

# EUREKA STREET

A MAGAZINE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS,  
THE ARTS AND THEOLOGY  
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# EUREKA STREET

A MAGAZINE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, THE ARTS AND THEOLOGY  
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## Absent bodies

'Muslims & Christians ... where do we stand?' (*Eureka Street*, September 2003) missed the quintessential point that Muslims and Catholics/Christians stand (yes so, still so) greatly divided by gender.

Sitting in the audience of this Jesuit Seminar Series I wondered how the religion and politics of the body could be ignored. Our patriarchal institutions have been tyrannised by fear of female sexuality since their inception. Why was the ignominy shared by Muslim and Catholic women denied ordination to the priesthood or to becoming an imam disregarded? Why were oppression, inequality, human rights and sharia law not defined in terms of their application in the lives of Muslim women? And that the enforced wearing of the hijab or burka, notwithstanding rationalisations, is to control sexual desire? And genital mutilation? An obscene and unforgivable abuse of human rights perpetrated to destroy female sexual pleasure. Girl births mourned in many Muslim societies, women blamed for rape, adultery, and so on.

The seminar kept our religious differences and similarities intellectual, gentlemanly and academic, in the head and out of the body. Kept it safe, kept it cosy and kept well away from the facts about where Muslim and Catholic women do stand.

**Kerry Bergin**  
Camberwell, VIC

## Keeping up the fight

Congratulations to Paul Sendziuk on his excellent coverage of the history of HIV/AIDS in Australia. 'Denying the Grim Reaper' (*Eureka Street*, October 2003) identifies the issues that people infected with HIV, as well as communities in which the virus is prevalent, have had to face in the past 20 years. Sadly, today many of these issues are still current.

In Victoria the annual number of AIDS diagnoses peaked at 203 in 1994 and fell

to 44 in 2001. However the number of people contracting the HIV virus has increased in recent years. In 2001, 218 people were diagnosed with HIV, the highest annual number of notifications since 1994 and the number continued to rise in 2002 (234 notifications). This causes real concern and consternation amongst many with the illness as well as those who are aware that education and awareness around HIV/AIDS remains an important focus for the whole community. Yet the message seems lost on many young people and those faced with making choices that may put them at risk.

People who come to Catholic HIV/AIDS Ministry talk of:

- The prejudice and stigma that they still face as well as their very real fear that friends, neighbours and/or work colleagues will discover their status and 'drop' them.
- The burden of having to be secretive about their illness and situation.
- The struggle with poverty, loneliness and alienation.
- Finding suitable housing in an area where they will not experience prejudice and ignorance.
- Finding sustainable employment with employers who understand the nature and circumstances affecting the individual.
- The side effects and complications of their medication.
- The tension between the desire to work and the stress of dealing with pressure in the workforce, pressure to perform and pressure to keep one's status private.
- Agencies that have been established to help people with HIV/AIDS are becoming fatigued and beginning to lose sight of the human face and suffering of those whom they are there to help.
- Being so fortunate to live in Australia as compared to the situation in other countries.
- Respite care being under pressure and strain to provide for those who need the extraordinary care of this unique facility.
- Quality of life for many people with HIV/AIDS has improved remarkably because of the extensive services and supports that are offered.
- A desire to see that stakeholders and partners associated with HIV/AIDS continue to work progressively to improve and address together key concerns, issues, initiatives and ideas.
- Encouraging new stakeholders and part-

ners that may be able to assist to become involved in seeking further positive initiatives, funding, assistance for responses that may be helpful for other countries who are not as fortunate as Australia.

- Encouraging the community to become aware that HIV/AIDS is not discriminating in age, sex or gender and has real ramifications for Australia and the world if we ignore it.

One man talked of these issues and then very eloquently spoke of the 'depression' which haunts him in life's quieter moments, the depression which says 'I have a terminal illness and I know how I am going to die'. Another person says, 'it never, ever goes away', and she may live for another 20 years knowing the medication she is taking is both keeping her alive and likely killing her.

