typed the country's name in the address bar, make sure that it is spelled correctly: IRAQ.
- To check your weapons inspector settings, click the **UN** menu and then click **Weapons Inspector Options**. On the **Security Council** tab, click **Consensus**. These settings should match those provided by your government or NATO.
- If the Security Council has enabled it, the United States of America can examine

your country and automatically discover Weapons of Mass Destruction. If you would like to use the CIA to try and discover them, click **Detect Weapons**.

- Some countries require 128 thousand troops to liberate them. Click the **Panic** menu and then click **About US Foreign Policy** to determine what regime will be installed.

- If you are an Old European Country trying to protect your interests, make sure your options are left wide open as long as possible. Click the **Tools** menu, and then click on **League of Nations**. On the **Advanced** tab, scroll to the **Head in the Sand** section and check settings for your exports to Iraq.

- If you are Donald Rumsfeld, click the **Bomb** button.



Chicken run

Europe has long displayed such ingenuity and elegance in manufacturing Church-State crises that it is difficult in this area now to be innovative. But a Dutch abbey has broken new ground by sending their chooks on a long vacation. When the Chicken Inspectors visited the abbey to check their birds for avian flu, Sr Mary refused to let them in. Nor would she tell them where the chickens were.

They reported her to the police who took her to jail so that she could help them with their enquiries. She remained silent. So did her Abbess who, however, explained, 'We respect life, even if it's only chickens, and we don't let the ministry destroy them for purely economic reasons.' S11 is said to be interested in the affair.



Ring 'dem bells 2

Echoing the bell-ringing debacle in NSW (*Eureka Street*, June 2003), it seems the Scots too are having their troubles in adapting to the modern age.

'St Francis Xavier's Church in Hope Street, Falkirk, has introduced a hi-tech bell system, digitally recorded from Dublin's famous Augustinian church. The original bells were cast in 1872 at Murphy's Foundry in Thomas Street and the Falkirk church is introducing them to a much wider audience than was ever envisaged. The bells were rung for the first time at the Easter weekend and since then they have been heard daily before each Mass and for the Angelus, a traditional devotional prayer said at noon. They will also sound for weddings and funerals.'

Bravo.



The boy who cried wolf

JOHN HOWARD is correct in thinking that the public can discern between a grand lie and a little lie. He's not, really, a grand liar. Throughout his political life he has stood for much the same things and also actually believes them, thus avoiding the perception of a carefully crafted public image. And he has some respect for argument, or at least some recognition that one does not win them, in the public's eye, by mere abuse. So he listens courteously, acknowledges the sincerity of your views and then puts his own. The Robert Menzies remark about Alan Brown—that he could see further through a brick wall than most—applies equally to Howard.

All of which suggests that credibility has not been Howard's problem. But it is, and increasingly so. Howard is careless with little facts. If caught out he will bluster, but never admit, simply, that he was wrong. He was not told. Or he was told, but was not untold. He misunderstood the question as being narrowly phrased. You are omitting the caveat he put on it, which puts an entirely different complexion on what he said. Or the error, if error it was, has been taken completely out of context, and was in no way central to what he was saying.

Twenty years ago John Howard, as Federal Treasurer, was ambushed by John Stone, his Treasury Secretary, a week out from an election. Whether the Budget was moving into deficit was a live political question. John Howard and Malcolm Fraser were insisting that all was well. Then Stone came to see Howard, with witnesses, and told him that the Budget had blown out by \$7 billion—more in proportionate terms than the celebrated black hole he 'discovered' when he became Prime Minister in 1996. Howard was shocked, not by the figures but by the prospect of trying not to lie in the week ahead. He was lucky and got away with it. But no public servant has since been allowed into his inner sanctum without Howard, or his staff, knowing what he or she is going to say. And if it is news that Howard does not want to hear, or to be known, for a fact, to know, the messenger will be intercepted by a staffer, who will undertake to tell the Prime Minister what he needs to know. What Howard is told will be oral. One can follow the trail to the Prime Minister's office—often to his closest advisers. But no record will disclose exactly what the Prime Minister knew.

Did Howard know, before the last election, that no children had been thrown overboard? Almost certainly—he began to slip pre-weasel words such as 'I am informed' into his comments as suspicions began to emerge. Did Howard know that the 'proof' of his assertion when challenged—the intelligence documents sourced on his own statements—was tosh? Probably.

Could anyone prove it? No, because no-one is allowed to question his staff.

When Howard went to war in Iraq, his case was anchored on the prospect of the imminent use of weapons of mass destruction by Saddam Hussein. Did Howard know that much of the proof of this was confected? He knew he was reciting a public relations dressing up of intelligence material, which accentuated information that supported the case for intervention and downplayed material that did not. However, no-one gave him specific statements known to be doubtful or untrue. Howard's advisers knew perfectly well that he wanted information to rationalise a decision that had already been made, and for another reason altogether. Australia went to Iraq in support of the United States. So why are George Bush and Tony Blair in trouble over dodgy intelligence information, but not John Howard? The public's adoption of Howard's cause did not depend on his rationale so much as on the success: in this sense he is right in saying the public has moved on. And the ineptness of the opposition has made this difficult to exploit. As the polls indicate, the affair underlined Howard's reputation for deliberately misleading the public, but many of the public did not seem to care.

SUCH PRACTICE IS NOW widespread. Treasury documents—once regarded as above the fray—are now censored or self-censored to reflect government propaganda, such as the pretence that the GST is a state tax. Supposedly objective documents on higher education policy are filleted of critical material before being made public. The ministerial office is now, often, deeply down in the department helping to draw up the formal departmental advice to the minister, so that nothing might emerge to undermine him.

Occasionally a Howard slip, such as his misleading parliament about meetings with ethanol lobbyists, can be explained only by highly technical arguments that he thought the question to have been more narrowly focused. The fact that parliament was misinformed is neither here nor there; the only question, for Howard, is whether he consciously misled it.

Voters are not fooled, even if they have become so cynical that they expect to be lied to. Nor are Howard's political colleagues or enemies. They know that John Howard will never admit any personal responsibility for a misleading answer. He's been lucky so far, but it is his Achilles heel. One day it will be really critical that the public, the opposition, or his colleagues believe him. And they won't. ■

Jack Waterford is editor-in-chief of the *Canberra Times*.

the month's traffic



Cuban rhythms

FROM CUBA TO CONGO
AND BACK AGAIN

IN ONE WEEK IN July this year, two of the greatest personalities of world music died. Both were Cuban and both were heroes of their people, even as they represented two wholly disparate strands of Cuban society.

The first to die was Compay Segundo, aged 95. In a music industry dominated by teen bands and the quest for the next young starlet, Compay Segundo was a refreshing anomaly. A musician all his life, he did not become famous until in his nineties as the spiritual leader and charismatic soul of the worldwide phenomenon, the Buena Vista Social Club. When he was interviewed recently, he said: 'The flowers of life come to everyone. One has to be ready not to miss them. Mine arrived after I was 90.'

As leader of the veteran musicians he became a cult figure, even starring in an acclaimed documentary about the group. It was the reward for a man who had known no other life than making music, even inventing his own guitar—the seven-stringed 'armonica'—because he found normal guitars too restricting for the mellifluous Cuban *son* rhythms and melodies that filled his head. He also wrote the song 'Chan Chan', which became Buena Vista Social Club's unofficial anthem. This grandson of a freed slave lived a life of excess and was loved all the more for his abilities as a raconteur, for his role as a 'great connoisseur of female energy', and for his panama hats always tilted at a rakish angle.

For Compay Segundo music and the good life it engendered were everything and when he spoke about politics it was with his customary wit. Ry Cooder, who helped spark the Buena Vista success story, asked him about politics in the late 1990s. His reply was simple. 'Politics? This new guy is good. The 1930s were rough. That's when we had the really bad times.'

Within days of Compay Segundo's death, Cuban music suffered another loss.

Celia Cruz was less known than Compay Segundo outside the Spanish-speaking world, but was nonetheless the undisputed queen of salsa, more responsible than anyone for the genre's popularity—a Latin-American Aretha Franklin or Ella Fitzgerald.

Unlike Compay Segundo, Celia Cruz didn't like the 'new guy', Fidel Castro, and fled Cuba in 1959. She never returned to her homeland. Instead she forged a career playing the memories of the large Cuban exile population, who were drawn to her in part for her strong anti-Castro stance.

Her popularity also derived from an astonishing repertoire which filled more than 70 albums and won countless awards. Alongside her extraordinary voice, she will be remembered for her flamboyance, her wigs and costumes and her trademark cry of 'azucar!' (sugar).

The success of these two old masters is remarkable only for the fact that it took so long. The English-speaking world was, in this respect, light years behind everyone else in discovering Cuban music and its pioneers. In Africa, Cuban songs carried back to the continent by returned slaves fused with the rhythms that their ancestors had taken on the reverse journey.

If there is one enduring external influence on the rich world of African music, it is the music of Cuba. From big Congolese sounds and the rumba guitar of the Congolese legend Franco to the salsa strains of Africando or Orchestre Baobab from Senegal, the legacy of musicians like Compay Segundo and Celia Cruz goes well beyond the better known products of their later years. There is now a rich discography of collaborations between Congolese and Cuban musicians whose names—Papa Noel, Papi Oviedo, Adan Pedroso—are legend yet largely unknown to a wider audience. The world has been listening to them since long before their music reached the West.

When I was in a bar in Cameroon in 2000, they played Buena Vista's 'Chan Chan' and everyone rose as one to dance. Compay Segundo would have liked that.

It is impossible to fill the hole left by these two masters whose music spanned generations and continents. It is fortunate that they have left behind a collection of albums to match the breadth of their legacy. ■

Anthony Ham is *Eureka Street's* roving correspondent.

Children at war

CONFLICT IN LIBERIA

LIBERIA'S ARMED CONFLICT between government forces and two rebel groups—Liberians United for Reconciliation & Democracy (LURD) and the splinter Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL)—has had a profound and lasting impact on the country's population. Liberia's previous war from 1989 to 1996 and Sierra Leone's 1991–1999 war had a particular impact on children. Boys as young as seven were engaged as combatants and girls aged from ten were abducted or recruited by armed forces as sex and/or domestic slaves. The current war will continue to affect generations of Liberians.

This latest conflict began in 1999 when the LURD rebel group surfaced in Liberia's north-east. It is made up of opponents of Charles Taylor's successful 1989–1996 rebel campaign against Liberia's United States-backed Samuel Doe government and was largely financed from sources in Guinea and Sierra Leone. Earlier this year MODEL appeared in the country's south-east, backed by Côte d'Ivoire's government as a means of forcing Taylor to re-deploy Liberian mercenaries engaged as rebels in Côte d'Ivoire's own civil war.

Liberians anxiously await decisions over peacekeeping troop commitments from countries within the region and from the US. Meanwhile, conditions are getting worse. Recent rebel advances into the capital, Monrovia, followed the looting of internally displaced people's (IDP) camps close to the city. This has forced hundreds of thousands of people into a city without water and sanitation—a legacy of the 1989–1996 civil war.

I was last in Monrovia in July. Because of past and anticipated looting by armed forces from all sides, the UN's World Food Program and non-government agencies had been unable to distribute food rations and non-food subsistence items for over a month. Soon after, however, they were able to take advantage of short lapses in the fighting to feed many of the city's newly arrived IDPs.

Monrovia's health services, provided almost exclusively by non-government agencies, are confronting a complex humanitarian emergency. An increasing number

of cholera cases have been reported, and it is difficult to respond to these without safe access to the affected areas. Should these cases lead to large-scale outbreaks, humanitarian agencies will have little chance of providing assistance.

While reports have focused almost exclusively on Monrovia, widespread malnutrition is now likely to have enveloped the rest of Liberia. Tens of thousands of Liberians are trapped by the conflict in remote bush areas during what is now an extended hungry season, usually four months but now likely to be eight. During the last six months the conflict has meant that farmers have been unable to plant and harvest crops and save excess harvest as seed for the following planting season.

In Liberia's more remote areas, malnutrition is likely to be higher than in Monrovia due to poor harvests, poor mobility and the fact that humanitarian aid agencies cannot get to them. In the remote areas that aid agencies have been able to access before the conflict recently intensified, they witnessed very high malnutrition rates. During the last two months this situation will have worsened considerably.

Lastly, the political and military reality remains that Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Guinea have excess numbers of arms and an abundance of combatants eager to use them.

Many of these combatants have been immersed from childhood in a culture of violence. In Sierra Leone, southern Guinea, western Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, a generation of boys and girls has grown up without the usual developmental experiences—play, education, livelihood security and the benefits of a caring environment.

Instead, sudden displacement, family separation, recruitment and abduction into armed forces, sexual violence, exploitation and abuse and pressure to engage in transactional sex to sustain themselves have become the norm for the region's children. A generation of boys has grown up understanding that the only way to deal with conflict is through violence. There will be repercussions for generations to come. ■

Julian Smith has worked with Save the Children Fund (UK) as its Programme Director in Liberia and Côte D'Ivoire.

The church in the world

WITH THE PUBLICATION of *Gaudium et Spes* in 1965, the Second Vatican Council set the Church on a new course of engagement with the modern world. Pius IX's blanket condemnations of modernity were consigned to the past as the Council recognised the truth, goodness and justice to be found in what it called the modern social movement. This new moment for the Roman Catholic Church generated a great deal of enthusiasm.

Forty years into the journey, commentators debate whether the Council was overly optimistic about modernity. Did the heady days of the early '60s influence the Council's agenda to its detriment? Should we learn from the great tragedies of the 20th century that the world is a much bleaker place than the Council realised?

From my reading, the Council was well aware of the limitations of modern culture, and in a sense the debate about optimistic and pessimistic views of modernity misses the main game. Much more changed with *Gaudium et Spes* than a more positive assessment of modernity. At the heart of the change is a new understanding of the Church's relationship with the world.

According to medieval historian Colin Morris, the understanding that guided the Church's relationship with the world from the middle of the 11th century was the building of 'Christendom'. This was an attempt to build a civilisation where the structures, institutions and culture reflected the Christian nature of society. Whatever the nobility of the attempt (inspired by the logic of Incarnation) and its very dark underbelly, the French Revolution signalled the end of the practical life of this understanding, even though some groups still adhered to it well into the 20th century.

Gaudium et Spes clearly abandons the model of Christendom, stating that the Church is not to be identified with any particular political, social or cultural reality. Nonetheless, the Council envisages an important role for the Church in the world, one that could be characterised as both *dialogical* and *trinitarian*. In this new understanding, the Spirit of God is continually stirring humanity and the world, and so it is necessary for the Church 'to listen to the various voices of our day', discerning and evaluating them in the light of God's word. The Church does not impose the Spirit on the world.

In early July, Cardinal Walter Kasper addressed some of these issues in a lecture entitled 'The Future of Christianity: Truth and Dialogue in a Post-Modern Era', delivered in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. He argued that the model of dialogue is not just a political strategy but reflects the dialogical nature of human existence. 'There is no return to the 19th century,' he said, 'with its opposition between Church and modernism.' This was a passionate, intelligent and deeply sympathetic lecture that struggled with what it means to speak God's word in a culture of which some parts do not recognise any meaningful concept of truth. There is deep need of dialogue here. ■

James McEvoy teaches at Catholic Theological College, Adelaide.



Curiouser and curiouser

CURIOSITY MAY HAVE been the death of the cat, but it is the lifeblood of science. Recently Archimedes came across two delightful examples of how human the events leading to advances in scientific research can be.

Physicist Wah-Keat Lee had finished a day's work on the Advanced Photon Source synchrotron at the Argonne National Laboratory near Chicago and realised he had a few spare minutes on the beamline. For lack of anything better to do, he scooped up a dead ant and placed it under the powerful X-ray beam.

To his surprise, he found he was able to look right through the ant's opaque exoskeleton and reveal its insides. Making use of edge enhancement techniques, he saw an internal structure of unimagined complexity. Lee became so enthralled he went looking for entomologists to help him explore the inner world of insects.

With a group of researchers from the Field Museum of Natural History, Lee used the high-intensity X-rays generated by the synchrotron to observe for the first time how insects breathe. What they found will cause textbooks to be rewritten.

The group was able to take X-ray videos which showed that insects can breathe actively, in a manner similar to mammals. Not only is this in complete contradiction to what was previously thought, it also explains how insects can pump enough oxygen to support complex nerve, sensory and muscular systems in the extremities and head.

But that's not all. The approach used by the group can now be applied to unravelling the internal secrets of many other small organisms, providing information that may be important to human health. All from a small burst of curiosity.

Archimedes listened to a similar story of serendipity at the recent International Congress of Genetics in Melbourne. Tom Wolf from Washburn University in Kansas works with *Drosophila*, the small fruit fly that serves as the standard genetics laboratory animal. He was mucking around one day and put one of his flies under an ultraviolet microscope.

Much to his surprise he found that *Drosophila* naturally fluoresce around the facial region. The facial patterns are species specific, and they also vary with the sex and maturity of the fly. In fact, fluorescence appears to have something to do with mating.

Drosophila can mate in the dark, but not if ultraviolet light is removed, Wolf found. What's more, the mating ritual involves a head-to-head dance, so the fluorescence may help with the recognition of species and sexual receptivity in darkness.

Fluorescent facial markings can be used to keep tabs on the mating habits of separate but nearly identical species of *Drosophila*—even groups which are in the process of becoming separate species. For example, Israeli geneticists have used facial markings to study the mating habits of flies across the microclimates of a single canyon, discovering that the flies mate only with others from the same micro-environment.

Not only do such tales make a welcome break from the relentless pursuit of a cure for cancer or a more durable paint, they also illustrate why we should support sheer-for-the-hell-of-it, curiosity-driven science. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

Keep on walking

AMERICAN NUN Sr Helen Prejean, the author of *Dead Man Walking*, has witnessed the execution of several men on death row in Louisiana and is no stranger to human misery. But in Australia this week she was 'bowled away' when she learned of Australia's treatment of asylum seekers and its indigenous people.

'It is unspeakable,' she said. So unspeakable that she has already begun 'hatching' a plan to return to Australia in September 2004 to do what she can to support asylum seekers in detention.

Sr Helen, a member of the Sisters of St Joseph of Medaille, has been lobbying against poverty and injustice since she first moved to St Thomas, a New Orleans housing project of poor black residents, in 1981. It was then she discovered that most people on death row were poor and was asked to write to death row inmate Patrick Sonnier. She became his spiritual adviser and walked with him to his execution. She has since supported several other condemned prisoners and the families of their victims.

Art, she believes, has an important role to play in bringing about change. Sr Helen's book has inspired an opera as well as a movie. The State Opera of South Australia will perform *Dead Man Walking* in August—its first performance outside the United States, where it was a great success.

'My job is to awaken people. Someone woke me up and we have to wake up the middle classes and the privileged. You have to work both sides of the bridge,' she said. While careful not to criticise the Catholic clergy, she said leadership on social justice issues usually comes from the people, not the clergy or the Catholic Church hierarchy.

'Church is the people. And leadership is where the gospel meets the poor. Leadership is where the poor are being ministered to and that is usually bottom up. I mean that is where Jesus came from.' ■

Rosie Hoban is a freelance journalist.

by the way



Blair whiching

TONY BLAIR was in trouble. Grey-faced, uncharacteristically faltering, he could only reiterate under siege in the press, on television and in parliament that the Weapons of Mass Destruction which had convinced him to take Britain to war really did exist and would be found.

Perhaps to divert the heat, his colleague and chief spin doctor, Alastair Campbell, suddenly savaged what he characterised as the BBC's biased coverage of the war with Iraq and the WMD dispute. He took special aim at the BBC's defence correspondent, Andrew Gilligan, who notoriously reported that the September dossier on Iraqi WMD had been 'sexed up' at the behest of Downing Street.

'We must not allow ourselves to be diverted by Downing Street, and in particular by Alastair Campbell,' riposted the *Guardian's* Richard Norton-Taylor on 28 June, 'from extremely serious issues which go to the very heart of how we are being ruled.' The following day, under the heading 'Don't Be Conned by the Campbell Sideshow', the *Independent* joined in the charge, insisting that 'Britain appears to have been led into an unjustified war, in which thousands of soldiers and civilians were killed, on a false pretext ... Unless the weapons are discovered and shown to be as lethal as Blair said, voters will not be distracted by marginal issues.'

Meanwhile, in the same newspapers and on the same days, another Blair was being argued about, though with somewhat less of a splash. This was Eric Arthur Blair who, on 25 June, while his namesake's desperate defences were unravelling, would have been 100 had he lived. This Blair is of course much better known as George Orwell. Next to Richard Norton-Taylor's article, headlined incidentally, 'The BBC row has been got up to obscure the ugly truth', was one called 'Orwell: saint or stooge?' in which Scott Lucas and D.J. Taylor, both biographers of Orwell, 'argue over the inheritance of the literary icon's fickle idealism'. And in the *Independent*, one page before the editorial on the 'Campbell sideshow', was 'A hero for the wine bar warriors' by Joan Smith—a flip, shallow column in which she remarked correctly that 'George Orwell is everywhere'. The *Independent* and the *Guardian* were not alone in fulsomely if combatively recognising the centenary. Eric Blair, in his Orwell manifestation, was as ubiquitous during that week, even if in a lower key, as the other Blair—attracting praise and excoriation from admirers and the apostate Left respectively.

From my temporary headquarters in Kentish Town, where azure summer skies were mocked towards the end of each long, traffic-traumatised day by a bluer haze of diesel fumes gathering thickly above grid locked Kentish Town Road, I observed these debates with compulsive interest. Kentish Town, while thoroughly insalubrious in so many obvious ways, was

nevertheless a curiously apt place to be during the time of Orwell's memorialisation and the inquisition of Tony Blair.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the anti-hero, Winston Smith, emerges from his office in the Ministry of Truth into a balmy, blue-skied evening, so lovely that he is tempted to go for a walk. Such a decision is dangerous in the society of Airstrip One. It denotes individualism, eccentricity, a transgression defined in Newspeak as *ownlife*. But Winston sets off anyway, turning 'on impulse' away from the bus stop and wandering off 'into the labyrinth of London'. As Harry Mount shows in a stylish piece of literary detection in the 21 June *Spectator*, Winston Smith walks into Kentish Town, haunt of the 'proles'.

It had been one of Orwell's stamping grounds in the 1930s. He worked at Booklover's Corner, which was not far from the present Owl Bookshop, and in emergency used the nearby pawn shop, still trading. And the uninviting, rundown pubs in the area—as Harry Mount shows and as I can well believe, having drunk in most of them—are not all that different from the ghastly proles' pub that Winston visits during his semi-licit excursion.

WINSTON HAD SET OUT on his walk desperate to escape for a while the suffocating atmosphere of London under the ever watchful gaze of Big Brother, the lies and fabrications of the Ministry of Truth, the unblinking eye of the telescreens, the oppression of slogans: *War is peace, Freedom is slavery, Ignorance is strength*.

For all their interest in Eric as opposed to Tony Blair, the London columnists didn't notice that the Iraq WMD debate was precisely about the people being told that war in effect is peace, that the concept of freedom is susceptible of endless manipulation and obfuscation, and that ignorance—being kept in the dark or, worse, lied to—will in the long run prove to be a position of strength. The Poms didn't buy it. They were outraged and Tony Blair remains in a critically parlous position because of his apparent deceptions.

Back in Australia, the Orwell anniversary created no such interest outside the academy. Our prime minister, as he routinely does, denied and shrugged his way through the WMD-absence problem, and suggested that the Australian people wanted to 'move on'. Apparently we did. War, the nation convinced itself, was peace. Ignorance was strength, because uncomplicated. A subsequent crass attack on the ABC was worthy of The Ministry of Truth and just as unstoppable.

And, like Winston Smith at the end of his ordeal and in the depths of his defeat, Australians loved Big Brother—the telescreen one, that is. ■

Brian Matthews is a writer and academic.



The alienation of Iraq

ACROSS THE ISLAMIC WORLD there is despair among moderate Muslims. Looking closely at the three primary justifications used by the US administration for the war in Iraq—weapons of mass destruction, the need for regime change and the promise of democracy—it is not difficult to see why.

America's obsession with weapons of mass destruction has always left many in the Middle East a little bewildered. In the Iraqi context, many of the weapons that were believed to form part of Saddam Hussein's formidable arsenal came from American and European sources. It has been said before, but cannot be said enough, that when the Iraqi Government was using chemical weapons against the Kurds of northern Iraq, Saddam Hussein was a friend of America. In the 1980s, the now-Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, visited Iraq and shook hands with Saddam Hussein. At the time, Iraq's weapons of mass destruction were indispensable to America, enabling it to use a proxy in the war against Iran. When chemical weapons were used extensively against Iranian forces with massive casualties, America remained silent.

For President George W. Bush or Donald Rumsfeld to say that these weapons posed a fundamental threat to Iraq's neighbours and to the safety of the people of the region is decades too late. When the Iraqi leader had the inclination to use them there was no coalition of the willing. In the aftermath of the most recent war, when not a single weapon of mass destruction has been found but many have been used against the Iraqi

people, it is scarcely surprising that Iraqis don't rejoice when the new American administrators of Iraq tell them that they have been liberated. After all, the Iraqi people suffered at the hands of Saddam's weapons for almost 25 years and no-one acted to save them.

America's assurances that Iraq's weapons were the main legal basis for war are also not believed in a region where the only nuclear power—Israel—is a close ally of Washington.

It is true that Iraqis interviewed by Western journalists have largely supported America's true aim of regime-change. Saddam Hussein's government was one of the most brutal dictatorships in modern history. To escape persecution, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis fled their homeland as refugees. Millions more remained behind, unable to leave.



In the late 1990s, I represented numerous asylum seekers from Iraq, each one bearing stories of tragedy and irreparable loss. Tariq's brother was arrested when Iraq's feared Mukhabarat came looking for Tariq. He was never heard from again. His farm was burned to the ground and his property confiscated. Tariq fled the country and later

learned that his elderly father had been tortured for two unrelenting weeks in an attempt to extract details of his son's whereabouts. Tariq's father died soon after his release.

Yusuf was in his eighties when he was picked up by the Mukhabarat. He was never told of his crime and he too was tortured, in this case for three weeks. When he was released, he was a broken man and retreated within himself rather than burden his family with the indignities to which he had been subjected. Somehow he made it to Australia with his daughter, only to die on the morning he was granted refugee status without ever knowing that his application had been approved.

From illiterate farmers to doctors and lawyers, from Sunnis and Shi'as to Christians, it made no difference in Saddam Hussein's Iraq. All were forced to flee, carrying to Western countries desperate pleas for the world to take notice, to understand what was happening inside





Above: A young man prepares to defend his family's wealth.

Right: Walking through the remains of bodies recovered from a mass grave. Female victims are identified by the dark burkas in which they were killed.

Left: Tanks sit abandoned by the side of the road.

Far Left: US soldiers have helped this household of women to secure food supplies.

Photographs by Mathias Heng



Iraq. Instead they were treated as a threat to the national security of nations like Australia. I sat in interviews with Iraqi asylum seekers who were accused of lying to support their case. One old man died the week after the interview, having become deeply depressed and convinced that he was about to be forcibly returned to Iraq.

ANOTHER ASYLUM SEEKER whom we represented began convulsing under a barrage of hostile questioning and accusations. He told us later that the experience reinforced memories of interrogation in Iraq. When I raised objections at a Department of Immigration liaison meeting, a senior representative of Compliance—the section of the department responsible for immigration detention and policing illegal immigration—said for all to hear, 'If I had a detainee who started to convulse, I would know that I had them right where I wanted them'.

And yet countries like Australia who imprisoned Iraqi asylum seekers as if they were criminals and accused them of lying,

thought nothing of using the flagrant and widespread human rights abuses taking place inside Iraq as a justification for war.

In the context of such a duplicitous history, Iraqis and the wider Islamic world find it difficult to believe that regime-change was pursued for the interests of the Iraqi people.

After the initial euphoria of Saddam's demise, American forces were bewildered to learn that they were seen not as liberators but as an occupying power. As occupiers, the 'coalition' forces failed to provide basic security despite highly intrusive house-to-house searches, allowed Iraq's hospitals and ancient treasures to be looted while the oil ministry remained unscathed, and proved incapable of restoring universal power and water supplies. As a consequence, America left itself open to the accusation that in the 'liberation' of Iraq, the needs of the Iraqi people were secondary to prosecuting the 'war on terror'.

It is indeed a singular 'achievement' of the new administration in Iraq that, despite the climate of fear under which Iraqis lived for decades, security for

ordinary Iraqis is said to be worse than under Saddam. In truth, regime-change has brought Iraqis few benefits.

But most significantly of all, many in the region simply do not believe that America wants a democratic Iraq. Instead, America's hesitantly stated intention to use Iraq as a catalyst for democratic change elicits a deep-seated cynicism among many Muslims.

Memories are still fresh of Western support for the democratisation process in Algeria in the early 1990s. In the first multi-party elections in the country since 1962, the fundamentalist National Salvation Front won a landslide majority of 81 per cent in the first round of voting in June 1990, which took place under conditions described as free and fair by international observers. The second round was never held and mass arrests of Islamic activists began. Western governments were silent about the cancelled elections and supported the incumbent government out of fear that an Islamic administration elected by the people would set a dangerous precedent. The country slid into a destructive civil war from which Algeria has still to fully emerge. Tens of thousands of Algerians have lost their lives and continue to do so.

Or the people of the region point to Israel, America's best friend and long claimed to be the only democratic government in the region. In reality, Israeli electoral laws deny voting rights to Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. At the same time, Israel and the US refuse to engage with Yasser Arafat, a man who for all of his faults was democratically elected as head of the Palestinian Authority. Mr Arafat is accused of supporting terrorism, while Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon emerges unscathed from his policies of extrajudicial killings, the building of illegal settlements on Arab land and economic blockades which have devastated the Palestinian economy. In peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, one of the most difficult issues is the return or otherwise of Palestinian refugees. Sharon knows that if Palestinian refugees were allowed to return to their former homes inside Israel, the demographic and electoral map of the country would be transformed.

In Kuwait, America and its allies went to war to restore to power a dynastic

government of oil-rich men who were anything but democratically elected. Across Iraq's long border to the east, the United States Government has chosen to label Iran as part of its 'Axis of Evil' and threatened it with retaliation for its alleged support for terrorism. This is instead of supporting the forces of reform, forces which include the democratically elected President Khatami.

And democracy in Iraq? Few believe that it will happen, in large part because it is unlikely that a pro-American government would be elected. To confirm as much and in an echo of 1990 Algeria, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has categorically stated that there will be no Shi'a theocracy in a country with a 60 per cent Shi'a population.

The dilemma for the American administration is that the longer its inept occupation of Iraq continues, and the longer it insists that it has brought freedom to Iraq when civil society is crumbling, the more likely it is that the Iraqi people will elect just such a government as a statement that they will decide the terms of their own liberation.

When the American and Australian governments talk of Iraq's new freedoms, Iraqis feel that it looks more like occupation and insecurity. Similarly, when the word democracy is mentioned, they know from the region's history that the only democracy they will be allowed is one where the American government retains the casting vote.

It is essential to understand the profound sense of alienation that this causes among Muslims. By marching into the lands of Islam with the 'liberating' tread of foreign army boots, Western armies are watering the roots of the next terrorist outrage, the next government that is willing to embody the anger of the people of the region. Unlike the present governments in Iraq or across the region, such a government would truly be the representative of its people, one that has sufficient legitimacy to demand that the West cease its violations of Islamic lands.

Whether this is expressed at the ballot box in a newly democratised Middle East or in the defiant fury of al Qaeda terrorism, the consequences will transform the world in a way that we can scarcely imagine. ■

Anthony Ham is *Eureka Street's* roving correspondent.

verse



Thames

Here, where, it seems,
All the gravies of London have run,
A tug
Lugs its scrum of barges
Through flurries of silt
And the great persuasions of the tides.
The Thames, a girlhood in meadows,
A verb of itself, a wending
Refracted by the rising in a mason's eye,
By evensong
In the majestic Wren of St Paul's.
In midsummer it is flawless,
Royally slow,
Gorgeous with plunder,
Sugared, eddied with tea dust,
Brushed with silken lights.
By winter
Prowled by ravens,
Its sound
Is the lurching of hulks prisoned to history,
The deathly hinge of traitor's gate.
It is a gathering of migratory gulls;
It is Will Shakespeare's words muddled in a fog,
And his ferryman
And the glow of his breath
Blooming in the frostlight
Of a cold All Hallows evening.

Grant Fraser

Truth, conscience and conversations

Debates about primacy of conscience illustrate the necessity for a passion both for truth and for freedom

FOR MANY YEARS, Archbishop George Pell has expressed reservations about the appeal many Catholics make to the primacy of conscience. In a recent speech, he has said forthrightly that, while individual conscience is important, the 'misleading doctrine of the primacy of conscience should be publicly rejected'. He argues that 'conscience has no primacy; truth has primacy'.

Although these claims are made in the terms of a long standing debate among Roman Catholics, they are of wider interest. For they touch the relations between individual and society, between personal freedom and law, between allegiance and dissent, that are being renegotiated in a world shadowed by September 11.

The primacy of conscience is a slogan that can decorate the flags of quite different philosophies. To bring it into useful conversation we need to specify what we mean by conscience, what conscience has primacy over, and under what conditions it has primacy.

Within Catholic conversation, conscience is usually identified with the process by which we make decisions about right and wrong. When we follow our conscience, we weigh the arguments and do what we recognise to be right. Conscience is important because in it we engage the hunger for truth and goodness that are the core of our humanity. For that reason both Archbishop Pell and his Catholic critics insist on its centrality.

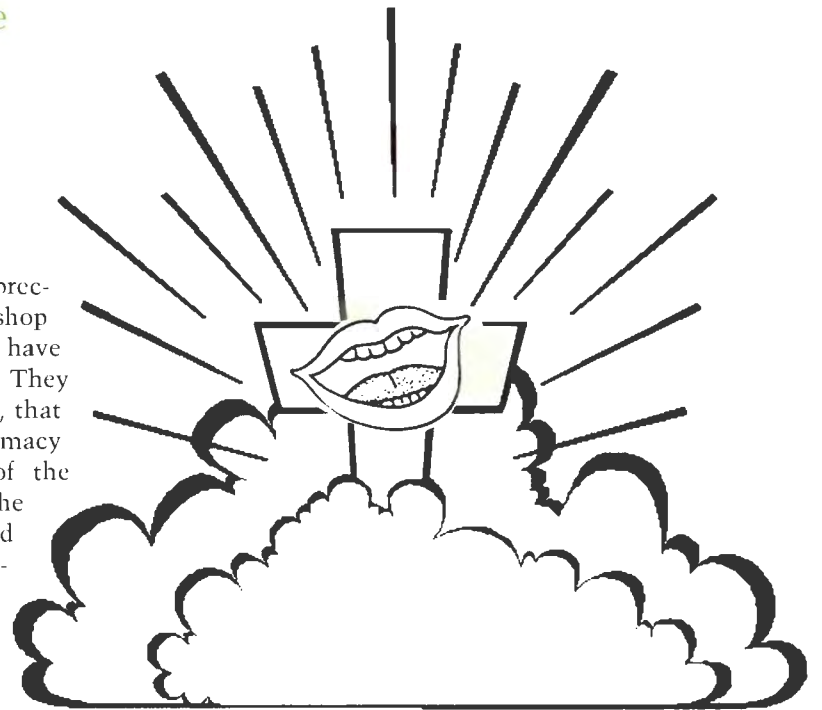
When we speak of the primacy of conscience we assume that conscience must take precedence over at least some other things. In spelling out where

conscience has precedence, Archbishop Pell and his critics have much in common. They agree, for example, that conscience has primacy over the claim of the state to dictate the religious faith and practice of its citizens. Archbishop Pell explicitly acknowledges this in endorsing the Declaration of Vatican II on Religious Freedom, which insists that the search for religious truth is central to human beings, and that assent to it must be freely given.

They agree also that conscience has primacy over our convenience or our comfort. The stories of martyrs are remembered in order to show that human dignity never shines more brightly than when people brave threats to their life and security in following their conscience.

This common insistence by Catholics on the importance of conscience is significant, because in Australian national life today the claims of religious freedom and of the lonely conscientious voice need all the support they can find. Where so many people find government policies and their execution morally repugnant, we need a moral framework that can expect and honour conscientious dissent. In a climate of anxiety, too, the religious freedom of minorities is precarious.

If conscience has primacy over religious coercion and over comfort, the aphorism



'conscience has no primacy; truth has primacy' needs to be qualified. For the commitment to religious freedom implies that the claims of a true faith must yield to the claim of a conscience inspired by false beliefs. And when the archbishop praises the integrity of a man who withdraws from the Catholic Church because he cannot accept Christ's divinity, he also appears to give conscience primacy over truth in this instance.

These examples suggest that it is not helpful to imagine truth and conscience as rivals pleading for precedence. Truth is better placed within the play of conscience; there it indeed does have primacy. When we ask what we should do, we affirm the value of truth. When forming our conscience, we enquire about the truth. After we recognise the truth, we choose to follow it. And we remain open to changing our way of acting if what we believed to be true turns out to be false. So although truth does not have primacy over conscience, it does have primacy within conscience over

self-interest and arbitrary choice. To speak of the primacy of truth within conscience is to say that our decisions are well made when they follow our recognition of truth. They are not well made simply because we have chosen them.

This framework is helpful for addressing Archbishop Pell's major concern: the relation between the conscience of Catholics and the church to which they give allegiance. The archbishop claims that in committing themselves to the Catholic Church, Catholics accept that God's authoritative guidance about life and belief are given through the church. It is therefore unreasonable to accept that God's guidance is given through church teaching and simultaneously to appeal to the primacy of conscience to dismiss that teaching.

He offers as protagonists of this appeal to the primacy of conscience those who dismiss the teaching of the Catholic Church about doctrines like the divinity of Christ, about moral issues like contraception, and about pastoral regulations

kind of appeal to conscience leads him to argue that the principle of the primacy of conscience should be publicly rejected. He claims that because Catholics recognise that truth is to be found within the teaching of the church, they should give precedence to that truth in forming their conscience.

THE ARCHBISHOP'S ARGUMENT depicts a church in which disregard for church teaching is widespread both in the number of people and the number of issues that are touched by it. It is a church where faith has been corrupted by a culture hostile to faith. I respect his judgment, but do not recognise in it the Australian church with which I am familiar. Although there is a crisis of authority within the Catholic Church, as indeed there is in society, I believe that it touches a relatively small area of faith and life, and has more to do with the style of formal teaching than with its content.

At the core of the difference between the archbishop and his critics is the

government and its citizens. Archbishop Pell uses the image of God revealing knowledge that was previously unknown. 'Christ is the son of God who came to redeem and save us and explain to us the secrets of this life and the next. His teaching has a unique authority. We regard it as divinely revealed rather than simply the work of human intelligence.' This image of revelation naturally leads to explanation of how God's revelation is communicated and preserved intact. The apostles and teachers of the church are entrusted with these tasks, and so to them Catholics should look first for guidance about how they are to live their lives. In this image of revelation, the part played by human beings is relatively passive.

I believe that in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the image of relationship offers a more seminal account of God's dealings with human beings than does the image of revelation. It suggests that God invites human beings into a loving relationship that shapes them into a community. For Christians, Christ is present within the community, and his guidance for their lives is found through a variety of conversations, including prayer, worship, shared reflection, engagement with their world and culture, and formal teaching. In accepting the authority of God and of Jesus Christ, therefore, Christians commit themselves to this varied conversation.

In the conversations that shape the Catholic Church, there are many authorities. Among them are the assurance of prayer, the lives of good Christians, the consensus among committed companions, good theological reflection, and informal and formal teaching. The overarching authorities, of course, are the teachers of the church, the bishops with the Bishop of Rome at their head, who guide this varied conversation and declare authoritatively on occasion what faith and church life demand.

The complex and delicate structure of Catholic conversation is protected by many slogans. The authoritative character of teaching is enshrined in such phrases as the church is not a democracy, and Rome has spoken. The participatory nature of conversation is protected by axioms that stress the importance of the sense of the faithful, of the reception of doctrine, and of the connection between prayer and teaching.

To be a Catholic, then, entails seeking Christ's authoritative guidance in the



that forbid offering the Eucharist to non-Catholics or to the divorced. He also instances those who, on the basis of conscience, justify remaining in the church while working to overturn such authoritative church teaching as the prohibition of homosexual practice or euthanasia. This

understanding of how Catholics find God's authoritative guidance for their conscience within the church. To explore this difference takes us into the language and structure of Catholic theology, but the debate illuminates national issues, particularly the relationship between the

structured conversation that shapes the life of the church. It would be inconsistent to appeal to the primacy of conscience in order to dismiss in principle the claims made within that conversation whenever they conflicted with our interests or prejudices. That would be to accept a claim with one breath while denying it with the next. Where the appeal to the primacy of conscience entails that self-contradiction, Archbishop Pell is right to reject it.

But I know of few Catholics who dismiss in principle the claims entailed in their membership of the church. Many, however, find it hard to accept all the claims made in conversation, particularly the conversation involved in teaching at its different levels.

Catholics, for example, who have a practical decision to make about methods of family planning or about receiving the Eucharist in a Reformed church, often have some idea of the church position and of the reasons supporting it. But many, reflecting on the circumstances of their own lives, do not find church teaching compelling enough to outweigh other reasons. In terms of my previous analysis, they do not recognise church teaching as true when they make their decision. But they do not withdraw from the various forms of conversation, including that involved in teaching, and remain open to persuasion.

IN CASES OF this kind, any implicit pressure to choose between truth and conscience is too brutal. Each case needs to be judged on its merits, and for this task subtle and close tools of analysis have been developed within Catholic discussion. They touch such questions as the centrality of particular teaching in Christian faith, the different levels of authority of church statements, how the teaching has been received, and the conditions under which teaching becomes authoritative and under which its authority may be known with certainty.

The complexity of these questions suggests that to take due account of Catholic teaching in the formation of conscience is not always a simple matter. It suggests, also, that unanimity and



harmony flourish when the various conversations that shape Catholic life are aligned, with the result that there is a clear and transparent relationship between the conclusions drawn in prayer, shared reflection, and informal and formal teaching. Historically, in periods when these conversations have not been aligned, there has been conflict and uncertainty. So the conflict today should not be surprising, particularly given that the methods by which the teaching authority tries to align the conversations within the church are themselves at issue. This discord does not weaken the claims to truth, but it does argue the need for time, patience and mutual respect—the conditions under which truth is refined and recognised. Slogans and pressure to conform narrow that necessary space.

Where truth is in dispute, open conversation is needed. Truth requires freedom both to be recognised and to be credible. It is as counter-productive to withdraw topics like women's ordination and contraception from public conversation as it was for communist regimes to ban advocacy of political systems different from their own. In any conversation where only one side may be argued, we instinctively assume that those who publicly defend the official position are motivated by ideology and not by an interest in truth.

The outlawed position is then assumed to be true, and wins by default.

The debate about conscience plays out in Roman Catholic terms issues that face Australia as a nation, and particularly the relationship between the government and citizens in the conduct of national policy. The common insistence among Catholics that truth has primacy is important, for after Tampa and Iraq it needs to be said that decisions about war and refugees are moral decisions in which truth and reality matter. Truth is not to be manufactured as expedient. The debate also asks how authorities should relate to their people in times of uncertainty. It is natural for governments to assume that they and their chosen know the secret truth about war and public affairs, and so to impose their view by abuse, ridicule, the stacking of committees with like-minded people, and the suppression of informed conversation. The necessary space for conversation shrinks and the citizens become alienated. Against that construction of government stands the importance of a varied national conversation that is motivated by a desire to establish the truth and to act upon it.

To enable that kind of conversation, it is important to defend the primacy of conscience over coercion, to defend within conscience the primacy of truth over will, and within the search for truth, the primacy of freedom over closure. ■

Andrew Hamilton sj teaches at the United Faculty of Theology, Melbourne.

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Gallipoli Revisited

The birthplace of a nation? Anzac Cove lies in wait for Australian pilgrims

MANNING CLARK FAMOUSLY said that the first investment any historian should make was a good pair of boots. Nothing could be more pertinent to the military historian or aficionado intending to visit the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Much has been made of the crowds of backpackers making their secular pilgrimage to this hallowed ground. Certainly few arrive with relief maps or photocopies of the battlefield maps from the official histories in their kit, though some doubtless carry copies of Cupper and Taylor's informative battlefield guide. Most will follow the much-travelled road from Eceabat (formerly Maidos, a village virtually razed by naval gunfire during the campaign) to the visitors' centre at Kabatepe.

Kabatepe immediately raises questions to the inquiring military mind. It was a Turkish observation post at the time of the Allied invasion. The position offers a superb view of the coast along the strip known as Brighton Beach, the officially designated landing spot. Anzac Cove is not visible from this position. For those drawn to the theory that the Anzacs were not landed at the wrong beach this view offers the first salivating morsel.

From Kabatepe you can drive along the coastal road all the way to Fisherman's Hut and the North Beach. On a clear day the Island of Imbros rises boldly against the horizon to the west. The tranquillity of the place belies the awful slaughter that befell some of the 7th Battalion on the morning of the landing when they came under fire from Turkish machine-guns. A walk north past the Commonwealth War Grave Cottages and workshop will take you to a number of small cemeteries and lead you into the area of the August offensive.

As in all Commonwealth war grave cemeteries, visitors can gaze upon the headstones of young soldiers and read the heartfelt epitaphs. Some are pithy while others are couched in the Imperial dogma

of a bygone era. It is easy to slip into a clichéd melancholia about the folly of war.

The dominating feature of the landscape in this part of the battlefield is the escarpment known to the soldiers as the Sphinx. Its features have clearly been eroded over time. Impossible to climb, it stands glowering like a stony sentinel. Soldiers moving in the northern sector would have marked their positions from it. Equally formidable to the eye is the position of Russell's Top and Plugge's Plateau. Together, they look like a giant anvil or axe head cleaved into the ground and worn down in the middle from one too many strikes.

Anzac Cove is littered with refuse washed up from the Aegean Sea as well as rubbish discarded by Turkish and Australian visitors. Walking close to the bluffs that lead up to the road, it is impossible to gain a sense of proportion about the height or the ground beyond. The road, of course, did

not exist 88 years ago. In the early hours of 25 April 1915, invaders and defenders alike would have flailed blindly in the dark as they tried to make sense of the ground over which they fought. Hell Spit marks the southern point of the cove and is the site of Beach Cemetery where Simpson, the bloke with the donkey, lies among others. Visitors can clamber from here back to the main road and across to Shrapnel Gully or move further south and visit Shell Green, site of the famous cricket match at Anzac.

The walk up to Shell Green is instructive. A feature of the ground is the orange clay, and rain makes many of the paths pasty and spongy. Of course these are easily managed in the tractor treads of modern-day walking boots. The soldiers in 1915 were less well equipped. The

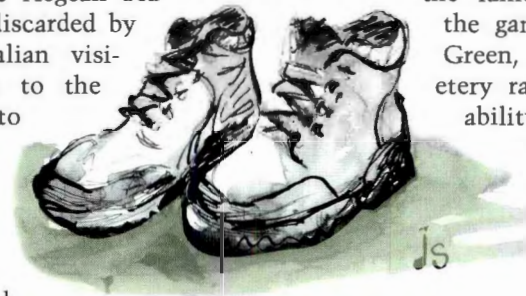
straight-leather-soled boots they wore were not ideal for climbing. It is likely that they were confronted with similar conditions. The operations had been delayed two days due to inclement weather and it rained again on the evening of the first day's fighting. You notice as you walk over the rain-affected ground that your foot actually depresses the clay, leaving significant imprints. The men would have preferred this as the ground when dry is sprinkled with loose, sandy gravel that can make the steeper grades quite slippery.

Those on the Anzac tour buses will doubtless be subjected to the obligatory pose with the cricket bat to re-enact the famous photograph of the game played at Shell Green, although the cemetery rather restricts your ability to hook and pull with conviction.

From the Green you can walk up the artillery road along the back of Holly

Ridge to the Lone Pine cemetery. It is worth pausing a short distance into the climb and letting others in your group forge ahead. As you watch them winding ever upward you can easily envisage your colleagues as representative of the columns of reinforcements, ammunition and water carriers that regularly made the arduous journey.

Gaze northward again and you will be struck by just how well the Australian war artists captured the colour of the place. The drab olives and ochres of the shrubs and the grey and blue hues of the water and sky are perfectly represented. Another striking feature of the ground is the way the contours of the hills are lost against those beyond them. To the untrained eye it would have been exceedingly difficult to distinguish where one hill finished and



another began because, depending on the angle, they can look like a seamless mass. You can imagine soldiers being sent off to support lines in the distance only to find themselves confronted by unexpected ravines and gullies.

AT LONE PINE YOU find yourself at a position central to the celebration of Australian achievement at Gallipoli. Most people congregate in the cemetery, ambling down the serried ranks of the fallen and posing beneath the enormous edifice of the Australian memorial. It is difficult to grasp the exact nature of the trench system there. The Turkish lines are still visible along the east and south walls of the cemetery. They are now just shallow, overgrown gutters but are worth wandering over. The land still occasionally reveals the past in tangible ways—a backpacker a few days after me found the identity disc of an Australian soldier.