It seems that the challenges facing the Australian community when HIV/AIDS was first diagnosed are the challenges that continue to face the community. These challenges are not limited to the communities most closely associated with HIV/AIDS but the whole Australian community, for we are diminished as people when we are unable to respond compassionately to those in need.

**Marg Hayes (Coordinator) and  
Anthony Nestor**  
Catholic HIV/AIDS Ministry  
Melbourne, VIC

## Moved by the spirit

The next pope, like all popes, will be elected under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; but famously the Holy Spirit's ways are not ours so His preference is often difficult to make out (even for cardinals).

To overcome this difficulty the Vatican effectively fills the conclave well in advance with cardinals of the current pope's own theological stamp.

This makes it easier to see what kind of pope the Holy Spirit has in mind.

**John F. Haughey**  
Carlton, VIC

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# Costly conflict

**W**HEN WE ASSOCIATE A YEAR with a nation, the people of that nation have usually had little to celebrate. Think only of Hungary 1956, Cambodia 1975 and Rwanda 1994. This has been the year of Iraq. Faithfulness to the people of Iraq urges us to look back on the war and its aftermath and come to some judgment.

Controversy continues about whether the war was morally justified. The debate is politically important in the United States and in Europe because it affects the future shape of international relations. It has understandably been marginal in Australia. For it is now clear that Australia assisted the invasion of Iraq only because the United States asked us to. Moral considerations were irrelevant in Australian participation in the invasion of Iraq, and they have been irrelevant in Australia's withdrawing support from its rebuilding.

The continuing debate about the morality of the war can be summarised under the familiar criteria of just war theory, according to which a war can be just only if it is fought for a just cause, if it is waged with legitimate authority, if that cause cannot be achieved by other means, if the harm caused by war is not disproportionate to the good achieved, and if the war will achieve its goals.

It's clear that the real cause of the war was the opportunity offered by concern about terrorism to remove a relatively weak and absolutely odious ruler, in the hope of giving a new political shape to the Middle East. Arguments about weapons of mass destruction were shaped for persuasion and not to reflect reality. Protagonists of the war have consequently based their moral argument on the right to overthrow a murderous regime. The case for waging an aggressive war to overthrow a savage tyrant is arguable, but is morally plausible only if the other criteria of a justifiable war are strictly met.

The legitimacy of the war remains the most contentious area of debate, because it affects the legitimacy of the United States occupation. Most nations have taken the view, strongly represented by church teaching, that to be legitimate, any aggressive military action must be undertaken under the auspices of the international community. The invasion of Iraq failed this test, and was accompanied by the alarming doctrine that the United States may intervene militarily whenever its interests are at stake. This doctrine is morally indefensible, and it has poisoned attempts to

broaden responsibility for the reconstruction of Iraq.

Advocates of the war have asked their opponents whether the goals that inspired the war could otherwise have been achieved. They can appeal plausibly to the immediate removal of Saddam Hussein's regime. But if the war was fought for broader goals, such as the eradication of weapons of mass destruction or the remaking of the Middle East, the claim that they could not have been achieved in other ways is hollow. The evidence suggests that the war has made these goals harder, not easier, to achieve.

**B**EFORE NATIONS GO to war, the most difficult moral challenge is to weigh the good to be achieved against the harm that it may cause. Those opposed to war are tempted to exaggerate the harm that will come from it. So, in the case of Iraq some critics of the war predicted apocalyptic consequences—prolonged combat, collapse of the world economy, uprisings in other nations. That these things didn't happen and that the war was quickly over seemed to argue that the war was justified. But as the goal of the war is stated more modestly and as we can take a longer view of its consequences, the gap becomes wider between the achievements of the war and its harmful consequences. The damage to the social fabric and the collapse of much infrastructure have become evident. It is also clear that the war has made more difficult any solidarity between the Arab and Western worlds, and the creation of a world inimical to terrorism. This is a heavy price to pay for the removal of Saddam Hussein.