Stand on the tongue of land behind the Lone Pine memorial and you will see it branch to your right to form Pine Ridge, a position gained then lost by the Australians on the first afternoon's fighting. Look north and east and you can only conclude the Turks were mad to try to wrest their lost trenches back with repeated assaults. While the Turks held the Nek and line across Baby 700, the Australian position was effectively contained. Australian possession of Lone Pine offered little advantage to any further movement. The broad valley between Pine Ridge and Gun Ridge, the heights of Mortar Ridge and

the Turkish guns on Scrubby Knoll all made any attempted Australian advance a highly improbable venture.

The Nek was one of the pivotal positions at Anzac, and the scene of Australia's gallant 600 immortalised in the film *Gallipoli*. Stepping out the distance between the lines (basically the length of the cemetery) only reinforces the madness of the venture. Push through the bushes to the left and you will be rewarded with magnificent views of the northern part of the Anzac position extending all the way to Suvla. The infamous Salt Lake still shimmers—though that belongs to the British story with which few Australians are conversant.

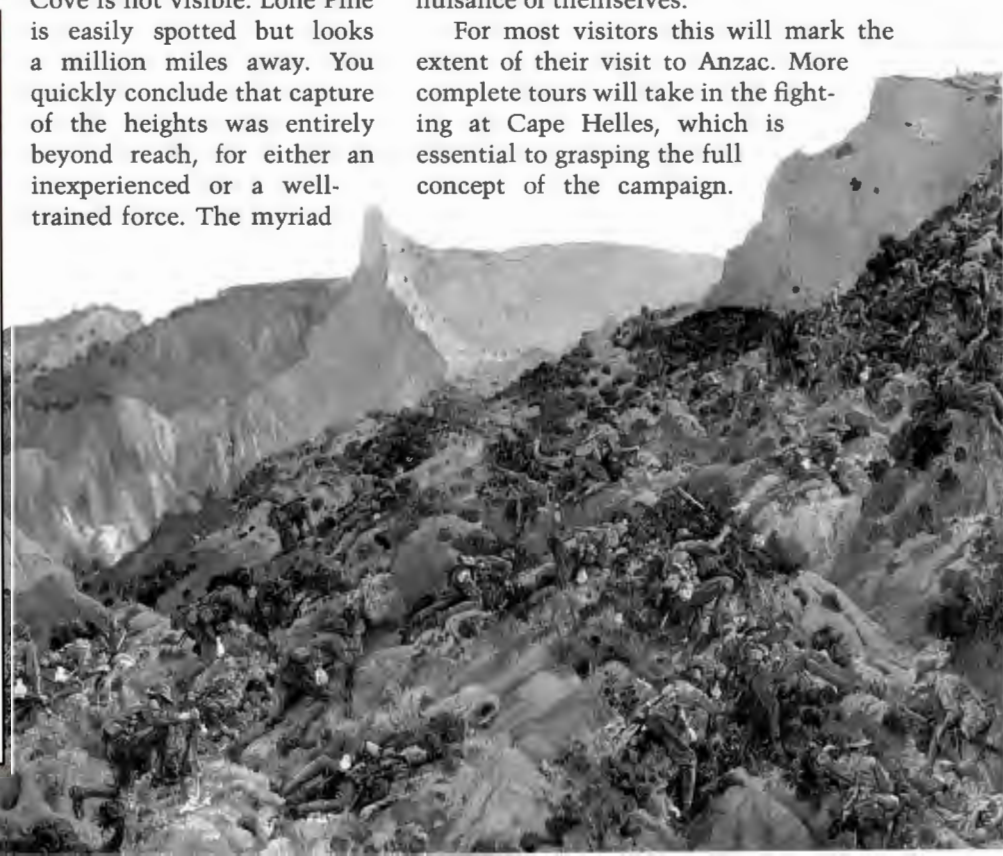
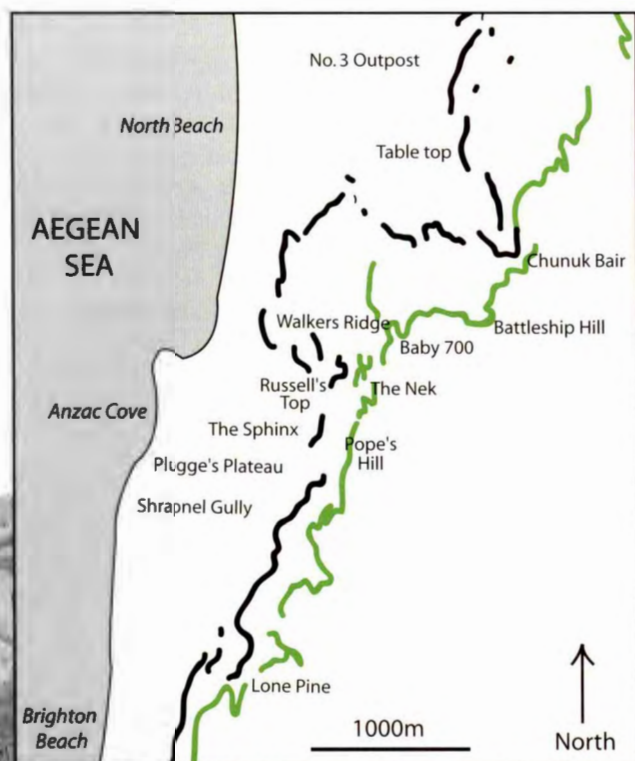
The area controlled by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is essentially that held by the Allies prior to the evacuation. Outside this area, on the heights of Hill 971, Chunuk Bair and Battleship Hill, the ground has been well and truly claimed by the Turkish nation. In fact, the number of Turks visiting the region was a surprise. Oddly, some Australians have expressed resentment at the erection of Turkish statues. It seems that for some, the honouring of the participation of the Turkish *mehmet* who fought and died in greater numbers than their uninvited guests is somehow seen as triumphal and insulting to Australian sensibilities.

These Turkish-controlled heights offer more food for thought. Looking down the ridges the area presents itself as a deceptively smooth sloping tabletop. Anzac Cove is not visible. Lone Pine is easily spotted but looks a million miles away. You quickly conclude that capture of the heights was entirely beyond reach, for either an inexperienced or a well-trained force. The myriad

gullies and ravines and razorbacks are not particularly visible to the naked eye when dotted with shrubbery. Soldiers gazing over this landscape from a distance could be fooled as to its friendliness. I was on a subsequent day when I opted for a solo trip along the north-eastern spur of Battleship Hill, a position reached by Captain Tulloch and a few other hardy souls on the first day. What looked like a pleasant stroll soon assumed nightmarish proportions. The scrub is thick and prickly, the ground undulating. You soon make numerous detours and are unexpectedly confronted by sheer drops on the western face of this portion of land. It is the same all over, really. After floundering helplessly for an hour I headed back to the main road, with multiple scratches over my arms and legs and a tad dehydrated by the warm sun. I wondered at what point I would have given up, as numbers of Australians did all those years ago, and lain doggo, deciding I was bugged and had done enough for the moment. It is exhausting enough unencumbered by kit, but to do it under fire and without the access of sealed roads must have been quite another undertaking.

It is from these commanding Turkish positions that you can glimpse the Straits. Even in the unlikely event that the Allies had managed to capture these heights, a cursory examination of the ground beyond suggests that the campaign would hardly have been a fait accompli. There were still plenty of positions where resolute defenders could dig in and make a damn nuisance of themselves.

For most visitors this will mark the extent of their visit to Anzac. More complete tours will take in the fighting at Cape Helles, which is essential to grasping the full concept of the campaign.





Be sure to demand to be let out along the Seddulbehir road so you can inspect the ground where the Australian 2nd Brigade advanced astride Kanli Dere in the only Australian attack outside of the Anzac position. This failed advance toward the ultimately unattainable and militarily useless position of Achi Baba proved another costly act of folly.

Of course, for this self-admitted military nut one day was never going to be enough. Having previously arranged through the War Graves Commission to stay in the visitors' quarters at Fisherman's Hut, I cut loose from my touring party and caught a morning ferry from Canakkale to Eceabat. In my excitement I forgot to buy film for my camera and hopped into the seatbeltless and cigarette-smoke-filled taxi for the 15km journey back to Anzac.

Armed with my maps I headed over to No. 3 Outpost with the intention of walking inland. After picking my way along the razorbacked crest that runs east from the Outpost's position, I stopped to take in the views. From here the Turks could clearly see any Australians moving off the North Beach. Equally, as you gaze toward the Sphinx you realise you would be a sitting duck if the enemy held the ground to the south above as the Australians eventually did. Resuming my journey I was suddenly confronted with a 20-foot stretch of ridgeline, perhaps a foot wide at best, from which the sides fell like sheer walls to the gullies below. I hesitated, weighing up the possibilities, then decided discretion was the better part of valour and began to retrace my steps.

A glance at my watch revealed I had

been advancing for about half an hour and had made only a few hundred yards. I decided to quicken my pace and finding a suitable decline scrambled down the face of the ridge to the *dere* below. Here I felt suddenly transported to the Australian bush. Dry grass brushed chest-high as I was consumed by buzzing insects. The soil was cracked and parched, the shrubs and bracken stiff and uncompromising. A cleanly chopped section of a snake played host to an army of ants. The sight sent me into a frantic goose-stepping Cleese-like retreat to the safety of higher ground.

Turkish snipers were one thing, Turkish vipers another.

MY SECOND FORAY led me to the western base of Walker's Ridge with the intention of making Russell's Top. The ascent was relatively easy at first, but again I was defeated by some badly eroded sections of the ridge. Sitting down on the reverse slope I pondered the difficulty of the Anzac position. Turks on the low ridges from where I had just come would have been easy prey with a rifle; equally I was open to attack from the Turk positions to the north-east and would have been forced to take cover on the reverse slope of Walker's Ridge. This haven provided protection for thousands of Australian soldiers. The view into Mule Gully from here is spectacular. Certain death for any unfortunate who lost his footing, but the rock formations below and the sheer walls of the Sphinx are Grand Canyon-esque.

To the traveller wandering alone, the defensive position seems quite large. However, when you try to imagine the

logistics of cramming in over 20,000 men plus all the paraphernalia and stores associated with a grand military exercise, it is almost inconceivable that the position accommodated so many.

My third field trip for the day was to walk up Shrapnel Gully to Monash Gully. It was just like the photographs that had occupied my mind for so many years. Once more I found myself on the second ridge and made my way to the Nek, then along Russell's Top. Again magnificent views presented themselves to the north, west and east but my attention was drawn to the depressed knob of ground below at the head of Monash Gully. This was Pope's Hill on which the Australian line hinged. It was open to Turkish fire from many directions. It ranked as one of the worst hot spots at Anzac and you can easily see why.

From Russell's Top and the Nek I footed it to the reconstructed Turkish trenches on Battleship Hill close to where Major Kindon and Captain Lalor had advanced, not far from Tulloch's position. On the journey back I descended into Monash Gully, passing the 4th Battalion Parade Ground Cemetery, and went back to the beach. Quite exhausted and having consumed my water supply, I trudged along the beach, cooling my overheated ankles in the ocean before walking along the cove. Somehow, despite my near-stupor, I was drawn to the tink of metal on the smooth pebbles at the water's edge. I looked down and was uplifted by the sight of a .303 shell lolling in the shallows—a holy trinket delivered by the gods of war to make the trip worthwhile.

I slept the sleep of the dead that night and awoke to head off to the northern portion again to trace Monash's ill-fated advance in the second offensive. I was fortunate to meet Mike and Joe, two serious pilgrims—Joe was visiting for the fifth time if I remember correctly—who were winding up a ten-day visit to the battlefield. Here I was, knackered after two days and nearly half Joe's age too! They were a refreshing tonic to jaded spirits. Mike, a jovial bear of a man, gave me a roll of film to offset the pain of my earlier stupidity.

Bidding them adieu I set off toward Bauchop's Hill where I unearthed an old twisted piece of metal—tractor or bomb I could not tell. Unfortunately I did not have a decent map of this area and was soon stumbling through thick grass and intractable foliage, forced into detour after detour. Once in the *deres* it is difficult to find your bearings as the heights are often lost to view despite their obvious monolithic presence. I kept veering north and east, changes of direction constantly forced on me by the terrain. I had hopelessly confounded myself (and in the daylight too).

I returned well satisfied that I had unravelled some of the mysteries of the Anzac position. There is much more to see. I wondered about the thoughts of the many backpackers as they departed the area. Did they just stare at the headstones and recoil at the folly of war? If so, let us make it a compulsory field trip for all Australians. Or does visiting this place affirm in some way their identity as Australians? Or is Gallipoli simply an event, a tourist attraction and a cheap destination offering the opportunity to party with your own in a different place?

As one who does not see Gallipoli as the birth of our nation, as one who extracts no personal sense of nationalistic fervour from the Gallipoli campaign and as one who resists the drawcard of the mythical digger as the defining model of our national identity, I experienced no epiphany. Others may well do. Yet the place is important because it remains one of the best-preserved campaign areas in military history.

The joy for the military aficionado is that Gallipoli still offers an uncrowded and unhurried discovery tour if you have the time. The relative remoteness

of Anzac to any major towns may preserve it long into the future. However, increased numbers of Australian and New Zealand visitors, coupled with the Turkish realisation of its tourist potential, could quickly erode the area's appeal. Unsightly Boomerang cafés, Anzac hotels and Kangaroo, Koala, Kookaburra and Kiwi whatever's have already sprung up in Eceabat and Canakkale. I am prone to my own moments of parochialism but seeing the Australian flag and national symbolism promoted in a landscape so far away made me cringe. It is pitched at the most banal form of Australian identity. It was a feeling akin to seeing a McDonald's sign in the most exotic and remote location left on earth. I hope such displays will remain contained some distance from the battlefield area. ■

Dale Blair is the author of *Dinkum Diggers: An Australian Battalion at War* (MUP, 2001) and visited Gallipoli for the first time in October 2002.

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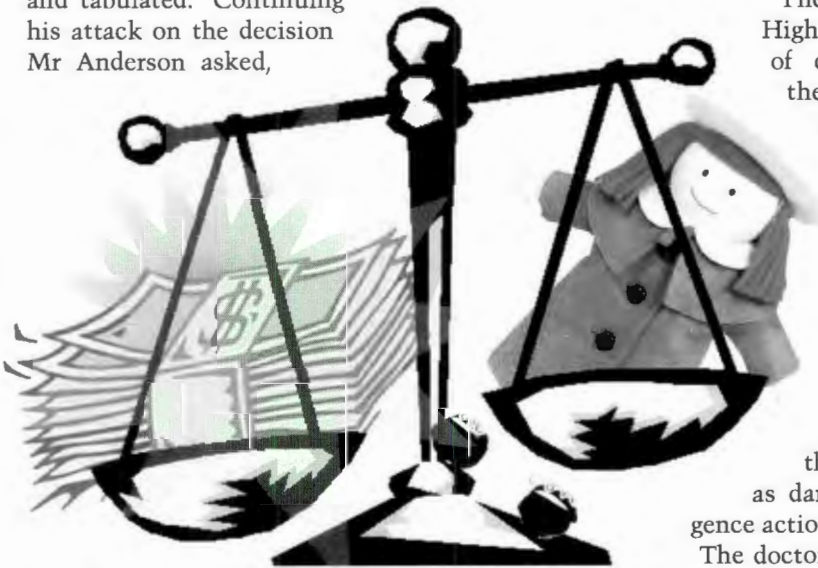
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Romance v. reality

The cost of raising a child is no measure of a parent's love

'CHILDREN ARE A BLESSING' has become a catchcry in the highly emotive and at times shrill public reaction to the recent High Court decision of *Cattanach v. Melchior*. By a majority of four to three the High Court upheld a decision of the Supreme Court of Queensland to award \$105,249 to a Brisbane couple, Kerry and Craig Melchior, because of a failed sterilisation operation which had resulted in the birth of their third child, Jordan.

Two days after the judgment was handed down, Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson was quoted in front-page newspaper articles: 'It is repugnant that the birth of a healthy child, like Jordan, should be the subject of damages ... Children are a gift from above, not an economic burden that can be enumerated and tabulated.' Continuing his attack on the decision Mr Anderson asked,



'Do we no longer understand that when we devalue and cheapen one life, we devalue and cheapen all life—and with it threaten our cherished freedoms?'

Commentators followed this rhetoric, branding the decision one that reflected the High Court's 'progressive devaluation of human life' and that reduced the existence of a child to that of a chattel (Angela

Shanahan in *The Age*, 22 July 2003). A further issue raised in the fallout from the case was the 'nightmarish' consequences in terms of further litigation, with dire warnings that the 'risk of lawsuits would force doctors to stop sterilisation procedures and even prescribing the Pill'. (*Herald Sun*, 18 July 2003)

The case certainly raises difficult ethical and moral issues, and this is reflected in the split decision of the court and the six separate judgments generated by the seven judges. However, these broad statements about the value of human life and the rather hysterical tenor of the public reaction obscures the actual legal issues with which the High Court is grappling and the complex realities of pregnancy, birth and raising a child.

The issue before the High Court was not, of course, 'What is the value of human life?' but was limited to whether the costs of raising and maintaining a child born as a consequence of a failed sterilisation operation should be recoverable by the child's parents as damages in a negligence action.

The doctor's negligence was not at issue in the High Court proceedings. The lower courts had found that the doctor had been negligent in failing to inform his patient, Mrs Melchior, after a sterilisation operation in 1992, that the procedure may have been ineffective. The risk of the failure of the sterilisation procedure arose because the doctor had clipped only the left Fallopian tube. Prior to the operation Mrs Melchior had informed the doctor that she believed

her right ovary and right Fallopian tube had been removed in a childhood operation. However, following the birth of Jordan in 1997, it was established that the right Fallopian tube was still intact and that during the sterilisation operation the tube had been obscured by adhesions which were a legacy of the childhood operation. The doctor's failure to inform Mrs Melchior that the sterilisation may have been ineffective meant that she did not avail herself of further tests, which could have established her fertility. The courts found that this negligence was a material cause of the subsequent pregnancy and the birth of Jordan.

The lower courts had awarded Mrs Melchior damages for pain and suffering associated with the pregnancy and birth (which included a period of post-natal depression), for lost earning capacity and for medical expenses, and a small sum was awarded to Mr Melchior for 'loss of consortium'. These damages (a total of \$106,672) were not challenged on appeal. It was rather the additional award of \$105,249 for the costs of raising Jordan to the age of 18 that was the subject matter of the appeal.

The task of the High Court judges was made difficult by the conflicting authorities in both Australian and overseas jurisdictions that had dealt with similar cases. Many of the US cases had adopted a policy of limiting recovery in failed sterilisation cases to exclude the costs of child-rearing. Each of the judges also considered a recent House of Lords decision that had limited recovery to the costs associated with the pain and suffering of childbirth. This decision had reversed a trend in English case law to allow the cost of child-rearing expenses and has been subject to considerable criticism—particularly as its effect in subsequent cases was a tendency to discriminate between the birth of a healthy child (for which no damages are recoverable) and the birth of a disabled child (for which damages

have been held recoverable). The majority judges in the Melchior case found this distinction both illogical, arbitrary and highly discriminatory.

In this case, all the judges accepted that the damage to the Melchiors was a reasonably foreseeable consequence of the negligent act of the doctor. However, in deciding whether the loss flowing from that damage should be recoverable by the parents, the judges disagreed about whether there were sound public policy reasons to limit recoverability of damages and characterised the damage in significantly different ways.

Two of the minority judges characterised the parent-child relationship or the actual birth of the child—rather than the economic consequences flowing from the birth—as the damage suffered by the parent. In couching the damage in terms of the actual child or the parent-child relationship, the minority judges could then argue that it would be repugnant to attempt to place a monetary value on the life of the child. In the minority judgment of Justice Heydon:

‘Human life is invaluable in the sense that it is incapable of valuation ... The duty cast on parents which flows from the arrival of new human life is also incapable of valuation or estimation or discharge by payment.’

IT IS THIS focus on the sanctity of human life which resonates in the insistent theme in media reports that the birth of a normal healthy baby is always a blessing. Justice Kirby (in the majority) refutes the universality of the ‘blessing’ argument as representing ‘a fiction which the law should not apply to a particular case without objective evidence ...’. Even Justice Hayne in his minority judgment concedes that the notion that the birth of a child is always a blessing imposes on the parents ‘a paradigm of family life which may or may not be apt’. Certainly the effect on a family’s circumstances of the arrival of an unplanned child might range from mild inconvenience to financial, emotional or medical disaster. Consider the circumstances of Mrs Melchior, who conceived Jordan at the age of 44 and with two daughters already aged eight and 11 years, as outlined by the trial judge:

‘Mrs Melchior made a considered choice of sterilisation in order to avoid the burdens—economic, medical and practical—of bearing another child in middle

age. Her evidence was that she loved her son, but his arrival in the household was a major disruption to the family, she was depressed and angry at the effect a new baby had on the life she had planned, and she found his care, as an energetic three year old, exhausting.’

Both the trial judge and a majority of the High Court judges recognise that the fiction of the birth of a child inevitably



constituting a blessing should not be imposed on this reality—a reality of family life which is not uncommon whether a child is planned or not.

In support of the argument that no damages should be recoverable for the cost of the child’s upbringing, Justice Heydon was the only judge to argue that the publicity associated with the litigation and the discovery by Jordan in later years that his birth was unwanted would result in emotional distress to the child. In my experience this has been the most common reaction to the case in casual conversation. However, the other judges claim convincingly that this is entirely speculative: it is the manner in which the parents explain themselves to Jordan and how they express their love for the child after his birth that will affect whether the child is hurt by the knowledge of the

litigation. Indeed there is no reason to assume that had the Melchiors not been able to seek damages, the circumstances of Jordan’s conception and birth would never have been mentioned to him. In everyday life—and outside the context of failed sterilisation operations—each of us has encountered perfectly well-adjusted adults who are aware that while their birth may have been unwanted or unplanned,

they have experienced a happy and loving family life. As Justice Callinan wryly commented, ‘There are many harsher truths which children have to confront in growing up than the knowledge that they were not, at the moment of their conception, wanted’. (p78)

Three of the majority judges found that the damage suffered was not the creation of the parent-child relationship or the birth of the child per se, but the economic burden that must be borne by the parents as a consequence of the parental obligations that arose on the child’s birth. (per Kirby J p38, McHugh & Gummow JJ, p20) This distinction is crucial to an understanding of the majority judgments. The emphasis is not on the birth of the child as an injury or harm, but on the financial consequences of that birth. The majority judgments acknowledge that while

Jordan's birth may not have been wanted, once born he was accepted and loved by his family. 'In the real world, cases of this kind are about who must bear the economic costs of the upkeep of the child. Money, not love or the preservation of the family unit, is what is in issue.' (per Kirby J, p38)

The majority judgments dismiss the notion that it is too difficult to calculate the costs of a child's upbringing—noting that for years courts have been called on to place values on incalculable items such



as pain and suffering (for example, the assessment of Mrs Melchior's pain and suffering in pregnancy and childbirth), loss of reputation and personal injuries such as the loss of a limb. The calculation of the financial costs of raising a child is commonplace in family law and child support proceedings and for insurance purposes.

The majority also draws a crucial distinction between the emotional benefits flowing to the parents from the birth of a child and the economic burden of raising a child. In finding that these two aspects are incommensurable and that the costs of raising a child should not be discounted by an amount representing the joys and rewards of parenthood, the judges employ the analogy of the coalminer who, 'forced to retire because of injury, does not get less damages for loss of earning capacity because he is now free to sit in the sun each day reading his favourite newspaper'. (per McHugh & Gummow JJ, p25)

The majority judgment in *Cattanach v. Melchior* does not represent an assault on the sanctity of human life. Instead it marks a careful consideration of legal and ethical issues in a novel area of negligence law, eschewing the arbitrary appli-

cation of emotive assertions in relation to 'blessings', 'key values in family life' and 'litigious time bombs'. (per Kirby J, p39) Indeed the floodgates argument—that allowing the Melchior's claim will foster a raft of similar applications relating to failed sterilisation procedures—though prominent in the minority judgment of Justice Heydon, is not in itself a bar to recovery of damages. As the majority judges point out, it is up to the legislature to act in relation to concerns about the potential number and magnitude of claims.

Though criticised for its 'legalism', the majority judgment rejects the attractive simplicity of the broad value statements so readily identifiable in the government and media responses to the decision. By doing so, the High Court judgment avoids imposing the fiction of some ideal model of the family upon the complexity and the very real messiness of family life. ■

Virginia Bourke is a lawyer. As part of a Master of Arts in English Literature at Monash University she studied constructions of the family which emerge from Australian and US family law judgments concerning surrogacy arrangements.

Thank you very much to those who responded to the Reader Survey in last month's issue. Your comments will assist us in further developing *Eureka Street*.

The recipients of *How Simone de Beauvoir died in Australia* by Sylvia Lawson, courtesy of UNSW Press, are:

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We've been thrilled by the response from readers. Thanks also to our advertisers, for their support of the magazine and in helping reduce the cost to readers. Your comments about *Eureka Street* are still welcome. Please go to the website (www.eurekastreet.com.au) where you can complete the survey on line.

Congratulations!

Our warm congratulations to the winners in this year's Jesuit Publications Raffle. And thanks to all who supported the raffle—let's hope it's your turn next year!

The winners are:

First prize: Bishop Peter Connors, Ballarat, Vic. Bishop Connors is a subscriber to all three magazines from Jesuit Publications. Second prize: Jo Wickens, a *Madonna* subscriber from Castle Hill, NSW. Third prize: Mr & Mrs Miskin, Innisfail, Qld—Mr Miskin's mum is a *Madonna* subscriber, and he is pleased he bought one of her tickets! Fourth prize: Mrs Fay Parkinson, Launceston, Tas. She and her husband are subscribers to *Eureka Street*. Fifth prize: Dr D & M Frawley, Nowra, NSW—long-time *Eureka Street* subscribers.

Artistic freedom

Artists respond to Australia's treatment of asylum seekers

IN THE HEAT of the arguments that have continued since episodes such as the *Tampa* crisis of 2001, terms like 'queue jumpers' have been used so often we are in danger of thinking the labels are true.

In Victoria, Port Philip Council recently hosted a series of art installations, 'Six weeks of asylum, Six weeks of compassion', as a means of highlighting the situation of refugees, promoting community awareness, and conveying a message of support to those in detention centres around Australia.

Artists Bronwyn Weingott, Jessica Salehian and Tamsin Salehian have created a series of installations around Port Philip Bay. Extending along the

Elwood foreshore, a line of figures stand among the shrubs leading up from the water. These are the 'queue jumpers'—figures clad in woollen jumpers, nameless and faceless, some alone, some coming ashore as family. The abstract, and at times disturbing work reflects Australia's treatment of asylum seekers and the much-needed values of compassion and understanding. Such works speak of our moral obligation to assist refugees, reminding us that asylum seekers are people, not a label. ■

Sarah Dickson-Hoyle is a Year 10 student at MLC who compiled this text and photo-essay while on work experience with *Eureka Street*.



Muslims & Christians ... where do we stand?

Dan Madigan, Abdullah Saeed and Frank Brennan examine religious conflict in Australia as part of the Jesuit Seminar Series

Religion and politics: The (not so) great divide

THE COVER OF Abdullah Saeed's recent book *Islam in Australia* carries the photo of a very determined young woman running with a football tucked under her arm. Nothing new there: we've got beyond thinking only males can play rugby. What is surprising about the scene, though, are the veils she and her pursuers are wearing. She's challenging a stereotype. The photo reminds us that even a book entitled *Islam in Australia* is not so much about a system of religious thought and practice but about people, about Muslims. When we ask ourselves where we stand, we must first insist on speaking about Muslims and Christians—as people, as believers—rather than about Islam and Christianity, which after all are abstractions.

Much of the fear regarding Islam so evident in the West—and expertly exploited for political advantage in the US and Australia—comes from the sense that we are confronted with a faceless and monolithic system that is of its nature inimical to

us. We have not yet outgrown visions of the world much like the multi-coloured maps of our school days in which the Commonwealth was illustrated in pink. That one colour disguised an extraordinary diversity. A very few of the people who lived in those pink countries were pink-skinned; the others were of every shade of skin colour imaginable. Some lived

under dictatorships, some in republics, others under monarchies. Most lived in grinding poverty, some in middle-class comfort, a few in opulence. We were bound together by cricket, royal visits and tea.

Many of today's politicians and commentators—Christians, Muslims and others—offer us a view of the world in the primary colours of kindergarten blocks. They are great big blocks, easy to grasp and hard to lose. They seem to make everything understandable, yet they actually obscure the complex truth of the matter, offering only a view of the world suitable for ages 3–7.

No-one could realistically deny that some Muslims are threatening the world's peace in the name of what they consider to be Islam. However, even as we acknowledge this, questions remain. How widespread is this violent movement, for example? The authoritative historian of Islam, Bernard Lewis, is surely stating the obvious when he points out that

to the religion of Islam the origin of their violence? Or is religion used to justify a path of violence provoked and chosen for other reasons? The answers to these questions require careful study of particular individuals and situations. The simple generalisations offered by commentators, even if they contain an element of truth, are always unhelpful in the end.

We misunderstand Islam because we act as if all Muslims are the same, as if the title Muslim itself will give us clear ideas about how a particular person will think and act. When the word Muslim comes to be associated with names and faces, friendships and relationships, then it has a very different feel. It becomes impossible to generalise because we know too many different people who claim that title and each is unique. We also have to ask ourselves to what extent the label is relevant. For example, is the behaviour of Lebanese gangs in Sydney due to the fact that they are principally Muslim? Or is it in spite of the fact that they are Muslim? It certainly appears that they have grown up in a culture of bitterness, arrogance and disrespect for the other, but is that to be interpreted as the true expression of Islam, or its failure? We can ask similar questions about the Serbian Orthodox in Bosnia, the Catholics among the Rwandan Hutus. Do their actions arise because they are Christian or in spite of the fact that they are Christian?

Much of the fear regarding Islam so evident in the West comes from the sense that we are confronted with a faceless and monolithic system that is of its nature inimical to us.

Where do we stand with regard to one another historically?

One aspect of the Qur'an and so of the faith of Muslims is a critique of what are seen as the exaggerations and errors of Christian faith.

most Muslims are not fundamentalists and most fundamentalists are not terrorists. We need to ask whether those people who are trying to terrorise us are doing so because they are Muslims or for motives that have more to do with such elements as economics, ethnicity, tribal rivalries, nationalism or post-colonial politics. That is to say, to what extent is their adherence

The idea of the 'clash of civilisations', enunciated ten years ago by Samuel P. Huntington, has become a commonplace of conventional wisdom. Yet most people have only a notion of the theory and know nothing of the caveats and qualifications that his article carried. The people of different civilisations, Huntington tells us, have different views on the relations between God and humanity, individual and group, citizen and state, parents and children, husband and wife. They also have differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy. That seems clear enough, but it glosses over the fact of the substantial differences among people within the same 'civilisation'. One is left questioning how many Muslims actually belong to the Islamic civilisation of Huntington's nightmare of ceaseless conflict. If the puritanical and fanatical Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan's warlords and Taliban belong to it, then how can an urbane and thoughtful university professor like Abdullah Saeed be said to belong? Huntington's broad strokes and primary colours can be very misleading.

The message most people seem to have drawn from Huntington's theory is that throughout our shared 1400-year history Muslims and Christians have faced each other as two armed camps and are destined to do so indefinitely. The way some tell it, we stopped our centuries-old battle only to take on communism. Now that communism is no longer a threat, it's back to the mutual bloodletting.

If one considers the history of warfare as a whole, the conflicts between Muslims and Christians pale into insignificance against the much bloodier conflicts waged between groups professing the same religion.

The history of the Muslim community has been marred since the beginning by internecine wars which continue to the present day—east and west Pakistan, Iran and Iraq, Iraq and Kuwait, in Algeria, in Pakistan, in Afghanistan, in Somalia, in Indonesia—to name only the most striking examples.

Virtually all the European wars have been fought between rival groups of Christians. And if we think we have left that bitter history behind, let us not forget the 800,000 Christians murdered by their fellow Christians in Rwanda, or the Christian Serbs and Croats who fought

one another as well as Muslims in the former Yugoslavia.

Where do we stand with regard to one another politically?

The overwhelming majority of Muslims live in developing countries. Some of the poorest people on earth are Muslims, as are some of the most obscenely wealthy. We could say the same of Christians. However, what defines our political relationship is that the West, which presides over and hugely benefits from the world's unjust economic structures, is seen as Christian, or as Christian and Jewish. While that is not an accurate description of the world's power structures, there are plenty of grounds on which an observer could be forgiven for making such an identification. It is not good enough for Christians to wash their hands of responsibility on the basis that because of a division between church and state, the economic and political spheres are completely autonomous.

Much of the political anger that Muslims direct against the West (and, by albeit mistaken association, against Christians) is shared by others who live in the developing world. Among Muslims this anger joins with a nostalgia for past glories and an abiding sense that Islam itself is under attack politically, economically and culturally by the West. Given the depth of the political tensions that exist between large numbers of Muslims and the dominant political powers of the West, it should be clear that, irrespective of the religious rhetoric employed, the resolution of such tensions lies in addressing the economic and political injustices that give rise to conflict.

Religion and politics

It is commonly held that Muslims cannot, or at least do not, distinguish religion from politics, and that the greatness of the West is due to the fact that we have enshrined this division in all modern systems of government. Neither of these assertions stands up to scrutiny.

In the Muslim community there has certainly been a commitment to giving faith a political expression in the way society is shaped and governed. At the same time there has been a rather

pragmatic approach to leadership. While it is true that the Prophet Muhammad united in himself both political and religious authority, the practice of Sunni Islam since the time of his death has been to choose or recognise leaders, not on the basis of their piety, but of their qualifications for leadership. What counted was seniority, tribal and clan affiliation, military prowess, the ability to hold the community together and help it expand, to command the loyalty of the Muslim forces, and to do justice in society. In many cases succession became dynastic. However, the longevity of the dynasty depended not on religious propriety, but political and military acuity.

The present reality of politics in Muslim-majority countries suggests no further reason for believing that political and religious power are inseparable. Some of the rulers are dictators; others are the scions of a ruling dynasty. Some have been elected to their positions or have arrived there through military power. Only in the very particular case of Shi'ite Iran is religious expertise connected with political authority, yet even there one finds political pluralism, elections, opposition and protest.

Christians need to ask whether what we believe in is the separation of religion from politics or rather the separation of church from state? We have learned the hard way that positions of political authority are no place for the clergy. However, we must question the value of any faith that has no bearing on our politics, that is on how we organise our life together. What use is a religion that has nothing to offer on the subject of justice, rights and responsibilities? What does it profit us to have a religion with no realisable vision of human community?

Where do we stand with regard to one another theologically?

Christians and Muslims share elements of faith but there exists substantial differences that are not simply reducible by negotiations and adjustment. Though Muslims often find it hard to believe, and we certainly find it hard to explain, Christians are indeed believers in only one God. The belief in the Trinity, so strongly condemned by Muslims, is not a watering-down of monotheism, but rather

its radicalisation—the refusal to explain any experience of the divine as deriving from any reality but the one God. The title ‘Allah’ was used by Christians before Islam was preached and continues to be the word used for God by Christians who speak Arabic and other languages that draw from it. It is not the proper name of some God special to Muslims—it is simply the title ‘God’ in Arabic.

Islam does not present itself as a new religion, but rather as the re-establishment of the original religion that has existed from the beginning of which Judaism and Christianity are examples—even if Islam holds that they have needed to be purified of certain extraneous elements.

The most important common belief we share is that the Word of God—the eternal divine word that is of the very nature of God—has been spoken in our world. For the Muslim, God has spoken His word in Arabic in the Qur’an—and indeed in other earlier scriptures. For Christians, God’s word is spoken not primarily in words but in the flesh—in ‘body language’ as it were. The words of scripture are not simply the words of God, but words written by believers to put us in touch with the capital-w Word that they had experienced in the flesh. For Christians, Scripture is not revelation itself. It is the witness to revelation.

Although Muslims see Jesus and the Gospel as being parallel to Muhammad and the Qur’an, Christians do not see things this way. What Jesus is for the Christian, the Qur’an (not Muhammad) is for Muslims. What Muhammad is for Muslims (the human channel through which the Word of God entered the world), Mary is for Christians. Of course, that Mary role does not exhaust the reality of who Muhammad is for Muslims. He is also a Moses figure as the leader of the community and its lawgiver.

IN THE END, though, how much does it matter and how important are these theological differences in the present conflict? It seems unlikely that we will resolve them and even less likely that such a theological resolution would bring an end to existing conflicts. The very term ‘inter-religious dialogue’ can draw our attention away from the much more urgent questions that confront us. We stand together on the same planet confronted by intractable problems of poverty, hunger, disease, injustice and environmental degradation. Can we really afford to be divided over issues of belief or to spend our energies only on theology?

So where do we stand? More importantly, where will we stand? Will we

let our leaders enclose us in two armed fortresses, allowing fear and hatred to dominate our politics and public policy? Will we be satisfied with letting vague religious labels dictate our view of the world and society?

The title of the seminar also contains an individual challenge to every Christian and every Muslim. Each of us is confronted with the question, ‘Where do I stand?’ Will I remain on the sidelines, waiting for the worst to happen, or will I play my part, however small and ordinary, in the improvement of relations between Christians and Muslims? Am I prepared to move beyond stereotypes and see the real person with whom I am confronted? What am I prepared to do in order to put real names and faces to the terms Muslim and Christian? Am I prepared to encounter the other, prepared to learn, to respect, prepared to live and work together for the good of all humanity?

We stand together or we stand condemned. ■

Fr Dan Madigan SJ is founding director of the Department for the Study of Religions at the Gregorian University in Rome, where he is also a lecturer in Islamic studies, and is a former publisher of *Eureka Street*.

Religious and human freedoms

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 changed the life of Muslims in the West, including Australia. Muslims in Australia today, their beliefs, values, practices and institutions, are under the microscope. There is a fear among many Muslims in Australia that is difficult to explain. In turn, Muslims are feared by many non-Muslim Australians, many of them Christians.

Muslims in Australia: a monolithic entity?

Substantial diversity exists among Muslims, in the same way that it exists among

Christians. Muslims around the world, 1300 million of them, agree on just a few things such as belief in one God, the prophethood of Muhammad and life after death, and some basic practices such as five daily prayers, fasting, charity and pilgrimage. They also agree on some basic ethical-moral values, which they share with Christians. But they disagree on a vast array of things, from religious tolerance to gender equality, human rights and systems of governance.

Muslims in Australia number around 300,000, or 1.5 per cent of the population; 36 per cent of them were born here.

Australian Muslims do not even form a single community; there are Sunnis and Shi’as, and different traditions and schools within those broad religious groupings. There are also ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences. Not all Muslims in Australia were migrants; some are second- or third-generation Australians. There are converts to Islam from Anglo and other backgrounds. Some Muslims are conservative in religious matters while others are liberal. Some are observant, others are not. Demographically, Muslims represent a cross-section of Australia incorporating political and socio-economic differences.

More than 75 per cent of Muslims in Australia are Australian citizens.

Christians and Muslims have much in common

There is a generally held view among many that Muslims and Christians have been in continual conflict since the beginning of Islam in the early 7th century, and are notable for their differences rather than the characteristics they share. While I recognise there are plenty of negatives in the Muslim-Christian relationship over the past 1400 years, in this presentation, I will not make any apologies for emphasising the positives.

It is worth remembering that Muslims and Christians share a common religious heritage. A significant part of the Qur'an, the Holy Scripture of Muslims, is devoted to Jesus Christ. One of the chapters of the

Describing the way many Christians received the Prophet, the Qur'an (5:82) says (addressing Muhammad):

'... And you [Muhammad] will find the closest in love to the faithful [the Muslims] are the people who say "we are followers of Christ", because there are priests and monks among them, and they are not arrogant.'

Sadly, this positive atmosphere changed in the post-prophetic period. This was largely due to the military conflict between Muslims and Christians, which saw much of the near-east and north Africa, which was formerly Christian, now come under Muslim rule and political control. Despite this conflict, however, very many Christian communities continued to exist under Muslim rule in places like the Middle East and North Africa. Muslims and Christians lived as neighbours, friends, business partners and colleagues. Many of

Much of the fear regarding Islam so evident in the West comes from the sense that we are confronted with a faceless and monolithic system that is of its nature inimical to us.

Qur'an is named after Mary, probably the only woman mentioned by name in the Qur'an, referring to her as an example to humankind. The Qur'an recounts the virgin birth, that Jesus Christ is not like any other human being, that he was a 'word' sent to Mary, that he was 'raised' to heaven, and that he performed many miracles. What the Qur'an does not believe is that Jesus Christ is son of God, or God.

Prophet Muhammad (d.632) had a wonderful relationship with many Christians. When the Prophet Muhammad experienced his first revelation in 610CE, one of the first people with whom he discussed the matter was a Christian, a cousin of Muhammad's wife. Also, it was a Christian ruler—the king of the kingdom of Abyssinia—who gave asylum to the first Muslim community when they fled Mecca where they had been persecuted for their beliefs. The king gave them complete freedom to practise their new religion under his protection. It was thus under Christian protection that the earliest Muslims managed to practise their religion in freedom.

these Christian communities still exist today. Of course, the situation of Christian minorities in Muslim majority countries has varied greatly.

Emphasising the commonalities between Christians and Muslims, a Jewish historian, Bernard Lewis, says:

During the centuries of confrontation and conflict, Muslims and Christians alike were more conscious of their differences than of their similarities. Yet these similarities are very great, for the two religions and the two cultures had much in common: both shared the inheritance of the ancient civilisations of the Middle East; both had adopted the Jewish religious tradition of ethical monotheism, prophetic mission, and revelation preserved in Scripture; both were disciples of Greek thought and science ... However much Christians and Muslims may have argued with one another, the very fact that they were able to do so, using a common logic and common concepts, shows the degree of kinship that existed between them.

In the 20th century, we are seeing an increasing emphasis on promoting the commonalities between Muslims and Christians. Theologians on both sides are attempting to focus on the need to move forward and improve relations between Muslims and Christians. Significant advances have been made through studying the past, inter-faith dialogue, and emphasising commonality rather than difference. This shift in thinking is evident in these remarks by Pope John Paul II:

'The Church has a high regard for them [Muslims], convinced that their faith in the transcendent God contributes to building a new human family based on the highest aspirations of the human heart.'

We can concentrate on what we share and allow the differences to remain. Islam and Christianity are different religious traditions. They do not have to be identical. But with so much common ground between them, Muslims and Christians can talk to each other, and work together on issues such as social justice and human rights both in Australia and elsewhere.

The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, spoke in 2002 on the indivisibility between love of God and love of neighbour:

'For Christians as for Muslims there is no higher commandment than to love God. But Jesus reminds us that this fundamental orientation towards God cannot be separated from our relationship to our neighbour. The commandments to love God and neighbour belong together. If we think that we can love God while we ignore, despise or hate our neighbour, we are deceived and our religion is empty.'

In Australia, Muslims and Christians are literally neighbours. Common to both traditions is that the love of God should be extended to our neighbour.

Christian-Muslim relations, Muslims and violence

Despite the positive developments of the 20th century in Muslim-Christian relations, there are now major challenges to extending love to the Muslim neighbour in Australia. In the post-September 11 period, this difficulty arises because of the link so often made between Muslims, terrorism and violence. For many in Australia, the threat of terrorism from

Muslim Australians is now perceived as real; an unease fed by images in the media and political agendas. Equally, Muslims in Australia are worried that they are being unfairly labelled and targeted.

It seems that in order to establish good neighbourly relations, we need firstly to understand each other. We have no choice in this regard. We share the same neighbourhoods. Our children share the same schools. We share workplaces and, more importantly, we share the future of this country. Without understanding, we will continue to move towards the irrational, in the form of mistrust, stereotyping and suspicion.

No-one would deny that Muslim militants, extremists and fanatics exist in a number of countries, that many of them have an anti-Western agenda, or that they support the idea of the clash of Islam with the predominantly Christian West. We have seen that some militants are ready to eliminate those whom they regard as their enemies, be they Muslim or Christian. What we also know is that the number of Muslim militants is relatively small, and that the vast majority of Muslims in the world are not fanatics, hate-mongers, violent extremists, or suicide bombers. History also tells us that acts of terrorism and religious violence are neither new, nor the exclusive preserve of Muslims.

Given what we know, why are terrorism and Muslims still so closely connected in our minds?

There are many reasons for this. Let me mention briefly some:

Terrorist activity and Muslims are linked every day in the media, from suicide bombings to attacks on American or Western interests. Historically, the images in our minds of Islam (and consequently Muslims) are those of a violent and fanatical religion. With the end of the Cold War, Muslim militants were an easy target in assuming the role of international bogey-man. Locally, fear has been fuelled by some politicians' allusions to Islam and Muslims as posing a threat to our society; that Muslims are anti-Australian or anti-Christian.

Demonisation of a community is insidious; it develops slowly, perhaps unconsciously, as we saw with the Jewish communities of Europe prior to the Second World War. We should be careful not to compare Germany in the 1930s with Australia today; there is no

comparison. But history can teach us much. What I would like to emphasise is that demonisation of a religious community, particularly a highly visible one, can gradually take hold of an entire community, leading to a climate of hate, fear and irrationality. In fact, one in eight Australians interviewed for a comprehensive survey on racist attitudes admitted that they were prejudiced, particularly towards their fellow Muslim Australians. This is a serious concern for Muslims, many of whom are escapees from persecution elsewhere, who themselves are law-abiding citizens and residents of this country.

It is time for the so-called terrorist threat, particularly the Muslim terrorist threat in Australia, to be put into context.

Terrorism, for most Australians, is still something that happens elsewhere. I am not suggesting we should ignore this threat but to keep it in perspective. Terrorism is a problem that can be dealt with by law enforcement agencies without the hype and alarmist propaganda so commonly found in our media today. The suppression of terrorism can be achieved without creating unnecessary fear within the broader Australian community, or targeting the Australian

One wonders why the so-called threat of Muslim terrorism is given such wide currency in Australia.

Muslims in Australia hope that the Muslim militants, wherever they exist, will be prevented from carrying out their destructive activities. It is distressing for Muslims (who comprise 20 per cent of the world population) to be unfairly associated with terrorism because of a tiny number of extremists and militants.

THE PRESENT EXPERIENCE of Muslims can damage our long-term prospects as an Australian community. The Australia of the late 1980s and early 1990s is not the same Australia in 2003. Many Muslims are worried about the influence of the rhetoric underlying the so-called 'war on terror' and the legislative and regulative environment into which we are moving. Many also feel that in Australia today, being visibly Muslim is a problem. The religious freedom of which Australia is so proud seems to be contracting in the case of Muslims. If this trend continues, it will be disastrous for the Muslim community in Australia.

We can work together to dispel the myths and stereotypes that give rise to

Much of the fear regarding Islam so evident in the West comes from the sense that we are confronted with a faceless and monolithic system that is of its nature inimical to us.

Muslim community. The fact is there has been no single case of conviction in Australia to date of a Muslim terrorist or terrorist network.

Since 1978, Australia has not experienced any terrorist activity on its soil, let alone Muslim terrorist activity. And while 88 Australians were killed in Bali in 2002, even here, the number of victims of terrorism pales beside the numbers of victims of violent crime within Australia. Consider the numbers of people each year who are murdered, commit suicide or are killed on our roads or the victims of theft, burglary, armed robbery, assault or sexual assault.

what is at best discomfort, and at worst fear. Let me conclude with a Qur'anic verse that emphasises our shared humanity: 'O humankind! We have created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and have made you nations and tribes, that ye may know one another. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you (Qur'an 49:13).' ■

Professor Abdullah Saeed is Associate Professor and Head of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Melbourne and author of *Islam in Australia* (2003), published by Allen & Unwin.

Encountering the other

PROFESSOR SAEED and Fr Madigan make religious dialogue look easy. You would almost wonder what is the problem. Each of them is a gentle, refined, respectful scholar. If only all Muslims and all Christians were like this, all would be well. We would all have a healthy respect for each other's religious differences and co-operate for the well-being of each other and the rest of the human community. To almost every proposition they propose, I can hear assent followed by the murmur, 'Yes, but ...'. But for the activities of Osama Bin Laden, we would not have been hosting a seminar series on Christian-Muslim dialogue under the rubric of justice. But for Australia's participation in the coalition of the willing, it is unlikely that the seminars would have attracted such crowds across the nation. Despite the common ground between the professor and the priest, there is a problem and we have to ask: what is the point of inter-religious dialogue?

We have always known that there is a problem for Christian minorities in many societies where the majority is Muslim. Since 11 September 2001, we have had to admit that there is also a problem for Muslim minorities in countries such as Australia where the majority is Christian. These minorities suffer discrimination. They evoke fear in the majority and they have grounds for being fearful of the majority. They have suffered demonisation by government and are hard-pressed to enjoy equal protection of the state's laws and policies. If in doubt about the treatment of the Muslim minority in Australia, consider the remarks of our alternative prime minister, Peter Costello, having learnt that he would not be prime minister after John Howard's 64th birthday. He spoke on tolerance. Sounding more like an Iranian ayatollah, he then conceded that 'tolerance' is a verbal block-buster and shared with the voting

public one of the responses he received: 'Please note that if your personal policy is to pander to and show leniency to illegal Muslim immigrants who are queue jumpers and sworn enemies of all Christians, my family and I most certainly will not vote Liberal.' Mr Costello needed to establish his credentials to lead the nation, securely and fearfully.