In the light of all this, we can say that this war has succeeded only in the most limited terms. It has failed to benefit most Iraqis, and the doctrine that it has engendered, that war may be waged when it is in a powerful nation's interests, is catastrophic.

Two conclusions impose themselves. It is vital that the international community through the United Nations should be given responsibility for restoring legitimate government in Iraq. It is also vital that United Nations structures be strengthened so that aggressive military action can be undertaken only with considered consent of that body, and not as a result of the pressure of the most powerful nations and their acolytes. ■

—Andrew Hamilton SJ



# The price of education

**D**R BRENDAN NELSON, the Commonwealth Minister for Education, says—in his introduction to the proposed higher education reform called ‘Backing Australia’s Future’—that he wants to ‘pass on the soul of the nation from one generation to the next’. One of my many concerns is the imposition on students of greater burdens for repayment when they leave university. This is likely to cause a drought in the number of graduates who will be prepared to work for community agencies and the public service.

Under the proposal, HECS fees can increase by 30 per cent and may increase further after 2005. Although the government claims there will be more Commonwealth scholarships, these will be hotly contested and many students and their families won’t be able to afford upfront fees. This will leave many young people with large debts after university.

As a clinical supervisor of law students in a community legal centre, I talk to students who through their casework are exposed to the often harsh realities of the lives of people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Many students in the past have expressed a desire to work in legal centres or at legal aid, once they have finished university. But recently, students have been saying they are more uncertain about their futures and worry about how they and their younger siblings will manage if fees increase and loans escalate. Some who are part way through their courses say they will not be able to afford to work at the legal centres, much as they wish to.

Students leaving university will want to pay off their debts, and this will deter them from considering jobs in the lowly paid public service. For example, legal aid and community legal centres can’t compete with the law firms at the big end of town—particularly when the federal and state governments are less inclined to spend money on legal aid despite increasing demand. Young barristers have traditionally worked pro bono for legal centres when no legal aid is available and where clients are unable to represent themselves. Legal aid remuneration is small compared with the preparation and court time required, and many young barristers struggle to pay overheads if they do too much of this work. Additional university debts will probably make it difficult for legal aid and legal centres to find representation for people when the courts are deciding their fate or that of their families.

Community organisations employ youth workers, social workers, counsellors and psychologists.

In health centres doctors, podiatrists and dentists are employed. All these professions require graduate qualifications. Community health centres, for example, may be ‘priced out of the market’. There are already significant barriers to recruitment of doctors. Difficult patients with complex problems ranging from mental illness to drug addiction and chronic illness are a deterrent for many. There is a shortage of doctors in certain rural and metropolitan areas and an ageing doctor population. Any increase in debt for young doctors upon leaving university—which at one stage the University of Melbourne put at \$100,000—makes it harder for health centres to attract them.

An area that often creates headlines is the care and protection system for vulnerable young children. The tabloids lament the chronic shortage of youth workers and social workers. Salaries for these professionals are notoriously low with people often working additional hours at casual rates to get by. Government departments and community agencies already find it hard to recruit, often readvertising several times. Burn-out and stress are significant deterrents, and increased debt is only likely to put people off more. Students may decide to study in other fields likely to return a higher income, so their debt can be paid off sooner.

The public service can also ill afford to pay market rates for graduates. It needs the keenest and brightest people to assist governments. For example, Treasury needs people with a strong commerce and social policy background, but will it be able to justify to other departments a significantly higher pay rate when other departments also require skilled and trained professionals?