What is the point of our dialogue? No doubt such gatherings provide the opportunity for Christians and Muslims to meet, putting a human face on the other, breaking down the barriers between 'us' and 'them'. The fear of the other is very deep-seated in the Australian psyche, in part because of our geographic isolation. It is also part of our history.

Walking through Sydney Airport, Walid, one of the Palestinian asylum seekers whom I had known in Woomera, greeted me. At first I did not recognise him. He had been granted a temporary protection visa (TPV). He was wearing new clothes and his bearing was confident and graceful. In Woomera, in the desert dust, detainees do not have or wear good clothes. They are often downcast and despairing. I then met Geoff Clark, Chairman of ATSIC, and asked if he would have time to meet Walid. He greeted him with the words, 'You and I have the same minister.' Philip Ruddock is Minister for Immigration and Minister for Indigenous Affairs. At that moment, I realised that he was minister for everyone who is 'other' in contemporary Australia. Clark explained to Walid, 'I have told our minister "I don't mind you making tough laws for boat people *provided* you make them retrospective." ' Then pointing at me, he said, 'This is the trouble in this country. This mob, they're all boat people. But now they think they can run the show.' The identification of the other as 'one of us' or 'one of them' affects social relations markedly when a fear-filled community is concerned with security.

Those from different religious traditions, and none, might even find that they share deep convictions about ethics, as well as being able to identify the other as 'one of us'. The theologian Hans Küng has dedicated his energies in recent years to proposing a global ethic. He distils one and the same norm, the golden rule of all religions: 'Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you.' In Christianity, it is expressed: 'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you' (Mt 7.12, Lk 6.31). In Islam, it is expressed, 'No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself' (40 Hadith (sayings of Muhammad) of an-Nawawi 13). It is an elementary principle of humanity that 'every human being should be treated humanely, not in an inhuman, bestial way'. Küng derives four directives from this principle and he finds that all major religions offer guidance on the implementation of these directives:

'Have respect for life. Do not kill. Deal honestly and fairly. Do not steal. Speak and act truthfully. Do not lie. Respect and love one another. Do not abuse sexuality.'

When launching a multimedia presentation on this global ethic at the IMF Headquarters in Washington just after the first anniversary of September 11, Küng said, 'A global ethic truly does not mean a new global ideology, a new single world culture, even an attempt at a uniform unitary religion. It would be ridiculous to want to replace the Torah, the Sermon on the Mount or the Qur'an by a global ethic. A global ethic is not a substitute for religion, nor is it a simple ethicising of religion; it is not a substitute for a specific religious or philosophical ethic.' We still need to live our own religious tradition. But in making sense of our lives and actions to others of other religious traditions, the golden rule and

these directives can be useful tools. Many Australian Christians are revolted by the thought that Shari'a law would permit the amputation of the hand of a thief, but they do not think twice in joining the chorus advocating the death penalty for the Bali bombers. Many American Christians are as adamant about the state's right to inflict death on a murderer as are Pakistani Muslims calling for amputation of the thief's hand. Can our dialogue help us to better respect life?

Many Muslims are affronted by the sexually explicit advertising of the West. They see pornography on the internet as an unwelcome pollution of their religious world. Many Christian women are affronted by the way some Muslim men treat their women. Many Christians in the West think the wearing of the hijab evidence of the oppression of women. Together we can learn better how to 'Respect and love one another. Do not abuse sexuality.'

Dialogue of this sort may help us bridge the gap between us and them, deepening our appreciation of the global ethic we espouse. But in a society like Australia, many of our fellow citizens become daily more convinced that the world would be a better place without any religion. Though religion cannot be divorced from politics, economics and nationalism when we are seeking the causes of war and conflict, it is often perceived to be a contributing factor to these conflicts and rarely an alleviating one. Secular humanists conveniently overlook the religious motivation of many people who are committed peacemakers and peacekeepers. Christians easily espouse that God's self-communication is Jesus, one who is fully human. The secular humanist can happily join common cause with the religious person espousing full humanity for all, bypassing the need for any discussion of divine self-communication.

Christians and Muslims should be able to share their commitment to human rights for all persons. But this is where I encounter some distinctive problems with Islam. What place is there for tolerance, individual conscience and protection of the human rights of the minority? Professor Saeed may preach a message of religious tolerance and human rights for all. But he is a religious scholar in a religious tradition where there is no religious authority able to give a definitive reading on his religion's approach to tolerance

and human rights. Some modern Islamic societies propose a notion of a theocratic state far more restrictive and prescriptive than the Catholic tradition would have permitted before John Courtney Murray influenced the Second Vatican Council to espouse religious freedom and to accord more scope to the formed and informed conscience of the individual. Even if there be a bevy of Courtney Murrays in the Islamic tradition, there is no religious authority then to give a binding interpretation to the Saudi Arabian Muslims who would prefer to ban Christians wearing even an ornamental cross around their necks, while they are free to build a huge mosque in Rome. There will continue to be Islamic states that punish apostasy even if their Constitutions give formal

It is time for the so-called terrorist threat to be put into context

acknowledgment to freedom of religion.

Though Christian minorities will continue to suffer grievously in some Islamic societies, that is no excuse for us to discriminate against the Muslim minority here in Australia. Our contemporary treatment of asylum seekers including the demonisation of them by radio shock jocks and politicians has been possible because the majority of the boat people were swarthy Muslims rather than white Christians.

DURING OUR ADELAIDE SEMINAR, Mrs Roqia Bakhtiyari was moved to an Adelaide hospital, seven months pregnant. She and her friends sought regular visits by at least one close woman friend during her confinement in hospital. Initially declining the request, immigration department officials said that the presence of an ACM woman officer would be sufficient. Mr Ruddock continues to insist that the detention of such persons is not punitive and it is not a deterrent. He insists that administrative detention, without a judicial warrant or authorisation, is not designed or intended to be punitive or a deterrent, though it may have that consequential effect.

The design and intent of the detention policy is for a number of purposes that the

minister says are justified, namely, health, security, identity, ease of processing, and availability for removal upon failure to establish refugee status. None of these purposes is met by denying a woman in labour access to the friends who usually travel a considerable distance to visit her in detention when she is healthy. So what is the purpose of denying her visitor rights, provided the hospital and her doctor have no objection to the visits and provided the visits are sufficiently restricted in number so as not to cause any security problem for the ACM guards?

Given the media attention given to Mrs Bakhtiyari, the government had a legitimate concern to avoid a media circus about her confinement in an Adelaide hospital. But a blanket ban on any women friends visiting her would be disproportionate and evidence of another undisclosed purpose. It is a flagrant breach of the golden rule, possible in a democracy only because the majority identify one of her race, religion and migration status as so 'other' that her basic humanity is to be denied. Religious persons open to inter-religious dialogue should have a heightened sensitivity to this sort of inhumanity and adverse discrimination.

A final benefit of inter-religious dialogue is that the Christian ought become a better Christian by meeting the one who is other and Muslim, more accurately and comprehensively discerning the action of the Spirit in the world. And dare I speculate that the Muslim could become a better Muslim by meeting those of us who are Christian when we put on our best face. At this time when Muslims live in fear in our midst, we have the opportunity to open the dialogue with Muslims of good will, creating a social space where the Muslim and the Christian can turn to each other, face to face. Like the 29-year-old Iranian twins Ladan and Laleh Bijani who died during surgery to separate them, we may find that the dream costs us dearly. And there is no guarantee of success. But the stand-off cannot continue. It not only gives us a bad name. It also gives God a bad name, whatever name for God we might invoke, and whether we find God expressed in the Word made flesh or in the Qur'an. ■

Fr Frank Brennan SJ is Associate Director of *Uniya*. His latest book *Tampering with Asylum* (UQP 2003) will be published next month.

The king of children

JANUSZ KORCZAK was a paediatrician, writer and educator who wrote in Polish, died anonymously in 1942 along with millions of others whose bones are not even graced by a grave, and whose life and example deserve to be far better known. Had it not been for Korczak the UN would not have produced the only UN human rights treaty to be signed by every world government, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Janusz Korczak was not his real name. He was born in Warsaw in 1879 as Henryk Goldszmit, the privileged son of an assimilated Jewish doctor. His life changed dramatically after his father became mentally ill, was institutionalised and died seven years later when the boy was only 18. Henryk helped support his family while he studied medicine through tutoring and by writing. He adopted his nom de plume, Janusz Korczak, when he won a significant literary prize when he was 20 years old.

Korczak graduated in medicine in 1904, and worked with slum families and street children as well as in Warsaw's fashionable society. He decided to specialise in paediatrics and worked in the Warsaw Children's Hospital for a time. Twice—in 1905 and 1914—he was drafted into the Russian army and served as a doctor, witnessing the atrocities that all war visits on all children. After the Russo-Japanese war Korczak studied child psychology in Berlin, Paris and London, and he then returned to his native Poland to run the Company of Children's Camps in Poland for destitute Warsaw children.

Korczak began to teach medical students from a deeply humanist perspective, which was somewhat at odds with the heroic, scientific experimentalism of the time. He continued to practise medicine, often charging no fee. In 1912 he decided that this was not satisfying enough, writing that '[a] spoon full of castor oil is no cure for poverty and parentlessness'.

Korczak then became the director of a new Jewish orphanage, and he spent the rest of his life working in and for the orphanage with no salary, and living in its attic.

Korczak also continued to write and lecture about children and became greatly admired and loved throughout Poland and in other parts of Europe. His most important work, *How to Love a Child*, is a profound yet practical book about nurturing children that he wrote while he was serving during the First World War.

Korczak's most productive years were between the First and Second World Wars. His Jewish orphanage was an oasis of happiness for the children who lived in it, and in 1922 he was able to set up another orphanage, this one for Catholic (i.e. non-Jewish) children. He wrote two particularly popular novels. *King Matt the First* was the story of a little prince who inherits the crown of a utopian kingdom and fights the world's injustices (especially those inflicted by adults on children). It ends with the children governing and adults going back to school. *If I Were Small Again* is the story of an adult man turned back into a child. Both were widely read and translated. In 1926 Korczak also founded *The Little Review*, a newspaper produced and edited by children until the German invasion.

Poland became far more anti-Semitic during the 1930s and Korczak's weekly radio broadcasts and newspaper columns suffered as a result. His nom de plume and the title 'the old doctor' were used to ensure that nobody would realise he was Jewish but even so, anti-Semitism eventually led to the termination of his broadcasts. When the same bigotry made it politically impossible for a Jew to be responsible for the orphanage he had established for non-Jewish children, he continued to work with the Jewish orphans.

Korczak taught that it is necessary for adults to respect the child, to learn from

children and to teach children by example that they can trust and rely on adults for respect, love and care.

A child's life, he wrote, has an importance of its own: it is not a preparation for 'real' life later. Children must be appreciated for what they are now, not what they will become. Adults must respect and understand children's way of thinking, not observe them from an adult perspective.

Korczak showcased his theories on child psychology and education in his orphanages. Surviving children report that he gave them love, respect and healing, and there were thousands of unwanted children who benefited, as part of a consistent and comprehensive code of ethics and values that was meant to serve them throughout their lives.

Most extraordinarily, his orphanages were democratic, managed in accordance with laws that the children made and voted for, and subject to the jurisdiction of a court of regularly-elected child judges that could determine complaints and grievances by and against both adults and children, including Korczak, the director, himself. This, he taught, was what would really teach children respect for the law and individual rights. It was not always as easy for his employees to share their authority with children as it was for this much-loved man.

IN 1940 OCCUPYING Nazis forced Korczak to relocate his orphanage to the Warsaw ghetto. Starvation and disease were rife. He worked tirelessly, begging for food and medicines for his children every day. The situation worsened. He took over responsibility for the Ghetto's Orphans' Refuge and cared for the dying children, though he could not do any more than try to comfort them.

Though he was repeatedly given the opportunity to escape by his admirers and supporters, including Germans and non-Jewish people with influence and

real power, Korczak refused, saying that it was 'unthinkable to leave children at such a time'. He was urged to allow such children as still had families or relatives to flee from the ghetto, but he did not encourage this, because he believed that they would be afraid and alone. It seems incredible, not just in hindsight but given the obvious evidence that the plans to deport or kill them were developing, but Korczak seems simply to have had too great a belief in the fundamental decency of people. Once, when he was asked how to respond to inhumanity, Korczak said that 'one must act even more humanely'.

During the whole of his life Korczak continued to write. He developed his own version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Presciently it included 'the right to a premature death'. He also kept a diary which was concealed, preserved and published after the war, and which became second in popularity only to Anne Frank's.

On 6 August 1942 Korczak and his orphanage staff led a procession of 200 children to the cattle trucks destined for Treblinka, all holding a favourite toy and singing, walking behind the orphanage flag—green and white blossoms on one side, Star of David on the other.

None returned.

He wrote: 'Children are not the people of tomorrow, but people today. They are entitled to be taken seriously. They have a right to be treated by adults with tenderness and respect, as equals. They should be allowed to grow into whoever they were meant to be—the unknown person inside each of them is the hope for the future.'

After the end of the War the Polish government moved the United Nations to proclaim and dedicate the International Year of the Child to the example of Janusz Korczak, and to implement his lifelong championship of a children's charter. ■

Further reading:

A Voice for the Child: the Inspirational Words of Janusz Korczak, S. Joseph (ed.). Thorsons (Harper Collins), 1999.

The King of Children: The Life and Death of Janusz Korczak, B.J. Lifton. St Martin's Griffin, 1988.

Moira Rayner established the Office of Children's Rights Commissioner for London in 2000. She was the keynote speaker at the recent Child Law Conference 2003.

The **rage** within

MOMENTS OF transformation are difficult to capture in words, but the effects of such experiences can be life-changing. Tony McNamara had one such epiphany in a Rome hotel.

McNamara describes himself as both a playwright and a director, a luxury in an industry full of wannabes who'd be grateful for a crack at just one of those job descriptions. His first major film, *The Rage in Placid Lake*, an amusing yet vicious take on the upside-down life of Placid, the son of self-indulged baby-boomers, is due for release on 22 August. It is the film version of his successful play *The Café Latte Kid*, the first of four plays that have performed to full houses, good reviews and public acclaim. McNamara has a fifth on the boil but reserves the writer's right not to discuss it, since it's still in formation.

The Café Latte Kid debuted with the Sydney Theatre Company's New Stages, was nominated for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards and won the Phillips Parsons Award for Young Playwrights, all in 1995. McNamara believes it was a success because it took a new and angry position on baby-boomers. By calling his lead character Placid (he is anything but), McNamara satirises all the parents who've ever called a child River, Tiger or Summer. Placid's baby-boomer parents consider that no matter how self-obsessed they are, if they are happy their child will be too. The play charts them blithely following this philosophy, rationalising all the evidence to the contrary, as Placid hurtles towards self-destruction.

McNamara is a gentle man of 37 with an endearingly easy manner. He hasn't

shed his Melbourne identity, despite exposure to the faster pace of Sydney and its more impatient social interactions. He is gracious when I fumble the film's name.

'It's not Lake Placid, it's Placid Lake. Lake is his surname,' he reminds me. And the rage is *in* not *on*.

He's had a blessed career (not his word) and recognises his good fortune: 'I'm in the position where people go to see my plays in tens of thousands. They want to watch my plays, I write for TV, I write for film—I make a living out of something I love.'

All said without a touch of arrogance or neurotic posturing. Nor any suggestion of fear that it could all crash down, a thought he

claims has never occurred to him.

Not for a minute during the making of *Placid*, as McNamara affectionately calls it, did he fear failure or even see its shadow. Not even in film-making's hot-house moments: the extraordinary cast, the temperaments, the dramatic tension, script incongruities, the payroll, the catering, the heat, the lack of oxygen.

McNamara is quick to acknowledge that his producer Marian MacGowan ensured he had a straightforward ride. 'She never allowed anything to unravel,' he says.

'*Placid* explores a middle-class Australia we don't capture very well in theatre and film. It wasn't an obvious comedy and that told against us for a while. But those who liked it loved it and there were enough who loved it.'

Even though the response to the script was initially slow, MacGowan eventually found backers. The film will be launched in Melbourne and then at the Edinburgh



Film Festival before being released to selected cinemas in Sydney.

McNamara cast Ben Lee as Placid, Miranda Richardson as Sylvia Lake and Garry McDonald as Doug Lake. They were his first choices and all said yes as soon as they read the script—an indication of McNamara's capacity as a writer.

The involvement of Lee, a singer, has been well-publicised. Some articles during filming were sceptical about the casting of a singer rather than a professional actor, but McNamara is pleased with the performance.

He says he was fascinated by what each actor brought to the script. 'No-one simply replicated the script, they all brought a little more to it.'

As McNamara talks it becomes clear that there is more to his success than the right producer and good actors. He has *belief*. Belief that the film will work, that wherever it lands will be the right place, that he will go on undented and undaunted, a playwright-director.

But it's not as though the future was always assured.

McNamara claims he was lousy at all the subjects and activities that usually give emerging talent the audacity to lay claim to a writing career. At school his marks in English were unremarkable. Apart from one inspirational teacher, a Marist brother, McNamara says there was nothing distinctive about his education at Assumption College, Kilmore, in country Victoria. 'I'm trying to think of the positives. But at this point I can't see what they are.'

He explained that it was the drive to get out of Kilmore that propelled him forward, a conviction that there had to be something better beyond. Kilmore and Assumption were small-town experiences he was happy to leave behind.

McNamara's experiences working in London for a merchant bank at age 22 confirmed for him that chasing money for money's sake is one of the most inane things a person can do. 'I wasn't paid a lot. But I was in the industry long enough to see that the dissatisfaction and sense of futility are really, really high. It seems to me that the money you get paid is really a bribe to get you to stay in the industry.'

For counterbalance he hung around theatres seeing plays. At the time it was a good distraction but at a subconscious level he was no doubt sifting, sorting and storing,

separating good technique from bad.

After eight months he took off and went to Rome. Alone in a country where he didn't speak the language, McNamara withdrew into the cocoon of a hotel room, and over the next few days a conviction took shape that he was really a writer. Not the writing itself, mind, just the conviction. McNamara *believed* he was a writer.

'The logic of who I was until that point didn't really bear out my conviction. But I just knew. I had a powerful belief, against all the facts. I had to believe in this intuition, since all rational logic told me otherwise.'

AFTER ROME, he managed to scrape into a one-year writing course at RMIT (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology), presenting an early work in gestation as his only credential.

Still lousy at writing prose and after writing some spectacularly awful poetry, McNamara managed to hang on until a semester on playwriting was offered. While others floundered in this highly specialised craft, McNamara found a natural, relaxed voice. 'It was the first time I felt comfortable. It simply seemed easier to write, I found myself enjoying the writing.'

Yet McNamara failed the RMIT course and there followed plenty of bleak moments waiting on tables and collecting debts to survive.

With his future wife he went overseas for a while, then on returning he spat out *The Café Latte Kid*. Michael Gow read the script and agreed to workshop it at a national playwrights' conference, and the play went on to win its awards. McNamara's dream now a reality, he attended the Australian Film, Television and Radio School from 1995 to 1997 and as one of their best graduates won the opportunity to write for Southern Star, the company that produces the television program *The Secret Life of Us*. McNamara has now written about six episodes and this work gives him the luxury of pursuing his other writing. He enjoys the opportunity to sharpen his comedic skills on one of television's hippest programs.

'It's fun to write a quality show, not a cop show, something that's a bit evocative. I like its irreverent morality, the way it explores the grey, grey area of how some people live, of topics such as gay and lesbian sex.'

McNamara added to his repertoire of plays when *The John Wayne Principle* was produced by the STC's New Stages in 1996. It has since toured Australia and gone to London. *The Resurrection of Grudge Grahame* (1998), *The Recruit* (2000) and *The Virgin Mim* (2002) have also played to full houses. In addition, McNamara has directed short films *Kick to Kick* and *Seduction 101* and has won an Australian Film Industry award for best screenplay for the short film *The Beat Manifesto*.

I return to his experience in Rome and try, far too earnestly, to work out what really happened in that room. McNamara hesitates then simply restates that it was the moment that he first knew he was a writer. If there was a break down, angels' wings, God's voice, booze, a woman or gangja involved, he isn't saying. It's an unadorned story and McNamara refuses to romanticise or elaborate, but even if he doesn't see it in religious terms it's a remarkable story of transformation. ■

Margaret Rice is a freelance journalist.

Stephanie Dowrick

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Family ties

Commonwealth cousins Australia and Canada
are headed toward distinctly different futures

WITH RESPECT to Armistead Maupin's *Tales of the City*, my three tales of 21st-century Toronto demonstrate how distant Canada and Australia have recently grown from one another.

June 2003—on a warm early summer's day, sitting in a taxi in Toronto, I strike up a conversation with a Somalian taxi-driver. He's a refugee and he's fascinated by global politics. We discuss Australia and Canada and the conversation turns to political parties. I make the point that John Howard is the leader of the Liberal Party in Australia. He turns his head sharply and snaps, 'John Howard's no liberal. Now Jean Chrétien [the Canadian PM], he's a liberal.'

September 2, 2002—at the 175-year-old University of Toronto. One of the contending heirs to the Canadian prime ministerial mantle (soon to be vacated by Chrétien), former Finance Minister Paul Martin, stands before an audience telling them that Canada is poised to become the world's first 'postmodern nation'.

What he meant was that as a diverse, independent and enriched nation, Canada understands the need to govern ourselves

on this planet as 'one humanity'. That globalisation means that we have to 'come together to try to figure out how in fact in an age of migration of peoples, the migration of disease, the migration of environmental problems, we as a world begin to govern ourselves.' (*The Globe and Mail*, 3 September 2002)

June 11, 2003—splashed across the front page of Canada's national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, is a gay couple kissing in the first official gay marriage ceremony in North America. That day the Ontario Court of Appeal had ruled that gay marriages are legal. Only a week later Canada's Attorney-General, Maurice Cauchon, says he's proud to be a Canadian as the Canadian federal government decides that it will not appeal the Ontario decision.

Just as Maupin's *Tales* encapsulated the essence of San Francisco as the most progressive and liberal culture in the US from the late 1960s onwards, so do these three vignettes capture the spirit that is modern Canada.

And they drive home another point. If Canada and Australia were once frequently

compared—because of the political and social heritage and diversity they shared—these days, most of the once positive comparisons have ended. Canada is indeed becoming the world's first 'postmodern' nation as Paul Martin said it would, and in doing so makes Australia look a fawningly colonial, closed-minded and embittered country that resents being geographically situated in Asia.

The similarities between Australia and Canada have become less visible, in part because neither country's media reports much on the other. But both countries are federations built on the Westminster tradition with the British common law legal systems. There are many opportunities to reflect on the way Canada and Australia respond to societal and cultural trends. Both our nations have had to deal with the consequences of massive postwar migration. For example, Toronto and Sydney are today in the top five cities in the world in terms of the range of languages spoken by their residents.

And both nations are dealing with the legacy of the appalling treatment given to the original owners of the land—

particularly through the growth of native title law and government policy to deal with the fact that in both Canada and Australia, the health and education standards of indigenous peoples are well below that of the white population.

Canada's and Australia's foreign policy constructs have, at least up until the election of the Howard government in Australia, contained a dual commitment to support multilateral processes of decision-making and global security.

Australia originally based its universal health care system on the Canadian model and both societies have now claimed it as a core social principle. Human rights jurisprudence and legislation grew at the same time in both countries, empowered by progressive modernising political leaders such as Pierre Trudeau and Gough Whitlam.

The public sponsorship of Canada's contemporary creative arts has propelled them into the international market place. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and the government's art-buying agency, were models that the Whitlam and Fraser governments drew on to enhance the nascent creative talent in Australia that was waiting for a wider audience.

Indeed, when the Howard government came to office in 1996 Canada and Australia had similar policy outlooks on

self-confidence and compassion that had been unthinkable when it was at 'home'.

Australia recognised the importance of integrating with Asia. It finally said 'no' to the US Vietnam folly and helped to build the Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC) trade and diplomatic grouping. It began to remove the vestiges of the colonial past by abolishing appeals to the Privy Council and beginning a debate on a republic. It led the international condemnation of apartheid in South Africa, hammered out a deal that saw independence for Zimbabwe and began to support the micro-states of the Pacific by standing up to French nuclear testing.

And while all this was happening offshore, Australians also decided that human rights needed protection. Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser ensured that we signed up to the UN agenda and implemented our own human rights regime. Whitlam, Fraser and Paul Keating pursued the cause of Indigenous land justice through Land Rights legislation and then through the implementation of the High Court's 1992 *Mabo* decision.

Suddenly, Australian creative arts were becoming visible in Paris, London and New York. From John Gorton's establishing the Australian Film Commission to Paul Keating's gargantuan 'Creative Nation' funding, the political

of Rights and Freedoms that has given Canada pride of place in international human rights circles. Canadian foreign policy was driven by the principle that its role was to act as mediator and peace-keeper and to ameliorate the excesses of its southern neighbour, the US.

Somehow it was assumed that having left home, Australia and Canada would develop in the same direction. But Australia has regressed considerably. In a realignment of foreign policy Australia has lined up with the US on a controversial war in Iraq, supported the US's military court for prisoners held on suspicion of being terrorists, and abandoned its leadership role in APEC. This Australia has snubbed its nose at the United Nations' role in world security and as a human rights watchdog.

On the domestic front, the Australian federal government has begun dismantling the authority of the Human Rights Commission with a vengeance—by forcing it to gain the government's permission if it wants to intervene in legal cases. Australia also presides over the developed world's only mandatory detention of—refugees policy. Cultural institutions like the ABC have been shamelessly stacked with hidebound conservatives like writer Christopher Pearson, former Liberal Party officials Tony Staley and



a number of issues. However, in the intervening seven years, the two countries have diverged in extraordinarily unexpected ways. An image that springs to mind is of the progress of two teenagers who have left home. Canada and Australia walked out the door of the conservative, Anglo/American political and historical 'house'. Australia left home in 1972 under Gough Whitlam. And its journey into the uncharted waters of international adulthood gave it a sense of independence and

process understood how crucial it was to Australia's identity to be read, heard and viewed by the world.

Meanwhile the Canadians—who'd 'left home' in the early 1960s when Prime Minister Lester Pearson, a decent and progressive internationalist liberal, warned Lyndon Johnson that Vietnam was unsustainable morally and politically—were emerging from their own Anglo and conservative Catholic French stupor. Pierre Trudeau championed the Charter

Michael Kroger, and even a critic of Indigenous policies, Ron Brunton. In the area of welfare the primary driver is to 'shame' the recipients of welfare through a policy of 'mutual obligation'. Harsh penalties have been introduced for minor breaches like—missing an appointment with—Centrelink, and the 'Work for the Dole' project is simply a public works scheme that does nothing for participants preparing for a sophisticated technologically driven world. Mr Howard has not

acknowledged the spiritual and emotional suffering of Indigenous Australians by formally apologising to them. The issue of the 'Stolen Generation' was also dealt with insensitively when its findings were challenged in the courts.

By contrast, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien tells the world media that he doesn't need to attend a Texan barbecue to assert Canada's robust relationship with the US. Canada refused to join the Bush Administration's 'coalition of the willing' in Iraq, preferring to send troops to Afghanistan to help rebuild that shattered country, when the rest of the world seems to be neglecting it.

Last year, Chrétien announced his intention to quit politics in February 2004. He was determined to implement his own 'legacy agenda', which includes:

- A new plan and funding to reform the country's health care system.
- A new ten-year investment in cities and transportation infrastructure.
- A long-term investment plan to help poor families escape welfare, including new money for early childhood programs.
- Protecting the environment, including ratifying the Kyoto protocol and creating ten new national parks and five new marine conservation areas.



- Improving the lives of aboriginals, including help for kids and combating alcoholism.

- Doubling foreign aid by the year 2010, with half of that going to Africa. (Nahlah Ayed, 'Grits lay out lofty social agenda', CNEWS, 30 September 2002)

Canada is no longer a teenager, it's an adult, and it has no intention of 'going home'. It wants the rest of the world to

see it as a leader in improving the lot of its people. Canada's actions on the domestic and international fronts are consistent with those objectives.

If one is inclined to the view that the differences between two post-colonial nations of similar size and heritage are exaggerated and can be explained by the political leadership each has had in the



last ten years, then think again. Post-John Howard Australia is faced with leadership by Peter Costello, Tony Abbott or even Brendan Nelson. Labor presents Simon Crean, Kevin Rudd or Mark Latham. None of these individuals seems remotely interested in radically repositioning Australia. Their political road maps are stamped with the word 'caution'. There's no Australian 'Paul Martin' arguing the case for 'postmodern' leadership and no excitement at the possibility of setting off on new innovative social adventures domestically and internationally. There's no interest in pursuing a Bill of Rights for Australia, and little interest in the issue of an Australian republic. Whereas Canada's prime ministerial rivals Martin and Manley promise to do so.

And does it matter that the two nations have diverged so markedly? The Somalian taxi-driver thinks it does: 'Australia used to be a paradise, but now I think Canada is. It has welcomed me and my family but Australia seems so hostile.'

Greg Barns is a Hobart-based writer and lawyer. He is a former senior adviser to the Howard government and now a member of the Australian Democrats. Greg's book *What's wrong with the Liberal Party?* will be published by Cambridge University Press in October.



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Political overdrive

Bob Carr: The Reluctant Leader, Marilyn Dodkin.
UNSW Press, 2003. ISBN 0 86840 757 7, RRP \$29.95.

THE LABOR PARTY is rapidly becoming a Pepsys show. The candid insights in Don Watson's bestselling account of the Keating government draws on the journals he kept while employed as a prime ministerial ghostwriter. He now has a New South Wales doppelgänger in Marilyn Dodkin. Her annals of the Bob Carr era are based on the premier's diaries augmented with comments, sometimes rather too glowing, from Carr's staff and party colleagues.

The result is a tale of two cities. Writing in the shadow of the March 1996 federal election debacle, Watson sees things through a glass darkly. His is a glum Canberra tale of decline and fall. Dodkin, in contrast, has a sunny Sydney ending, tracing Bob Carr's ascent from bookish nerd to 'the people's premier'.

Watson's theme is the ruination of Keating's Big Picture brand of government. Voters in the provinces saw this as remote and patronising. Dodkin's Carr is rooted in the barbarous realm of state politics which, as Carr readily admits in his diary, is banal in comparison with Keating's bold vistas.

Carr is an accidental premier. His first inclination was for federal politics, with ideally a stint as Foreign Minister before taking up a life of 'elegant curiosity' in Europe. He was transported to Macquarie Street because his right-wing faction felt unable to allocate him a safe federal seat. After his Labor state government lost office in 1988 Carr became leader because Laurie Brereton was blacklisted. This meant that when a longed for federal seat finally became vacant in 1990 Brereton, and not Carr, was free to take it up.

As a tyro state Opposition Leader Carr stoically embraced the treadmill of endless fundraising functions and visits to shopping centres. A journalist by trade, he was well equipped for the crucial task of hustling for media coverage. He had a

wide range of conduits to the print and electronic media, including a private fax line to John Laws. These were used to the full as he tirelessly worked up local issues and publicised stunts in parliament and leaks from the bureaucracy.

The sense of hubris that permeates Watson's account is singularly absent in the Dodkin book. There is no pride here. Carr seems to be driven by an excessive need to overcome self-perceived physical and cultural deficiencies. A ruthless regimen of physical exercise is matched by an equally earnest commitment to German lessons and reading Proust (although Carr's willingness to skip vast chunks of Proustian introspection would seem to defeat the purpose of the exercise).

KEATING'S FAILURE to connect with voters was fatal for his long-term prospects. Carr has avoided this mistake. He came within striking distance of power in 1991 by tapping into a creeping suspicion that the brashly reforming Greiner Liberal government was out of touch. He won in 1995 by sticking to a focus on basic services and marginal seats.

In office Carr is committed to a 'sensible management of public sector services'. This allows him to differentiate himself from a Kennett-style slash and burn approach to downsizing and privatisation. A measured reduction in the public sector is enough to generate opposition among ALP rank and filers but this only serves to make his government seem all the more responsible in the eyes of the wider electorate.

There has been no let-up in Carr's constant campaigning. Detailed policy work can be left to advisers and staffers freeing up the leader's time for the odd well publicised populist intervention. The investment in cultivating the media and publicity paid off handsomely

in 2003 when Labor was supported by an advertising blitz and endorsed, for the first time ever, by the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

A big political occasion, whether an election day or party conference, used to rob Carr of a night's sleep. This seems to happen less now although Carr remains an unlikely politician. A late diary entry indicates a sickness at the prospect of 'flawed human beings projecting their demands for the state to legislate miracles'. Such a person would never have become a state premier if this were a matter of choice rather than chance.

The diary extracts used by Dodkin indicate that Carr will never rival the racy candour of a Pepsys but they are lively reading nonetheless. There is a naughty reference to Michael Knight's planting a slanted story in the media in the days before the future Olympics tsar switched factions. A comment on Mark Latham's failure to win a preselection ballot because of poor grassroots work is also noteworthy. Carr's joy when recording the fate of Peter Anderson, a possible challenger who lost preselection in 1994, is unalloyed.

Montesquieu would approve of the current condition of Australia's political geography, with an array of provincial Labor governments balancing the Howard ascendancy in Canberra. There is no unhealthy concentration of power. Bob Carr pioneered this configuration.

Carr's success in New South Wales continues to bear an inverse relationship to Labor's electoral stock at the federal level. There is no telling what would happen if he tried to change streams. Dodkin concludes her account by canvassing the possibility of Carr's finally going to Canberra. Such advice, if followed, could well backfire on a man she so clearly admires. ■

Stephen Holt is the unofficial biographer of the famed journalist Alan Reid.

Myth-take no mistake

The Wee Free Men, Terry Pratchett. Doubleday, 2003. ISBN 0 38560 533 1, RRP \$39.95
Artemis Fowl: The Eternity Code, Eoin Colfer. Puffin, 2003. ISBN 0 67091 459 2, RRP \$19.95

SOMEONE ONCE WROTE, and I can't remember who, that the dead giveaway for most dud novels was when the author's name was significantly bigger than the title. Airport fiction abounds in suchlike: not the enjoyable light fare, but stodgy white-sliced-bread stuff like Danielle Steel's or Barbara Taylor Bradford's. Reassuringly, Eoin Colfer's name is dwarfed by the title on the cover of the third book of his series of novels set in a world of technologically advanced leprechauns and a juvenile criminal mastermind. But there are honourable exceptions: Terry Pratchett's name blazoned large on the cover of a book is a signal to his diverse fanbase that what is inside will be worth the money.

A more reliable guide to dudness is the publisher-created rather than author-created series. Children's literature is full of such products. Empty of wit, written to formula and vocabulary lists: *Goosebumps*, *The Babysitters' Club*, *Sweet Valley High* and others. All these are by multiple, almost-anonymous writers with a single narrow focus more connected to marketing targets than to imagination and delight. Much more connected to publishers' than to readers' demands.

Imagination and delight: who has them? We all want them when we read. The fact that J.K. Rowling had the first *Harry Potter* book rejected by 11 publishers might indicate that the people whose jobs it was to discern what people (young or old) actually want to read were caught napping—flagrantly, spectacularly.

When children (and most grown-ups) read, they want a story that is going to get them truly wondering and caring what happens next. They need a main character that they can love or hate (more usually love). They like to laugh a bit, even if the

humour serves only to break unbearable tension in a dark tale, like the Porter scene in *Macbeth*, while in comedy they need to see some sharpness and warmth, some dryness that hints at common sense. Colfer and Pratchett do this admirably. And children's novels' ethics need to be sound without being simplistic. Again, Pratchett and Colfer both have that gift of great storytellers, to place their characters in a world whose choices and problems are very like our own.

The Wee Free Men is not counted in Pratchett's adult *Discworld* series, but works within that universe. Like the previous novel, *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents*, it aims at a younger audience but succeeds as adult reading. The protagonist is a nine-year-old girl named Tiffany Aching. It is no *Babysitters' Club* tale, although she must find her baby brother who has been stolen by the fairies. She has decided that she wants to become a witch when she grows up. (Fundamentalists have long had Pratchett on their forbidden list for his witches and wizards, but they and their children are missing out on good ethics as well as good stories.) She is a tough and unsentimental child whose feelings run deep and whose sense of duty is tungsten-hard.

Despite the seriousness of the quest and the real threat to the little brother—all fairy stories must have real monsters to be convincing—the book is continually, blessedly funny. Pratchett is a word-magician; who else could have imagined Tiffany's small helpers as pietsies? Not pixies, mind—pietsies. These are six-inch-high *little men*, very much in the spirit of 'Up the airy mountain, down the rushy glen / We daren't go a-hunting for fear

of *little men*'. They are blue (much fun is poked at *Braveheart*), supernaturally strong (four can carry a sheep or even a cow, one at each leg), drunken, violent, superstitious and highly moral in a criminal sort of way. And inspiredly, their bard is known as a gonnagle: his appalling extempore doggerel is one of their most fearsome weapons against the effete and evil elves. Pratchett may well restart the cult of appreciation of William McGonagle that was so dear to Spike Milligan's heart.

Bad poetry is truly dangerous, Pratchett hints.

ARTEMIS FOWL is another strong young protagonist (14). Colfer's inspiration was to make a genius arch-criminal out of a rich, neglected child. The world is that of today, with hi-tech everywhere and sideways glances at real-world problems: no child reading Colfer will come away unaware of environmental damage and the workings of international crime. He adds leprechauns, but makes them almost scientifically possible. They are small, relatively immortal and are indeed magic, but are also centuries ahead of humans technologically. Here they are LepReCons, terminology that reassures somehow—there is no tooraloora in their culture. It would be best if readers began with the first book, *Artemis Fowl*, because the series is worth reading in full. Colfer is Irish, was a teacher and has a strong understanding of children. To read his books, as with Pratchett and indeed Rowling, is to be immersed in wise and amusing versions of the world we really live in, where myth tells us important things about what it is to be human. ■

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Grass roots

Local government meets Indigenous culture

HIDDEN ON A rugged stretch of coastline between Darwin and Broome, Wadeye is acknowledged as one of the most dysfunctional of the remote Aboriginal communities. Rather than languishing in the bad publicity the people of Wadeye (formerly Port Keats) have radically restructured their local government. In remote communities local government effectively dominates every facet of community life, from the delivery of services to housing and even food. The people of Wadeye refer to their new traditionally structured council as Thamarrurr.

Thamarrurr is unique in that it is designed according to Aboriginal cultural governance protocols. This means the decision-making process and leadership structure are appropriate for the community. This isn't the first time Aboriginal people have had control of the local government, but it is the first time the locals have decided how the council is to be structured.

The first step has been to acknowledge the complex clan system that dominates life in Wadeye. Wadeye is located in country traditionally owned by the Diminin clan. The centralisation of services in the town has led to the destabilisation of former local government structures, as decisions

of the Diminin mob have ultimately held sway. This has increased the influence of the Diminin mob, but also absolved other clans from assuming responsibility for problems that they regard as occurring in 'other people's country'.

Thamarrurr is an attempt to acknowledge such realities by ensuring equal representation on the Council between the clans and using community governance protocols that were already in place before the arrival of missionaries in the 1930s. According to Bill Ivory, the NT Government's Project Officer liaising with Thamarrurr Council, this decentralisation of power among the clans represents a major shift:

'For some of the outer clans, the only decisions they've been able to make for the last 40 or 50 years are where the next feed is coming from and other mostly internal matters.'

Gordon Chula is a leader of the Yedder Clan, one of the smallest and most marginalised of the 20 clans. He believes that, 'Thamarrurr will have ears big enough to hear everyone, the big people, and the little people.' Theodora Nandu, a senior woman of the Nangu Clan, also sees Thamarrurr as a chance for all the clans to

be counted—'people are now standing up and talking for themselves'.

As a collective voice Thamarrurr will have increased authority among the community, particularly in the town where the vast majority of problems are focused. As an illustration, the average number of people per house in Wadeye is 17.5, with some dilapidated three-room houses known to hold up to 34 family members. By improving service delivery to the satellite communities that surround Wadeye, residents will be able to spend more time there, easing the pressure on town services.

Cautiously optimistic, local clan leaders know there is a long and difficult road ahead. When questioned on the ability of Thamarrurr to handle the allocation of financial resources among the clans, one of the senior leaders in the community stood, excused himself, and left the room, rather than answer the question.

Gordon Chula has high hopes for Thamarrurr but when asked what this new model might offer his people he replied, 'we just have to wait and see, there's only been one step on that road'. ■

Lachlan Harris is the legal correspondent for the *Koori Mail Newspaper*.



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The empire's new clothes

The US is intent on securing its future as world leader

AS THE UNITED STATES cements its position as the arbiter of world affairs it has variously been described as the world's only superpower, the new empire, even the new Rome. The US has brought Bosnia, Serbia, Afghanistan and Iraq to heel in a succession of one-sided wars. The US administration has turned its back on multilateralism in favour of a doctrine of unilateral, pre-emptive retaliation. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, issued by the White House in September 2002, puts it succinctly: 'America will act against ... emerging threats before they are fully formed ... In the new world we have entered, the only path to peace and security is the path of action.'

US military expenditure is now greater than the total spent by the next 20 military powers combined. The cost of occupying Iraq—acknowledged by US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld as being nearly \$US1 billion a week—is, in annual terms, ten per cent of Australia's gross domestic product. There are more than 400,000 US troops stationed overseas, with bases in about 100 nations. The collapse of the Soviet Union together with victory in the Afghan war has allowed the Pentagon to put boots on the ground in a range of countries once out of reach: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The view from Beijing—let alone Pyongyang—is one of increasing encirclement: US troops in Japan and South Korea to the east, in the Philippines to the south, in the central Asian republics to the west.

The US is arguably the most powerful empire the world has yet known, yet in Iraq, the US may have won the war but is rapidly losing the peace. The slide from 'victory' to a situation characterised even by Donald Rumsfeld as one of war should not come as a surprise. Following its victory in Afghanistan in 2001, the US military installed Hamid

Karzai as president through a process of national consultation, as distinct from an election. But Karzai's writ extends only in the capital and immediate environs.

Mohammad Ashraf, an Afghani with Action Aid, says that while Afghanistan has been promised \$US4.8 billion in foreign funding for reconstruction it has received just \$US1.9 billion, of which 80 per cent goes directly to the United Nations and non-governmental agencies for their expenses. Meanwhile unexploded cluster bombs remain a threat and warlords are once again in control across the country. As author Nicholas Nugent notes, 'Despite being told ... that the US could "do two things at once", the Afghan government believes that the US in particular has lost interest in Afghanistan in favour of Iraq.'

The US may have taken its eye off the ball in Afghanistan, but the situation in Iraq cannot be regarded so lightly. This is a country of 24 million people, used, until 1991, to near-First World living standards, literate and nationalist. Iraq is at the heart of the Middle East and possesses the second largest reservoir of oil in the world. While most Iraqis are pleased to see the back of Saddam Hussein, they are making it increasingly clear that they

have no desire to be ruled by a foreign occupier. The US cannot afford to walk away from Iraq, but neither is it likely to 'normalise' it soon.

The common assertion is that this new US unilateralism is a consequence of the terror attacks on September 11, 2001. But in declaring war on 'terror', the Bush administration effected existing aims with the backing of popular consensus. For years, behind closed doors, the argument ran thus: to use the strength of the US military to establish strategic influence, the success of which would be measured in economic, diplomatic and geo-political terms. The so-called neo-conservatives declared their hand in June 1997 in a statement issued by the Project for the New American Century. Signatories included George W. Bush, his brother Jeb, and confidants Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz.

In part the statement read:

The history of the 20th century should have taught us that it is important to shape circumstances before crises emerge, and to meet threats before they become dire. The history of this century should have taught us to embrace the cause of American



leadership. Our aim is to remind Americans of these lessons and to draw their consequences for today.

Consequences of this position included significant increases in military spending so that the US could 'accept responsibility for America's unique role in preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles'.

The neo-conservatives emphasised two important points. First, that this was not a return to the presidency of the first George Bush, despite the continuity in senior White House personnel between the two Bush administrations. Bush senior was regarded as too conciliatory, too multilateralist—waiting until he had built a substantial coalition before invading Iraq in 1991 and ending the war with Saddam still in power. The call was for a return to the Ronald Reagan era, of folksy populism at home mixed with steely determination abroad.

Their second caveat about US foreign policy was that strategic considerations must take priority over 'the promise of short-term commercial benefits'. This, too, helps explain the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The US currently imports 53 per cent of its oil; that figure will rise to 65 per cent by 2020. Having control of Iraq's oil in concert with a continuing alliance with Saudi Arabia would put the US in an unassailable position and finally exorcise the ghost of the APEC cartel. If the US-Saudi alliance were to fail, Iraq's oil would provide a crucial buffer. But while access to resources and markets is the bread and butter of inter-state rivalry, it cannot be reduced to this alone. Britain did not fight Argentina in 1982 to retain the sheep riches of the Falklands; it did so to send a warning to potential rivals that British wealth was out-of-bounds to marauders in any part of the world. Likewise, the value of domination of the Solomons is of little value to Australia economically, but if sending troops means investments in Papua New Guinea or Indonesia are safe, or if it ensures safe passage of exports through the waters to our immediate north, then the exercise is justified.

The US, as the only true global power, considers its interests on a similar scale. Its rivals in Europe, Japan and, increasingly, China, need to be kept in line. This cannot be done by brute force. Instead, the medium-sized powers need to be made

to understand that they have to adapt to US needs. France and Germany were welcome to join the invasion of Iraq, under US control, but the US was powerful enough to go it alone if necessary. The US was not simply making a play for oil. It was alerting the world community to the priority it would like accorded to its interests abroad, whether in determining the outcome of the next round of World Trade Organisation discussions, burying the Kyoto climate change agreement or facilitating investment by US-based corporations overseas. As US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick stated, 'Countries that seek free-trade agreements with the United States must pass muster on more than trade and economic criteria in order to be eligible. At a minimum, these countries must cooperate with the United States on its foreign policy and national security goals.'

The neo-conservatives are acutely aware that while the US may be the world's military behemoth, the economic base on which such superiority rests is in decline, relative to US competitors. In the period immediately after World War II, the US was responsible for fully half of world economic output. Today that proportion is down to about a third, still huge, but not qualitatively greater than the European Union. The gap is likely to continue closing. According to the International Monetary Fund, in 2001 France, Germany and Italy all recorded a higher output per hour worked than the US. Furthermore, the Bush administration is taking an enormous gamble by running record government budget deficits—\$US455 billion this year, and expected to increase in 2004. The cost of the war and of tax cuts for the Republicans' wealthy voter base is part of the problem; the other is the flabbiness of the US economy since the dot com bust. The administration is, in effect, taking part in some good old-fashioned Keynesian pump-priming, but the bill is being picked up by overseas investors. If they cut and run, the US economy will dive.

The EU, either as a bloc or as separate nations, has not been able or willing to turn its extra euros into military material to match the US, which gives Washington the advantage. As the neo-conservatives suggest in the 1997 statement, 'We are living off the capital—both the military investments and the foreign policy achievements—built up by past administrations ... As a consequence, we are jeopardizing the

nation's ability to meet present threats and to deal with potentially greater challenges that lie ahead.'

What begins to emerge is a picture of the US as an imperial power, but a power that is not beyond challenge. France, Germany and Russia effectively held up the war in Iraq for months. China is rapidly emerging as a regional superpower, with the potential to operate on a global stage if its economic growth rates are maintained in coming decades. The White House cannot get 'allies' like India or Pakistan, let alone France, to commit troops to Iraq to ease the burden of its military commitment. India and Pakistan will not be persuaded to mothball their nuclear programs. The US could not get NATO ally Turkey to allow the passage of troops into

Iraq. Nor can it break the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by diktat.

WHILE THE TALK is of how the US is now prepared, post-Iraq, to throw its weight around on an even larger scale, Bush has tried to keep his distance on intervention in Liberia. Any deployment would be small and temporary, he says. It's not just that sub-Saharan Africa has little strategic importance, rather that even a super power can over-stretch its resources. Politically, the White House would be foolish to provide new troops for Liberia while leaving troops to sweat it out in Iraq, in the face of increasing opposition. Opinion polls in the US have shown a sharp turnaround in public support for the Iraq adventure, dropping from 74 to 53 per cent. George W. Bush might enjoy the exercise of power, but he does not want to go the way of his father.

Concern about the new unilateralism of the US is so widespread that some have raised the idea of creating an 'anti-empire front', an alliance of all or any prepared to stand up to the New American Century. In practice, the idea means relying on 'old Europe'—France, Germany, Russia—as a counterweight to US dominance.