How will community organisations be able to recruit people for what is often difficult, highly skilled and challenging work? How will community agencies compete with the corporations who can pay? What will happen to the community if fewer and fewer graduates are prepared to work in social service agencies? What sort of society do we envisage and is it really one we can say will ‘pass on the soul of the nation from one generation to the next’? ■

**Liz Curran** is a lecturer in law and legal studies at La Trobe Law, a supervising solicitor of the university’s Clinical Legal Education program at the West Heidelberg Community Legal Service and pro bono consultant to Catholic Social Services Victoria.



## Doctors' bills

**I**F I WERE TONY ABBOTT, I would be carefully listening to doctors' whinges about medical insurance—noting every claim about the costs imposed on their income by the risks of medical misadventure, whether caused by negligence or not. Because the key to any solution is that government assume this burden, but there's no reason why doctors should benefit much as a consequence. For example, if an obstetrician is paying in insurance half of what she or he receives for the birth of a baby, then it would be a fair bargain if government paid the practitioner half as much as before. It might be wise for government to subcontract the actual management of a claims system to a number of competing private funds, rather than running a national medical insurance agency directly. Private health insurance companies should also be required to contribute their share for every procedure performed. They might be keen to do so since now they have as much interest in keeping medical costs down, and doctors under some leash, as government itself.

Two years into the medical insurance crisis, it is still assertion rather than evidence which governs the debate. A major doctors' insurer collapsed, but whether that was because it had set its premiums too low or because medical negligence payouts had skyrocketed is far from clear. The evidence of court-ordered payouts does not support the idea of a massive escalation in claims or in amounts awarded. The courts were widening their definitions of negligence, embracing concepts of informed consent and the duty of a doctor to canvas with a patient what could go wrong with a medical procedure. This caused widespread panic in the profession, but it does not of itself seem to have produced a major increase in payouts. However, governments have been spooked by doctors' panic and have severely wound back the law to reduce the ambit of claims.

But it's perception as much as fact which governs the politics, and which has accentuated the uncertainties of doctors, made them withdraw services or types of services, or export their risk to the public hospital system, or threaten to leave their profession altogether. Or to practise, in the name of conservative medicine, the very antithesis of it: doing everything, just in case. Even those who think doctors are overreacting will concede a good deal of uncertainty.

But there's another reason why government should get involved. Most people who suffer from medical accidents do not, can not sue. They cannot establish negligence. Something more than a mistake, more than a less-than-perfect outcome, must be demonstrated: it must be shown that the doctor's treatment fell outside acceptable standards. Or that the doctor's failure to outline possible risks and side effects meant that the patient did not really consent at all. That's a hard standard. For the hundreds who collect, there are thousands who cannot, and they are compensated, if at all, only by the social security system. Two

people may have identical injuries as a result of the failure of surgery. One may get millions, the other perhaps \$200 a week.

Does the public really accept that? After all, the taxpayer is paying in both situations. In a high proportion of cases, the public hospital system pays. And even when the suit is against the individual practitioner, the premium cost has been loaded into her or his fees, and these overwhelmingly come from the public purse, whether directly from Medicare or indirectly through the tax subsidisation of health insurance.

One could not expect government to go the further distance and develop a national compensation scheme along the New Zealand model—one that abolished concepts of negligence in virtually all classes of personal injury and provided rehabilitation and compensation based on the type of injury involved. That might be too much like the welfare state for any modern government, let alone a conservative one.

**T**HE OPPOSITION, of course, is suggesting that the shifting of Abbott into health is a sign of the government's malevolent intentions towards the Medicare system. Any changes to the model—whether to the public hospital system, about bulk billing, or about permitting co-payment—are seen as sinister, the more so now that an able ideologue, such as Abbott, is involved. Kay Patterson might have been sinister too, but lacked the ability to carry out the government's agenda.

John Howard is not as mad as that. Health care is one of the few areas where the Opposition has any traction, and raising concerns about the future of Medicare is an effective tactic. Health care is becoming more expensive, partly because the population is ageing and because of the sophistication of some modern treatments, such as hip replacements. Although Australia has successfully kept a lid on drug prices, the total cost of the pharmaceutical benefits scheme is increasing in real terms. The biggest boost that public hospitals have received is in the way private hospitals have picked up an increasing proportion of the load. But the public health system is still handicapped by poor planning, by cost-shifting between the Commonwealth and the states, by an increasing crisis in health care staff, particularly nurses, and by the failure of the states to invest in new facilities or maintain what they have. The Commonwealth's charge that its extra funding is often matched by the withdrawal of state funds is essentially true; so long as the states can blame the Commonwealth for everything, they will. Brian Howe could not achieve much in the way of reform; Michael Wooldridge achieved even less. Kay Patterson could hardly make a decision. Tony Abbott, who can hardly stop making decisions, may actually get somewhere. ■

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



## the month's traffic



# Longchamp

LONG DISTANCE RACING

ON THE FIRST TUESDAY in September, the day that students returned to school in France, the horses came back to Longchamp in Paris. They had been racing by the Atlantic at the resort town of Deauville. All along that coast and in the Mediterranean the French had sunned themselves in the hottest summer. Now it was time for *la rentrée*. Back to town they came. Businesses reopened. At Longchamp, the greatest race in France, the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, was only a month away.

There had been a Group One sprint at Deauville on Sunday, won at 25/1 by Whipper, but for the programme in town no stars were out. Nonetheless, for this mid-week meeting at the world's most imposing track, there was a nine-race card. The prize money ranged from \$27,000–\$80,000. There were two listed races and—Australian authorities please note when whingeing about the dearth of local stayers—all eight races were 1600m and up in distance. The first was designed to be the biggest betting event, with a field of 18 guaranteeing huge returns for anyone who could pick the first four or five home.

It was a September Sunday 28 years ago since I had last been to Longchamp. Then we saw a very good staying filly, Ivanjica. Immediately I tipped it to win the Arc, which it did, but a year later. Since it had been so long ago, I sought directions from a couple of desperates in Jean-Louis's L'Autre Bar in Montmartre. They tried to get me on a bus from Clichy to Porte Maillot. In the end I took the metro to Sèvres-Babylone, changed for Porte d'Auteuil and took the 241 bus to the track. My companions were mostly older than I am, withered veterans of the hazards of the track.

Longchamp has a commodious, sweeping straight. The woods of the Bois de Boulogne run along the back of the course. In front groups of cyclists pedal ceaselessly. The Eiffel Tower pops up behind them. At the turn out of the straight there is a

large windmill and a small chateau. The first race was run over a horseshoe 2000m course (the Sydney way) on improbably plush green grass, considering Europe's drought. Canter to the post, the jockeys' colours looked brighter when the sun picked them out on this dull day. In *Le Parisien*, the 'dernière heure' (or late mail: racing language is the same everywhere) picked Le Cure. In the same paper, 'Gentleman' fancied Roger Fontenaille. I took Aravis and Verdi and sooled the former on to win by a neck for Thierry Jarnet. He was interviewed sitting down after the race, gaunt from a hard ride.

I followed Jarnet in the next race for two-year-old fillies, but he could only run third as the battling sheiks Maktoum and Mohammed took the quinella with Banksia and Silent. Round the back of the stands at Longchamp there are elegant billboards to explain what goes on, from stabling to saddling to the race. A statue of 19th-century champion Gladiateur meets incoming punters. Further along is Suave Dancer which, in 1991, took the Prix du Jockey Club (French Derby) and the Arc. The vast course was nearly empty. As in Australia, the crowds only come out at carnival time. The race call echoed around, sounding like one from Australia until the genteel pause after every couple of furlongs and the collapse into calling horses by numbers not names in a tight finish.