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The difference between the US and its European rivals is ultimately one of scale, not of kind. To the extent that they can get away with it, countries like France behave like smaller versions of the US. The French government has sent troops before now to some of its former African colonies; it maintains a South Pacific colonial base; and it was happy to put its hand up to join Australia in the Solomons to underline this fact. Germany is constrained militarily by its past, but is still interested in creating a sphere of influence. Its unilateral recognition of Croatian independence helped catalyse the war that broke apart the old Yugoslavia. Russia, of course, is an imperial power of longstanding. Its two re-invasions of Chechnya have been exercises in textbook brutality.

Who then can we look to as a counterweight to the US empire? Step forward what *The New York Times* has termed the world's second superpower—the peace movement that blossomed late last year and early this year, putting the world's largest ever co-ordinated protest on the streets on the weekend of February 14–16. If the anti-war movement can successfully make common cause with those fighting to defend societies, jobs, the environment and services—all threatened by the US imperial, free market agenda—then we have the makings of a counter-power. This movement will be impressive in 'old Europe' but there is no reason to suggest it cannot grow elsewhere, even inside the US itself. The most comprehensive poll of public attitudes on foreign policy ever undertaken in the US and Europe, last September, showed more similarities than differences in world-views on either side of the Atlantic.

The US empire is strong, but far from impervious. As Filipino academic Walden Bello put it recently when speaking in Berlin, 'We have ... entered a historical maelstrom marked by prolonged economic crisis, the spread of global resistance, the reappearance of the balance of power among centre states, and the re-emergence of acute inter-imperialist contradictions. We must have a healthy respect for US power, but we must not over-estimate it. The signs are there that the US is seriously over-extended and what appear to be manifestations of strength might in fact signal weakness strategically.' Empires pass, and even the neo-cons know it. ■

David Glanz is a Melbourne-based writer.

Sacred ground

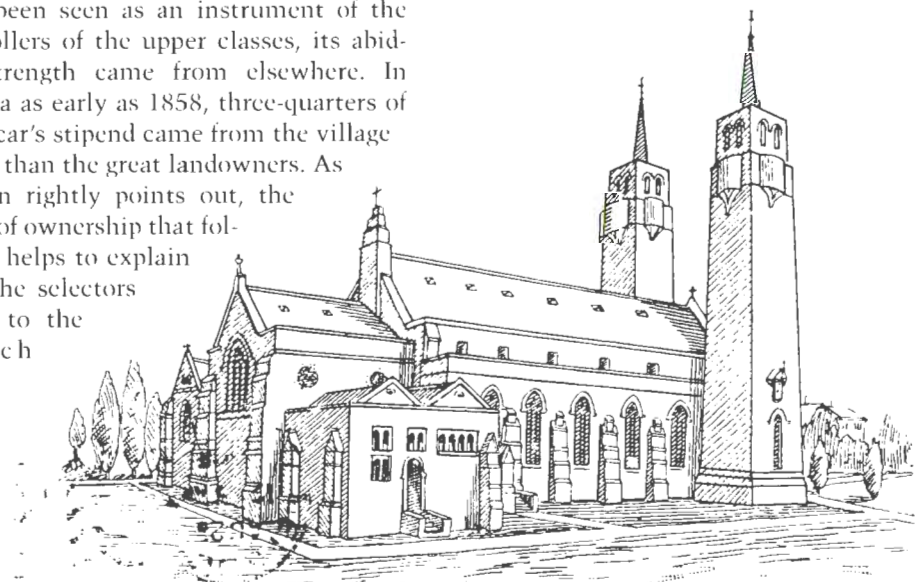
Church in a Landscape: A History of the Diocese of Wangaratta, Colin Holden. Circa, 2002.
ISBN 0 95809 380 6, RRP \$29.95

THIS HISTORY of the Anglican diocese of Wangaratta delivers a great deal more than it promises, since its author has a real affinity with the subject. Colin Holden went to north-eastern Victoria as an ordination candidate in 1974, a young man with a strong attachment to Anglo-Catholic liturgy as well as a strong sense of Australian identity. Wangaratta, with its well-known high church leanings in a rural setting, seemed to provide a synthesis. With some courage, though perhaps not altogether intentionally, Holden reveals the limits of that synthesis.

The book has been written from the respectful radicalism that often accompanies a high church position: one is put in mind of Anthony Trollope describing himself as 'an advanced conservative liberal'. Holden is at pains to demonstrate that although the Anglican church might have been seen as an instrument of the controllers of the upper classes, its abiding strength came from elsewhere. In Benalla as early as 1858, three-quarters of the vicar's stipend came from the village rather than the great landowners. As Holden rightly points out, the sense of ownership that followed helps to explain why the selectors stuck to the church

through their struggles with the squatters and the Kelly outbreak; for them it was not, as in England, the embodiment of deferentialism. Indeed the clergy found that they could not claim respect as a right, but had to win it through their personal qualities, including a capacity to handle farm work as well as anybody else.

But identification with parishioners could stem only for a time the nominalism which has always been the curse of the Church of England. The squattocracy took the pre-eminence of the Anglican church for granted, and indeed at the high noon of empire so did the whole community; but even in the 19th century only one in five of those who identified themselves C. of E. took communion regularly. When, years later, one of the 19th-century churches that went up so exuberantly was pulled down, it was found to have no foundations.



E. G. BRIGDEN. Proposed Anglican Cathedral at Wangaratta.

Nevertheless for most of the 20th century, following its establishment in 1902, Wangaratta flourished as an Anglican diocese. The clergy were now subject to closer episcopal supervision, while cathedral services set standards for the parishes to follow. Soon there was a local training centre for priests—perhaps less demanding academically than those in Melbourne, but which by recruiting locally saw its graduates become more integrated with the life of the region. If there was no grammar school, there was a boys' hostel, and an intermittent diocesan press. Finally, as the result of an extended building appeal, the cathedral was completed in 1965 and dedicated by the Archbishop of Canterbury himself.

But there were also considerable tensions. Although there was some identification with masonic lodges even among the high clergy—no doubt as an expression of community—there were also people like the Anglican divine who, parading around Myrtleford in a Roman soutane and a biretta, was asked by a visiting busload of Catholic tourists whether he could conduct mass for them. He obliged, and they left his church none the wiser. Such capers served to increase anxiety about chasubles and altar lights and any other hints of Romanisation. As time moved on, there could sometimes be a rift between clerical practice and the Protestant impulse of the congregation. 'Whatever happened to Morning Prayer?' they would chorus; the priest felt most engaged when serving the eucharist. And nearer to the present, as Holden points out, this exclusivist tendency could lead clergy to look for validation beyond this world, rather than in it.

IN THE COUNTRY, in particular, the challenges posed by the contemporary world have come at a faster rate than anybody could have anticipated. In 1951, an assiduous diarist could write of attend-



Left: Holy Trinity cathedral, Wangaratta, as envisaged by the architect, Walter Butler. The towers, criticised by those with more conservative tastes, were never built. Above: Sunday school picnic, Holy Trinity, Nathalia, 1971. The vitality of a Sunday school group in a community dominated by selectors and their descendants.

ing an 8am service at the cathedral and afterwards joining 140 men at breakfast. (He then went off to crutch sheep all day.) As late as the 1960s, more Anglican churches were being built than were closed. Moreover, Whitlamite programs of decentralisation and the tail end of the long boom sustained a sense of optimism in the diocese. In the early 1970s, there was still an Anglican program on the local radio station, and a successful mission to the young at the cathedral. But the incense blended into marijuana, and not enough notice was taken of the fact that the youth, as well as the men, were increasingly staying away. Symbolically, the ex-chorister who became a household name was Nick Cave.

Holden's interchapters on religion and the landscape set up a useful counterpoint in the book which, while detailed, is rarely bogged down in the minutiae of church matters. The new land becomes a dynamic which must be coped with, recognised, and then perhaps celebrated. He points out how slowly this came to be done. Indeed the founding Anglican bishop in Victoria deliberately excluded Aborigines from his brief, and even when the church supported missions to Aborigines in the 1930s, they were to the Northern Territory rather than to the local diocese. Similarly, the first churches replicated English Victorian gothic, occasionally vernacularised, but by 1928 the Euroa church was blending into the landscape with an

unusually squat tower. In 1957 a picture window behind the altar of the church at Toowong revealed Mount Bogong, as if it were being worshipped.

Implicit in this narration is a suggestion that the battle to retain strictly traditional forms, and to expect continued devotion to them, was—in the longest run—impossible to win. One reading of Anglican nominalism is that the lay retreat, amongst other things, was a cultural response to the new setting. For as Holden shows by his inclusion of extracts from Fanny

Barbour's diary, a strong sense of a mystical response to the land was, and perhaps still is, beyond the range of Anglicanism. The discussion of contemporary diocesan problems, such as the reluctance to share churches and non-eucharistic services, or to seriously entertain ideas of amalgamation with other dioceses, reveals how tradition-bound the core constituency remains. This is quite apart from any conservative response to the more general problems besetting the church, in connection with the ordination of women and (openly) gay priests.

While devout people no doubt remain in country districts, it also seems likely that the Anglican church for many acts as a buttress to their sense of heritage and identity. (Holden mentions one little church sustained by the attendance of one extended family.) The real problem is the eclipse of transcendence, and the contemporary collapse of most forms of spirituality. Perhaps in a country diocese one can see more clearly people clinging to temporalities as religion is gradually reduced to a metaphor. ■

Jim Davidson is Professor in History at Victoria University of Technology, Melbourne.

Church in a Landscape: A History of the Diocese of Wangaratta by Colin Holden is available from Circa Press, PO Box 176, Armadale, VIC 3143. Illustrations used with permission of publisher.

Smith's invisible hand

The theory may be sound, but the players are rarely fair

HUMANS OFTEN have difficulty grasping the concept of scale. There is that queasy feeling we get when we ponder the fact that as an individual we are just one of six billion people in the world, and this world is merely one planet orbiting one sun in a galaxy of billions of stars, in an infinite universe of galaxies.

Most of us get a similar feeling when we think of 'the world economy'. While mortgages, bills, annual income and the nightmare of tax returns preoccupy much of our economic thought, we trust that the broader economic framework is still out there and in operation. As long as Adam Smith's invisible hand of market competition delivers our electronic goods from north Asia, our luxuries from continental Europe, and exotic foods, spices and flavours from destinations we are not even aware of, then we are satisfied that all is well in the world economy.

It is the scale of the economy that is daunting. So many trillion dollars are exchanged via computer trading on the New York Stock Exchange. So many billions of dollars have been wiped off pension funds; all this trading has led to yet another blow-out in the current

the first time in decades, this is irrelevant if you are still one of the six per cent who are unemployed.

To make the world economy more comprehensible we reduce it to a catalogue of personalities, in the same way we tend to simplify history. Thus the world economy is made up of figures including Bill Gates, George Soros, Warren Buffet, Donald Trump and the Sultan of Brunei. Apart from the Sultan, they are all conspicuously North American, which leads us to the conclusion that this is where the money is, and surely where the sensible architects of the world economy are to be found.

As rich (and consequently as powerful as these figures are), the real players in the world economy are not individuals, but corporate entities. In the realm of trade in goods and services, corporations efficiently harness the talents of individual humans, separating management, control and investment decisions in the pursuit of profit across the globe. In the other main arena of the world economy, the financial markets, investment funds, hedge funds and other vehicles pursue the highest possible returns across world markets.

pursue elementary capitalist theories and lobby governments to reduce impositions upon their freedom to act profitably.

Trade in goods and services is the easiest starting point. Human societies have always traded, and there has been a correlation throughout history between the more successful and long-lasting civilisations and those that operate effective and efficient trading systems. Just as the military expansion of Rome was underpinned by a network of roads and trading routes across the Mediterranean—allowing access to the grains of Egypt, the horses of Arabia and the produce of Gaul and Spain—the dominance of the British in 19th-century Europe was founded on the mercantilist traditions of the navy and on the trade (and exploitation) of colonial resources. This demonstrates another point about capitalist tendencies in the world economy—the pursuit of profit often disregards the interests of others, who are not deemed partners in the system.

According to classical economic theory, trade should benefit all participants in the exchange. People should specialise in the production of goods in which they have a comparative advantage (that is, the

account deficit. As an individual, none of this is particularly relevant unless it affects you. Apart from a small stir of patriotism, if the Australian unemployment rate is lower than that of the US for

Because of the impersonal nature of these corporations and investment vehicles, and the billions of dollars at their disposal, such operations are often shrouded in a veil of mystery. Basically, however, they

alternative production that they forego in specialising is less than that of their trading partner) and trade to obtain goods that they cannot produce at comparative advantage. At an individual level this is



why a busy lawyer, even if she owns a lawnmower, may pay someone else to mow her lawn—for she can earn many times the amount charged to mow the grass in the time it would take her to mow. Division of labour is a primary example of trade.

However, nothing is static in economics and the world is not a simple, two-country trading scenario. Over time, comparative advantages change. This has seen the old industrialised nations of the West lose competitiveness in manufacturing, as skill levels and labour costs have increased. This has resulted in shifts in manufacturing dominance from the old world of Europe to the US, to Japan, to India and North Asia, and to the now more timid Asian 'tiger' economies. Such shifts are a reflection of the corporate world pursuing the lowest cost to produce a given product.

SINCE WWII, various international economic organisations have been created to manage the international economic framework. From Bretton Woods to the World Trade Organization (WTO), an underlying assumption of these institutions has been that by promoting economic interdependence, co-operation in the economic sphere can help to prevent the escalation of disputes into military conflict. At present the most influential institutions are the WTO in establishing trading rules and negotiating reductions in barriers to trade and other distortions, and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in overseeing financial markets.

Not everything goes to plan, however. In the washup from the Asian financial crisis, the World Bank- and IMF-prescribed policies and rescue packages have received substantial criticism, as a flashback to outdated Keynesian-style economics. The WTO has also been under fire for advancing the interests of the US and developed nations with agreements on intellectual property (TRIPS) while dragging its feet on agriculture, the issue of most importance to developing nations. While US farm subsidies and the European Union Common Agricultural Policy continue unimpeded, developing nations face retaliatory action over violations of the TRIPS policy for producing cheap generic pharmaceuticals. This has created significant tension and forced the issue of equality in the access to the benefits of the world economy.

The world economy is not a perfect or polished system. It is a system that has developed through the pressures of necessity and the demands of its users, rather than as a grand vision imposed from above. As most of these users have been corporations based in the developed world, and notably America, and as these groups have effectively lobbied their governments for support, it was in the interests of these nations that the international economic architecture was first designed. Other nations have chosen to participate because even with this bias, the benefits of participation in the institutional framework are still attractive.

As the student of economics is taught, economics is the study of equilibria, situations that clear the market, where demand meets supply. However, these points of equilibrium are never static. In the fluctuations of the world economy, the economic analysis describes not a final and unchanging system, but a constant and often reluctant accommodation to change.

Just as the pendulum had been swinging into an era of hands-free government and increasing corporate freedom, several high profile corporate insolvencies in America (ENRON, WorldCom) and our own local collapses (HIH, OneTel, Ansett) have created a political necessity for some government-imposed corporate governance. And in the WTO, the increasingly evident need to assuage developing nations' disenchantment with the West will encourage the dominant players, notably America, to adopt less wholeheartedly nationalistic negotiating platforms on basic trading rules.

No matter how risky or uncertain the world becomes, the money will still flow around the globe, as long as the returns are there. But don't worry too much. Just keep an eye on your super fund, watch out that interest rate rises don't catch you out on your mortgage, hope your company doesn't relocate overseas in search of cheaper inputs, and be confident that the invisible hand will guide foreign goods to your supermarket shelves and shopping centres.

Whether you like it or not, and despite what the governments of the world tell us, economically we are all world citizens. ■

David Ferris is a final year Commerce/Law student at Melbourne University.

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Our killing fields

Goodbye Buswamarai: The Mandandanji Land War, Southern Queensland 1842-1852, Patrick Collins. University of Queensland Press, 2002. ISBN 0 7022 3293 9, RRP \$34.00

BOOKS ON frontier conflict in Australia must now be written with an eye to the charges Keith Windschuttle has made about the deliberate 'fabrication', or at least exaggeration, of Aboriginal deaths. There is no harm in this: unusual care must be taken in an area of such politicised sensibilities. At the same time, the paucity of hard evidence creates serious problems for historians genuinely convinced by a combination of circumstantial evidence and tutored instinct that large-scale killings of Aborigines took place. Patrick Collins' book, is amongst other things a case study of these problems. It also tends to support the argument pursued by Henry Reynolds, Noel Loos and Raymond Evans that Queensland witnessed what was probably the most extensive and intensive racial violence in Australian history.

The dusty files of the Queensland Native Police that I happened upon in 1964 in search of an MA thesis topic, evoked the bitter frontier violence in central northern New South Wales and what is now central southern Queensland in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Behind the euphemistic formalise of 'insurgent blacks', 'serious depredations', 'collisions', 'dispersals' and 'punitive measures' was the story of how a squatter-dominated colonial government set up and supported a highly mobile and well-armed paramilitary force designed to 'pacify' the Indigenous peoples of the area and 'settle' it for permanent pastoral occupancy. Never mind the explicit instructions from the Secretary of State for Colonies, Earl Grey, that pastoral leaseholds were 'not intended to deprive the Natives of their former right to hunt over these districts, or to wander over them in search of subsistence'. The rush of squatters and their servants from the Liverpool Plains and the Darling Downs after 1847 quickly dispossessed and depopulated the Bigambul, Mandandanji and other Indigenous groups by sheer force of arms and with great bloodshed.

What was being played out in the late 1840s, was a last-ditch Colonial Office attempt to enforce the policy of safeguarding native interests introduced by Lord Glenelg ten years earlier to the dismay of the squatting fraternity. For them, the prospect of self-government meant an end to the 'canting hypocrisy' of Exeter Hall (the influential Evangelical humanitarian lobby in Britain) and colonial control over native policy as well as land. My response was to see how things had reached this sorry state, to explain why the last intervention before self-government was to deploy squads of Aboriginal troopers, led by European officers, in an officially sanctioned war against Indigenous land-holders on the pastoral frontier. Inevitably, I had to confront the earlier events at Myall Creek and other remote out-stations on the River Gwydir in the late 1830s and their repercussions.

There was stiff resistance to pastoral settlement in this area and northwards. Whatever may have been the case in other parts of Australia, the Liverpool Plains and then the Maranoa became one big battleground. Collins has provided plenty of evidence to show that Europeans were tolerated as travellers in the Maranoa (as Major Mitchell was in 1846) but not as a permanent and disruptive presence. Just how disruptive that permanent presence was for the Aborigines in economic terms can be gauged by the description of Alan MacPherson's newly-introduced sheep and cattle grazing 50 kilometres of water frontage on Muckadilla Creek, a northern tributary of the Balonne River. And it was the deaths of eight of MacPherson's white workers that helped to trigger what must have been one of Australia's bloodiest frontier wars. There were no official body-count to satisfy today's forensic historian. Nor is the official documentation very revealing. Native Police Commandant Frederick Walker tempered his official despatches to the Colonial Secretary in Sydney after an incautious remark about

his force's pitched battle with some hundreds of Bigambul warriors at 'Carbucky' station following the deaths of a number of white hands on the Wallan and the Lower Condamine in July 1849. In a moment of frankness he had written: 'I much regretted not having one hour more [of] daylight and I would have annihilated the lot, among which were six murderers and all the rest living solely on cattle ...'. According to William Telfer, a drover who later worked in the area, 'nearly one hundred perished under the sword and bullet of the white man' on that occasion.

TELFER'S ACCOUNTS OF this and other pitched battles with 'myalls', as well as massacres of 'tame' or 'station blacks', in what is now known as the Wallabadah Manuscript might be dismissed by the sceptic as unsupported hearsay. However, there is a significant congruence (allowing for some slight chronological error) between his descriptions and events which are only briefly sketched in the official record. Incidents of this kind would have been campfire talk for many years afterwards and the numbers of Aborigines killed may well have been inflated. Nevertheless, the Wallabadah Manuscript was written by a disinterested party only ten years after the events. The narrative is impressive in its unadorned and dispassionate simplicity. If the sceptic insists that Telfer's accounts fail the eyewitness test that is now applied to events which few were prepared to record, there is the graphic account by Margaret Young, a squatter's wife, of two massacres at their 'Umbercollie' station near 'Carbucky'. Both were in retaliation for the killing by Aborigines of the two sons of James Mark, an evident psychopath who had earlier killed an Aboriginal messenger. Mark and his men shot 'every native in sight, even our station aboriginals. Even my house gins, one of which was my faithful Maime,

my loyal friend'. The second massacre was conducted by the Native Police:

Some weeks later the police came back shooting still more natives whether guilty or not—we lost twelve more of our station blacks. Two young gins ran to me for protection. I hid them up ... in our roof ... they were there to stay for two days and nights without food and water. The police were still in and out of our house ... after the police had gone from the last shooting, we faced the terrible sight of so many dead natives and this time wild dogs had joined the [wild] pigs tearing the bodies to pieces. Once again Jonathan had the job of burying them.

So unrestrained and notorious was Mark's continued killing spree that Walker himself intervened to remove him from the district. Nevertheless, Crown Land Commissioner Richard Bligh, whose responsibility it was to investigate every killing of an Aborigine, found it impossible to prosecute Mark and others widely known as having committed similar crimes against 'tame blacks'. Aborigines (even the Aboriginal troopers) could not give proper evidence in court, and amongst the white settlers there was a conspiracy of silence. The lessons of the Myall Creek murderers' trials in late 1838 had been well learned: no white man would swing again for killing blacks. It is significant that so many of the squatters and white workers in the Maranoa were from the Liverpool Plains: 'Old Hands' or veterans of an earlier and no less bitter frontier war. Joseph Fleming, for example, was the brother of John Fleming, the principal ringleader of the Myall Creek and other likely massacres on the Gwydir.

It is difficult to balk at 'warfare' as the appropriate term for what was happening as the pastoral frontier moved rapidly from the Gwydir to the Balonne and the Maranoa in the late 1840s. Despite the subtitle of his book, Collins settles somewhat cautiously in his introduction for 'ruthless competition'. However, he has no doubts about the military leadership of a Mandandanji elder variously referred to as 'Possum Murray', 'Eaglehawk', 'Old Billy' and (probably authentically) Bussamarai. In this redoubtable figure he has discovered one of the 'missing' Aboriginal leaders referred to by W.E.H. Stanner as 'of outstanding, even of commanding, character and personality ... [who] having no office or title or rank, nevertheless had sway

over large regions and numbers ...'. Some of Collins' 'sightings' of Bussamarai in the written evidence seem to be guesswork and he may well be attributing to him more generalship than he was ever capable of exerting. Indeed, Collins admits that another significant leader, Oorumunde, may sometimes have been confused with him. To say that Bussamarai was an influential figure in an area the size of England—from the lower Condamine to the upper Warrego—may be straining credibility somewhat. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that he was able to unite the Bigambul and two or three other groups with the Mandandanji in concerted efforts to drive out the whites, sometimes involving pitched battles with the Native Police. 'The Great Fear' felt by the squatters and their servants was of just this demonstrated unity against them. To give him his due, Walker's policy was to insist that once a group of Aborigines was 'pacified' they should be allowed on the stations to find their livelihood. However, there were many station hands who preferred to shoot them on sight rather than take a risk.

THE SECOND HALF of Collins' book is more difficult to follow than the first and one or two chapters might well have been omitted. The story of the Native Police and its complicated politics, together with long disquisitions on Gideon Scott Lang and Roderick Mitchell, serve to obscure the relatively clear narrative line maintained earlier. The focus on frontier warfare is sometimes almost lost. At the same time, the geographical area of study expands beyond the reader's easy grasp.

Collins is a psychologist by training, not an historian, and his professional interest has been in group dynamics. He says that he avoided contact with historians and anthropologists and preferred to come to his subject via the writings of people like Eric Berne and Claude Steiner on the links between history and 'effective psychology'. The significance of this is not clear, but he certainly immersed himself in the primary resources for what seems to have been a long labour of love. The empirical basis of his work is sound and it would be churlish to complain of the absence of any over-arching theory. However, he tells us nothing about the group dynamics that made Bussamarai's leadership possible and very little about the

psychology of the squatters and their often n'er-do-well servants. It would have been useful to be told more about the original size of the Indigenous population and what latter-day anthropology can suggest about its economy and social organisation. Instead, there is a wealth of narrative detail which sometimes leaves the reader reeling. This is a local history, but it is the history of a very large area, upon which is superimposed the history of the Native Police. And the maps provided are not clear enough to be very useful.