There was no need for that when Bago dashed away with the colt's race. Running in the interests of the Niarchos family, he may go on to Group grade. The next race produced a French farce. The unraced colt Sunspot broke through the barriers. No clerk of the course set off in pursuit. Eventually the horse relented after 2000m, having reached the top of the straight. Then it was remounted, cantered back to the start, underwent no vet's examination and was allowed to run—20 minutes late. And it came second, the greatest certainty beaten since—well—the previous one. I headed away, missing the Grand Steeple Chase of Flanders, run in Belgium, but televised and listed as race seven on this card. Open to 'gentlemen-riders' and 'officers' who had won at least three races, it went to Herculaneum. Folly and grandeur, mixed in the French way, prevailed at Longchamp this early autumn afternoon.

—Peter Pierce

# Smoke and mirrors

CONSPIRACY THEORIES NEVER DIE

FORTY YEARS AGO this month, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, by a lone gunman ... the Mob ... the Cubans ... the CIA ... a magic bullet ... the FBI—take your pick from the conspiracy smorgasbord.

The JFK killing has endured in the public imagination because the US establishment was so evasive about its version of events. And wasn't the playboy president supposedly a progressive politician—a natural target for the Cold War rednecks at the heart of the military industrial complex?

This is the conspiracy guessing game that everyone can play. After all, conspiracies do happen. Powerful people do plot behind the scenes. Occasionally they get caught—think of the succession of 'gates', spawned by the daddy of them all, Watergate.

Yet people who will happily speculate on bullet angles from the grassy knoll instinctively edge away from those who earnestly argue that the moon landing was faked, that the US has covered up visits by UFOs, or that 9/11 was organised by the CIA and Mossad.

Where is the border to be drawn between justifiable suspicion and crackpot theory? When does prudent questioning become paranoia?

Why are so many of us prepared to believe that a section of the US establishment had JFK killed? It's because we know that the CIA assassinated hostile political leaders. Did it do so in 1963 in Dallas? We can't know, but the idea is not manifestly impossible.

Why do people believe in alien abductions and official cover-ups of UFO visits? It is because governments are secretive about the mundane, let alone the astounding. It is because we grew up in an era where we were told that 'the Russians are coming' and an era of nuclear tests in the deserts and satellites above.

Why do some people swallow variations of the mother of all conspiracies—that the world is being run by a cabal, whether Illuminati, Jews, Masons or the Vatican? It's because it's obvious to most of us that if someone *is* running the world, it certainly isn't us, or anyone we know.



There *are* small numbers of wealthy, powerful people. They *do* make decisions that affect our lives. And they do so in ways to which we are not privy, with motivations which bear little relation to the priorities of our private and community lives.

Rather than adopt a rigorous and sociological analysis of why this is so, some of those people who feel both powerless and afraid are willing to seize on the glib and the superficial—an ideological comfort blanket.

Writing half a century ago, Theodor Adorno dealt with this phenomenon by discussing conspiracies' half-siblings, the horoscopes. In his essay 'The Stars Down to Earth', he examined the inanities printed in a Los Angeles newspaper. Why, he asked, did people whose daily lives were shaped by the products of science accept the irrational?

His answer was that:

The "system" under which most people feel they work has to them an irrational aspect itself. That is to say, they feel that everything is linked up with everything else and that they have no way out, but at the same time the whole mechanism is so complicated that they fail to understand its *raison d'être*.

There was, he argued, a pervading sense of crisis which he dated to World War I but which was fuelled by the threat of nuclear war. The result was a 'feeling of being "caught", the impossibility for most people to regard themselves by any stretch of the imagination as the masters of their own fate'.

Fifty years on there is no let-up in that sense of crisis; indeed it has taken on new forms, not least environmental. The 'system' is no more comprehensible. There is still, for most, no obvious way out.

We are surrounded by problems both concrete and fantastic. Until we are masters of our own fate, is it so surprising that many assume that the real masters are ordering our fates for us?

—David Glanz

## Island life

BISHOPS' BUTLERS AND GAY TASSIE

**I**T HAS BEEN an interesting few months here in Tasmania. There have been many stories worthy of commentary but perhaps

the fattest headlines reported same-sex-related legislation, the allegations against a senior Catholic priest and that Richard Butler would be our next governor.

Tasmanian news, for those not familiar with it, reflects interesting elements of national and international import, but writ small. It's as if Tasmania is the full stop beneath the exclamation.

Hobart Catholics awoke to a shocking front page of *The Mercury* on Saturday 11 August. Previously unscathed by major abuse allegations, the Archdiocese reeled with claims by a former altar boy and seminarian, Mr Derrum Kearns, that he had faced repeated sexual assaults 20 years ago from a priest. Mr Kearns had approached Archbishop Doyle two years ago seeking the removal of the priest from parish and pastoral ministry but was unhappy that meetings and correspondence did not elicit this response. According to *The Mercury*, the priest was only removed from ministry after a threat of legal action, leading Mr Kearns to go public on *A Current Affair* and ask for the archbishop's resignation.

On 29 August, headlines of *The Mercury* were dominated by the passage through our upper house of the 'most progressive relationship laws in the world'. Gay rights activist Rodney Croome praised the reforms for allowing registration of newly termed 'significant' relationships, the removal of 'de facto' from Tasmanian law and the eligibility for same-sex couples to adopt the child of their partner. A campaign against the laws by the Catholic Church had described them as an attack on marriage. One correspondent to the Archdiocesan newspaper *The Standard* suggested that Mr Kearns's claims of sexual abuse were deliberately timed to undo the church's campaign against the same-sex laws.

In August Tasmanians learned that Richard Butler (and his partner Dr Jennifer Gray) would be moving to Hobart to live in the governor's mansion on the Derwent. The highly regarded previous resident Sir Guy Green had recently served the nation by standing in as governor-general after the resignation of Dr Peter Hollingworth.

Some aspects of the story that excited interest were as follows: the premier, Jim Bacon, was beside himself at having appointed such an internationally

prominent personage to act as a de facto ambassador for Tasmania. Some people were concerned that Richard Butler was unmarried and intended to foist his de facto partnership on morally upright islanders. The fact that he is a ferocious republican played in a number of interesting directions. There was outrage expressed by some at the oxymoron of a republican governor, to which the premier tantalised with 'he won't be the only one'. Others, like Greg Barns, the Australian Republican Movement's former campaign director, were concerned that by accepting the position His Excellency had shown he wasn't republican enough. David Flint, leading monarchist, was reported by *The Mercury* as detecting a 'certain conversion' in Mr Butler. His Excellency intends to do away to the reference to his excellence.

Many islanders asked why it was that the premier had failed to appoint an eminent Tasmanian to be Governor of Tasmania. Was this further evidence of our lingering self-doubt or backwardness? Discussion of home-grown candidates tended to nominate champion footballers, legendary axemen or Reggie from *Big Brother*. I thought Margaret Scott, poet and national treasure, might have been a deserving appointment. Not only is she widely loved by Tasmanians, she's been living in a shack on the Tasman peninsula since her house burnt down and certainly needs better accommodation. Nevertheless, Richard and Jennifer got the mansion and were married the day after the swearing-in.

There were certainly more vital stories for the future of the island and its islanders than these. *Spirit of Tasmania III* found a berth in Sydney's Darling Harbour, our population soared with a third of house sales going to 'mainlanders' and the Tassie Devils footy team got a home final in the VFL. But the bishop, the Butlers and gay Tassie claimed more than their share of headlines and exclamation marks.

—Tony Brennan

*This month's contributors:* Peter Pierce is *Eureka Street's* turf correspondent; David Glanz is a Melbourne-based writer. He remembers where he was when JFK was shot; Tony Brennan is a teacher at a Catholic school in Hobart.



## Refining Einstein

**P**OOOR OLD EINSTEIN. He's bound to be found wanting in the end, like Newton and Galileo before him. Though their scientific 'laws' were correct given the data available to them, and though their work is still used to predict motion on Earth and its surrounds, a better model encompassing the universe—Einstein's—came along and relegated Newton and Galileo to the status of special case.