That there were significant massacres at Yuleba Creek in March 1850 and Yamboucal in May 1852 is fairly clear to this reader, but the evidence is largely circumstantial. On the other hand, there are indications of official cover-ups and careful 'weeding' of the Native Police records at the time to avoid higher scrutiny and to protect reputations. The context carefully developed by Collins strongly suggests that the massacres took place and that they were well known in the area. A determined sceptic (Windschuttle inevitably comes to mind) is unlikely to be satisfied unless eyewitness accounts of massacres can be produced, but what was the likelihood of white observers putting pen to paper about bloody events in which they were likely to have been complicit? Margaret Young's testimony is a rare window into a lost reality. Another is Gideon Scott Lang's second-hand description of the corroboree near Surat in late 1849 that he called Eaglehawk's 'Opera'. Designed to intimidate the white audience in its depiction of their imminent defeat and expulsion (no doubt to some effect), it was fated to be no more than wishful thinking on Bussamarai's part. One of the worst massacres of 'station blacks' was to take place nearby just three years later.

An interesting conceit which Collins raises in his introduction is the congruence in experience of the Irish and the Aborigines and their consequent affinities in colonial Australia. The story of Paddy McEnroe, the 1798 United Irish rebel, and his Aboriginal ménage at Mount Abundance is a fascinating one. He seems to have found a unique rapport with the Mandandanji at a time when the entire district was on the verge of desertion by the whites in the face of their hostility. Almost certainly, this flowed from his long-term relationship with an unnamed Aboriginal woman and acceptance of the

associated kin obligations. However, it also seems likely that he took part in the vendetta waged earlier by his employer Alan MacPherson and the policeman Jack Durbin, after the killing of the former's servants by Mandandanji. At a broader level, Collins' suggestion that inaction over the Great Famine in Ireland and failure to protect Aborigines from the squatters of New South Wales both exemplified British government 'frugality' is not very convincing, but there can be little argument with his statement that 'different British governments allowed British citizens to take over and to profiteer from Aboriginal and Irish land'.

Collins attempts to find a poetic reconciliation for the actors in his tragic and at times devastating narrative, expressing the hope that 'somewhere they [McEnroe and Bussamarai] may have living common descendants'. Writing as an optimistic group psychologist and passionate Irish-Australian rather than sceptical historian, this is his notion of how it might all be viewed in the future:

From another perspective, sometime in the distant future, the regional conflicts will almost certainly form the core of consensually shared Australian legends. Heroes from both sides will be warmly remembered and their deeds will be as celebrated as those of Brian Boru and Robert Bruce. If this should be so, the regional struggles between Indigenous Australians and the settlers can validly be compared with events such as the Anglo-Norman invasions of the ancient Celtic kingdoms.

What would the descendants of the Mandandanji have to say about that, I wonder? The absence of their voices is part of the deafening silence historians have to deal with. It is reassuring that Collins has subsequently been able to tell his story to descendants in the Roma area and find that they were just as interested in their white ancestors as their black forebears. One claimed descent from Bussamarai and was intrigued by the thought that he might also be descended from Paddy McEnroe, transported appropriately enough in the *Friendship*. ■

Bob Reece is Associate Professor in History at Murdoch University. His book *Aborigines and Colonists* (1974) Sydney University Press provided the first detailed account of the Myall Creek Massacre of 1838.

verse



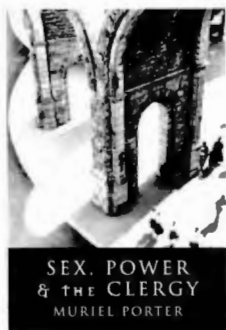
Jungian Counterpoint

Conducting my shadow with
a lash of eye and baton of breath,
we see-saw the hypotenuse of
her small office. This Juggernaut
knows the score and does not refer
to notes. Her wrist keeps time
for masked glances, while
Kleenex counts the strain.

I fidget pauses, my opus tapped
in Morse. Words relay the distance
between my shoes and hers.
Step a mile, step a mile through origins
and intentions: nursery rhymes, alleluia,
one, two, three, marzipan moments gutted
and parcelled as tithes. I percuss
from prelude to crescendo,
phrases from beaten skin:
missa cantata in memoriam.

A hand stands to stave the hour.
The maestro rounds for closure
and arranges the next epiphany
in a diary clotted with unfinished
symphonies. My pockets bulge
with sodden tissues and enough
change to get me home.

—Meg McNena



Sex, Power and the Clergy, Muriel Porter. Hardie Grant Books, 2003. ISBN 1 74066 026 9, RRP \$29.95

While I was reading *Sex, Power and the Clergy* the media were fascinated by the resignation of Dr Peter Hollingworth as Governor-General. By the time I had finished, their focus had switched to the furore over homosexual clergy in the Anglican Church. Porter rejects the accusation that the media focus on clerical sexual abuse is a conspiracy.

Sex, Power and the Clergy examines the issue of clerical sexual abuse of children and women, looking primarily at the inadequate responses of the leadership of churches. The focus of the book is on the Anglican and Catholic churches of Australia and the US. Porter's avowed aim is to contextualise the crisis in terms of the churches' attitudes to sexuality, women, power and leadership.

Porter argues that clerical sexual abuse is the result of the unhealthy patriarchal power structures of the mainstream Western churches. The book makes a cogent case, but it also leaves many questions unanswered. Porter acknowledges that she is not writing as an outsider; that as a committed Anglican laywoman she is both involved in the governance structures of the church she criticises and a long-term challenger of church patriarchy. Not surprisingly, Porter's writing is strongly polemical. Porter argues that clergy have a greater responsibility than other individuals because they claim, implicitly or explicitly, to represent God. This may be a reasonable position, but when Hollingworth's (then) failure to stand down from the position of Governor-General is compared unfavourably with Christ's willingness to die despite his innocence, my sympathy turned to the clergy of whom so much is expected.

Sex, Power and the Clergy is a fascinating piece of journalism, but it frequently lacks sources and explanations for the arguments it makes. It is the first draft of a history that deserves much more study.

—Avril Hannah-Jones



Media Mania: why our fear of modern media is misplaced, Hugh Mackay. Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2002. ISBN 0 86840 709 7, RRP \$24.95

Two elderly people sit together watching television, in silence, focused on the screen. Meanwhile, the wallpaper peels from the walls around them.

Hugh Mackay argues that the culture of blaming the media for society's problems is misplaced. Images of guns and bombs on television do not make children violent. And advertisements for mobile phones that take photographs cannot make you buy one.

Mackay suggests we stop seeing ourselves as victims, and consider the role individual will plays in the decisions we make. Mackay has a distinctive style. He habitually uses numbers to tell us about people. He also goes beyond the surface of the issues he covers. The book invites us to consider the couple sitting in silence anew: did the television steal their conversation, or did they choose not to talk?

—Emily Millane



Saving Francesca, Melina Marchetta. Penguin, 2003. ISBN 0 67004 045 2, RRP \$24.95

The title character of Melina Marchetta's long-awaited second novel is in need of saving. As a Year 11 student experiencing the difficulties of starting a new school—in its first year of accepting female students—discovering her identity and falling in love, Francesca Spinelli must also cope with a family on the verge of collapse.

Particularly interesting is Marchetta's portrayal of the debilitating case of depression from which Francesca's mother is suffering. The effects of depression are not dramatised, but shown in a way that lays bare the day-to-day reality of coping with mental illness, where misery is part of a daily routine and stomaching a cup of tea becomes a triumph.

Francesca's story is told with warmth and humour. Although the teenage characters are in danger of becoming stereotypes (the left-wing activist, the promiscuous girl, the slob in low-slung jeans), Marchetta develops these characters, allowing them to expose the hollowness of the very stereotypes they represent.

Though it is the type of book that can be read in a single winter's afternoon, *Saving Francesca* is more than an entertaining story. It is a novel about the resilience of familial bonds, and how salvation can come from the least likely places.

—Chloe Wilson



Olhovskyy Prince of Hamburg, Phil Leask. Black Pepper Press, 2003. ISBN 1 87604 437 3, RRP \$27.95

Michael Rothney is an English poet working on a suite of poems in the German city, Hamburg. He is attempting to shrive himself of a former lover. Rothney walks incessantly, at night, feeling for the pulse and lineaments of the city. He meets Olhovskyy, a semi-mythical creature, a mermaid, a hermaphrodite beauty.

We meet characters plagued by incompleteness. They long for the other, for the missing part of themselves. Their questing, their roiling hopes, seek relief in relationships, with a sexual partner or partners. Love appears to be the ground of human need, but it is fickle and treacherous. Desire, possession and belonging are its convenient and clandestine counterfeits.

It's a study of a city, too, which seeks its destiny with the same carnal energy as its inhabitants. The rhythm of the text, growing in intensity like Ravel's *Bolero*, is sympathetic with the insistent walking of the characters as they explore the city.

Leask's characters are psychologically stateless, and grieve for a home. Though an Australian, Leask has lived in London for 30 years, travelling in Europe and returning to Australia. Leask's book is about place, and rootlessness; about heartless loves and places of absence.

It is a haunting book and seems likely to be a novel which will reverberate beyond its times.

—Terry Monagle

flash in the pan



Throttled

Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle, dir. McG. I have to confess that while watching this film, and this may sound churlish considering that this is clearly a film designed to have action on every last frame, I was bored. It wasn't the lack of action, or that the plot was lumbering (improbable yes, lumbering, no). I was bored because everything was so over the top that there was no tension—no contrast. At some point, probably during the motocross sequence, I went numb and started to yawn.

But despite that, *Full Throttle* does have some perfect moments. There is a sub plot involving crime solving by star signs that is absolutely spot on. The cameos are exquisite; Jaclyn Smith (as Kelly Garrett) makes an appearance as a 'real' angel, the Olsen twins pose as a new generation of Angels, and Bruce Willis dies at the hand of an ex-wife.

But all up, this sequel is just too. It is too campy, too goofy, and too spoofy. What I loved about the first *Charlie's Angels* was that it played with camp, goof and spoof but one did not drown in them. The miraculous escapes had some tension in *Charlie's Angels*, but are so silly in *Full Throttle* that you don't care if the heroines escape or not. I love the idea of *Charlie's Angels*; I loved the series and I loved the first movie—but you have to give a damn about the characters. With everything *Full Throttle* puts between Angels and decent characterisation, it is very hard to find a toehold.

—Annelise Balsamo



Pleasure principle

Autofocus, dir. Paul Schrader. Acclaimed director, Paul Schrader (*The Comfort of Strangers*, *American Gigolo*) has made a film based on the life and death of actor Bob Crane. The film relies heavily on a memorable performance by Greg Kinnear (*As Good As It Gets*) as Crane.

At the outset Crane is happily married (despite a penchant for hoarding pictures of nude women) and presenting a top rating radio program. When he is offered the leading role in a pilot for a new TV series called *Hogan's Heroes*, he is unenthusiastic. After all, who has ever heard of a comedy set in a World War II German prisoner of war camp? Eventually he is persuaded that the show can work. The American public love it, and Crane plays Hogan from 1965 for the show's five-year run. He becomes a national celebrity.

However, from the moment he meets John Carpenter (Willem Dafoe) an electronics expert with access to the latest Polaroid cameras and home video equipment, Crane's life is dominated by his own addiction. Not alcohol, not drugs, but sexual obsession which becomes more and more perverted as Carpenter provides the electronic means to record it all. Some women are willing to be photographed having sex with a TV star, others are just victims of two sexual predators utterly indifferent to whom they might humiliate.

At one stage Crane boasts, 'I don't smoke, I don't drink and two out of three ain't bad'. Inevitably his wife finds out about his rampant extra-marital sex life and his first marriage is destroyed.

While *Hogan's Heroes* is successful, Crane's charm and fame is enough to ensure a supply of compliant women. With the demise of the TV series and personal fame, however, Crane slips from being able to have sex with virtually any woman he wants, to having to be content with any woman who will have him.

Kinnear is superb as the complex Crane. Cocky, vain, charming, sexually ferocious, his character disintegrates with a terrible inevitability. I found myself comparing Kinnear's Crane with Othello. Othello is consumed by baseless jealousy that ultimately destroys him. Crane is consumed by sexual obsession, which fame has given him the key to satisfy, but which must lead to personal tragedy.

Willem Dafoe as Carpenter is the lascivious supportive sleaze, the sexual acolyte, but always leaving a question mark about his own sexual relationship with Crane. Dafoe was the man for the part.

Ultimately Crane is a pitiful figure, unable to resist his own destructive urges. The film is depressing and at times distasteful, but Greg Kinnear's performance alone is worth the cost of a ticket.

—Gordon Lewis

Random thoughts

Confessions of a Dangerous Mind, dir. George Clooney. The cinema loves a liar; bad character makes for a good character. And Charles Hershel Barris is a great movie character. Besides being the real life inventor of schlock TV classics *The Dating Game* and *The Gong Show*, Chuck Barris also claimed in his notorious memoirs, 'Confessions of a Dangerous Mind', to have led a double life as a government hitman. It's a bit like discovering that Graham Kennedy worked for ASIO.

Intriguingly, Barris subtitled his book 'an unauthorised autobiography'. This apparent *non sequitur* makes perfect sense, when you consider that Barris wrote the book during a nervous breakdown. It's the story of a dangerous *mind*, after all.

You can see how the idea must have appealed to the scriptwriter Charlie Kaufman. To the man who invented *Being John Malkovich*, the notion that a game show host could also moonlight as a hired assassin obviously proved irresistible. In Kaufman's hands, *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*, comes across as the loopy half-brother of Ron Howard's self-important Oscar winner, *A Beautiful Mind*. In both films deluded, self-loathing men imagine another, more masculine, life for themselves courtesy of the US secret service, but are eventually brought back to reality by the love of a good woman.

In the Kaufman version of this story, Barris (Sam Rockwell) is busily working in 1960s American TV, developing good honest low-brow entertainment and schtupping his regular gal Penny (Drew Barrymore) when he is approached by the mysterious Jim Byrd (George Clooney) and asked to join the CIA.

After some desultory training Barris is soon a fully fledged Cold War warrior, bumping off Reds in exotic locations, and betraying Penny with a fellow agent, the luscious Patricia (Julia Roberts). Roberts gets the film's key line when she tells her co-spy, 'Very few people have delusions of being the guy down the block who works for an insurance company'. Which is pretty insightful for a figment of Barris's imagination.

This weird tale of television ratings and identity crisis is superbly told by its first-time director, the actor (and heart-throb) George Clooney. But at nearly two

hours in length, someone should have told Clooney to stop having so much fun with the visuals and lose a few scenes.

—Brett Evans

Blowin' in the wind

A Mighty Wind, dir. Christopher Guest. Recently my husband confessed to a youthful indiscretion: he had been to see Peter, Paul and Mary when they played Festival Hall in the mid '60s. Perhaps the readers of this journal have similar blots on their escutcheons. If so, you will get all the jokes and allusions abounding in Christopher Guest's latest sharp offering, *A Mighty Wind*, a relentlessly credible examination of the white American folk scene that lasted from the late '50s through to the early '70s. That piece of social history is dealt with in a brilliant mixture of photo montage and archival footage. Guest is a fascinated observer of particular aspects of popular culture and has found a medium, the mockumentary, to convey them in their abject minutiae, as writer, director and actor.

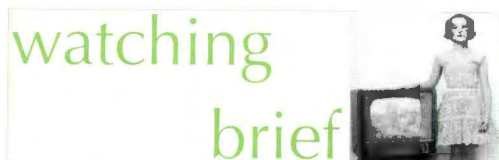
Guest's genius came to the fore nearly 20 years ago in *This Is Spinal Tap*, the inspired send-up of heavy metal band mythology, and later in the splendid *Waiting for Guffman* and *Best in Show*. Sometimes Guest's parodying is so effective that it becomes the thing itself, and here

lies the conundrum for *A Mighty Wind*: the players are so authentic, so damned believable as daggy folk singers that it will either spawn a revival of the genre (a terrible risk for Guest to have taken) or will keep punters away in droves.

Anyone who saw *Waiting For Guffman* and *Best In Show* will remember the cast of characters: the cultural tags and signifiers abound. Acute social observation becomes a sport, a game where the more you notice, the more you enjoy—I started noticing so much my eyes got tired. *A Mighty Wind* will get your ears noticing too: the twinned 12-strings in the Main Street Singers' first song, for instance, is very reminiscent of the Rooftop Singers, yet all the material is original, mostly written by Guest and the cast, who are all highly talented musicians. Eugene Levy stars, with Catherine O'Hara, as Mitch and Mickey, a duo who split long ago. The Mitch and Mickey story veers close to pathos, but Guest handles everything well. His folk acts epitomise the American phenomenon of white middle-class liberals whose music was as neat and sedate, and whose jokes were as clean and awful, as their clothes. But in the end my inner dag won the day: I was humming along entranced to their really quite lovely feature song 'A Kiss Beyond A Rainbow'. Be courageous: feed your inner dag and see it.

—Juliette Hughes





Fabulous nobodies

HE DOBBED ME IN, my own f. and b. 'Da-ad, she's been shouting at the telly again,' he said as soon as my husband walked in from a hard day's being flattered at work. I was surrounded by disapproving family males, all two of them.

'I thought we'd agreed you were going to give that up,' said the old one, more in sorrow than in anger.

'Only for Lent, dammit, and by the way, you snitching young yobbo, "she" is the cat's mother.'

'Quick, give her some chocolate, she's resorting to cliché,' said the young one. I snatched it and went snarling into a corner to reflect.

What is it about some aspects of our viewing culture that gets me so pen-snappingly cross? Perhaps I should start at the beginning, with a small Spot Quiz, folks. OK: are the following statements true or false?

America

- (a) invented singing, indeed all music, in the early 1900s in New York, Chicago or the deep South;
- (b) won both World Wars single-handed;
- (c) has three in every hundred people in jail;
- (d) has more guns than people.

Hollywood and the White House tell us (b) and Michael Moore (recently and amazingly on *Oprah*) tells us (c) and (d) but it's left to *The Voice* to tell us (a). The ABC ran this documentary on Sundays in August at 7.30, in a timeslot competing with Ten's *Australian Idol*. What a choice. Poisonous and cruel destruction of fragile youthful self-esteem on the one hand and fake history on the other. Perhaps that's rather harsh, but I kept waiting for the programs to explore that extraordinary instrument, the human voice, and was disappointed. Alan Lewens, a London-based authority on popular music, was the series' creator. Two years ago he created the series *Walk On By*, which tracked the development of popular music in a somewhat idiosyncratic but always interesting way. It became compulsory viewing in our music-mad house. But *The Voice* seems to have been cobbled from fag-ends of the previous series. There are a couple of throws to opera singers, but the faults of *Walk On By* were well in evidence without its saving virtues: maddening voice-overs, endless talking heads and not enough performance footage. Lewens seems to have a genius for ripping the climax out of an archival performance of someone like Ella Fitzgerald doing 'Summertime' to cross to some obscure American saying something along the lines of 'Ella was really really good. No, really. What a voice.' Or 'Judy/Aretha/Mahalia was really really fantastic, wow.' Or 'Ray/Satchmo/Bing/Frank was a legend. Wow. What a voice.'

It wasn't about the voice at all, it was just more potted

social history (blues-gospel roots, social change, invention of radio/cinema/TV/yada yada yada). The opera stuff was a brief afterthought, and consisted of wafer-thin profiles of people who had sung in America. The list of omissions is longer than this column's word limit, but try a few examples of what was missing from a documentary series that might deserve the title of *The Voice*: No European music (Maria Callas, the one diva whose voice was examined, was described as 'New-York born' and presumably Caruso got a mention because he emigrated to the US). Talking heads everywhere and very little information. Nothing about early music, Umm Kulthumm, Nusrat Ali, South African choirs, Bulgarians. No Kodaly choirs, no folk, no lieder, no art song, no Broadway, no Tanna Tuva throat singing, no Sutherland, no Tibetans, no Gregorian, no Mozart, Handel or Bach, no Yma Sumac and no vocal technique discussions worthy of the name. The last episode, on close vocal harmony, suffered from Lewens' tunnel vision and narrow knowledge base again, as it concentrated on the doo-wop groups in the style of The Platters and The Inkspots and drawing the tradition through The Everly Brothers and The Beach Boys to Westlife. Yeah, forget Palestrina, Allegri, Dowland, Purcell ...

AS FOR *Australian Idol*, aargh. If you want to watch kids trying desperately to please some dead-eyed pundits, and either being bollocked and humiliated or glutinously over-praised for bellowing in a fashion that would seriously damage a young voice if persisted in, then let's agree to differ. Jamie Oliver had some difficult kids to deal with in *Jamie's Kitchen* (on Ten during August), and seems to have done the right thing by them. The restaurant business is every bit as cutthroat as the music industry, and yet there were allowances made, chances given and some useful careers launched. Good on him.

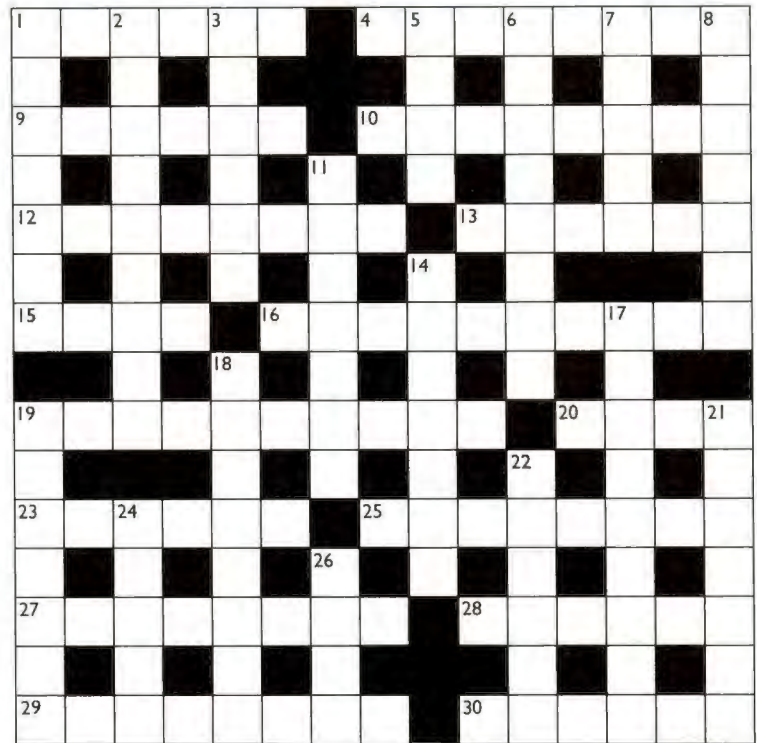
And while we're thinking of nurturing the young, don't forget to watch the ABC's *Platypus: World's Strangest Animal* (Wednesday 10 September, 8.30pm). David Parer spent three years trying to be the platypus's Big Brother, and succeeded thanks to some state-of-the-art snooping cameras that could poke into the burrow and wiggle about getting pictures of the elusive little cusses. It seems that platypuses are dedicated to giving their young the best start in life, supporting them devotedly until they're ready to get out on their own. Sort of like us, really, if we're like Jamie Oliver. Or not, of course, if you are of the idolatrous persuasion. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer.



ACROSS

1. Plods towards the public transport, but has afterthought —about the car? (6)
4. Circumvent the commercial? What a lark! (8)
9. Measureless wealth, possibly kept secret. (6)
10. Artist twice has altered visa. She's an unusual bird, but known to the Roman poet, perhaps. (4,4)
12. Proceed straight on to use credit for ends of layby. (8)
13. Novel by du Maurier is old hat! (6)
15. Correct practice, it seems, of ceremonial procedure. (4)
16. Worn out, but happy! (5,5)
19. Stupefy with drugs, then reportedly punch us. What awful trickery! (5-5)
20. Make a mistake about the underwear. (4)
23. Wealthy business man found where the centre of the hurricane is displaced. (6)
25. Cher wages on the fizzy drinks, we hear. (8)
27. Greek letter combined with academic qualification displays line of descent. (8)
28. Knit or tat carelessly, with anger, to produce gear. (6)
29. Changed rate is certain to provide rich value. (8)
30. To New Guinea, in short, an islander —he can be found herein. (6)



DOWN

1. Fulminate about them down below, but without 'em! (7)
2. Coming soon—in a moment or two! (5,1,3)
3. Plan of action on the insurance, for example. (6)
5. Have a go—but watch your back! (4)
6. Heading for the city, Lara anyway arrived with enthusiasm. (8)
7. What the hammer often strikes but it's not the incus. (5)
8. Tried to write a composition for homework, perhaps. (7)
11. Use this for drink mixture. Lo cal? Oh no! (7)
14. Often attached to horses, they can be used to push log somehow. (7)
17. Easing the way for substitute to take over ... (9)
18. ... provided their holidays are of equal magnitude! (2,4,2)
19. The place where the buck stops or the fire starts? (3,4)
21. Gate at the back of the Post Office? (7)
22. Common dirt towards the end of the cave. (6)
24. Sponge Diane first found in the enclosure. (5)
26. Put 28-across on display, aware that it can fray? (4)

Solution to Crossword no. 115, July–August 2003



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