That's the thing about science. It's a process, with its own built-in error correction mechanism. It's an endless debate, held in a forum where ideas and arguments can be tested and refined.

But where does that leave science communication? How is science to be reported? It's mostly work in progress, but can the punters cope with that? Or can they only accept research presented in black and white, just the facts, the results, 'the truth'? The answer to this question is important to the public support of research.

Archimedes was on the sidelines of such a debate recently. He and several colleagues had been involved in publicising research from a reputable institute, which had been peer-reviewed and published. The work pointed to a potential cause for a common type of cancer. It was preliminary and speculative, but interesting. And the publicity worked. The research was reported worldwide.

However, a well-respected senior researcher from another institute believed the work was flawed, the techniques inadequate and the results not credible. He took not only the scientists to task, but those involved in the publicity. Despite the fact that the work had already passed the examination of others, he thought it was irresponsible to report this speculative research, even when labelled as such. He thought the results would be misunderstood by non-scientists—that they would take them as fact, raising false hopes. Research should only be reported once it was fully proven or accepted, he argued.

Apart from the question of what constitutes fully proven, and by whom does such research need to be accepted, there are other problems with these attitudes. They assume that non-scientists are not only uninterested in science, but also incapable of understanding that it's a process—that they just want to be provided with facts without any debate or uncertainty. Archimedes finds this view somewhat patronising and arrogant.

Worse, the implication that scientists should not involve or even make others privy to their debates—that they should simply hand down the results of their work as absolute truth—is absurd and dangerous. Whether it be stem cells or climate change, researchers need public support to turn their findings into something meaningful. And that means giving lay people a seat at the debate, so they too can be convinced, so they don't have to take things on trust.

Just ask the succession of British governments whose handling of mad cow disease and a major foot-and-mouth outbreak, among other issues, has managed to destroy public confidence in government statements on food safety, genetic modification and vaccination.

Far from muzzling researchers, Archimedes votes for better communication and more public debate. Now, let's get on with finding those flaws in Einstein. ■

**Tim Thwaites** is a freelance science writer.



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Uniya, the Jesuit Social Justice Centre, and Eureka Street, invite you to the launch of

# TAMPERING with ASYLUM

## A Universal Humanitarian Problem

An examination of the Australian government's response to the *Tampa* incident written by **Fr. Frank Brennan SJ AO**, Jesuit priest and lawyer, and the Associate Director of Uniya, the Jesuit Social Justice Centre.

If you would like to hear **Fr. Brennan** discuss his latest book, please attend one of the following events.

### Locations and times:

#### CANBERRA

Wednesday 5 November 12 noon  
National Press Club,  
16 National Circuit, Barton

#### PERTH

Thursday 13 November 6.00pm  
Notre Dame University, Fremantle  
Guest: Dr. Carmen Lawrence MP

#### MELBOURNE

Wednesday 19 November 6.30pm  
Reader's Feast Bookstore,  
Basement, Cnr of Bourke & Swanston Sts,  
Melbourne  
Guest: Prof. Robert Manne B.Phil

#### ADELAIDE

Thursday 20 November 6.00pm  
Imprints Booksellers  
107 Hindley Street, Adelaide  
Guest: Dr. Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE

#### SYDNEY

Wednesday 26 November 6.00pm  
Gleebooks, 49 Glebe Road, Glebe  
Guest: Tom Keneally AO

#### BRISBANE

Tuesday 2 December 7.00m  
UQ Centre Lecture Theatre,  
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## Chesterton and paradox

WHEN I WAS A SCHOOLBOY, I read all I could find by G.K. Chesterton. I liked the boisterousness of his writing, the paradoxes in which he effortlessly unveiled the self-contradictions of modernity, and his romantic celebration of Catholicism. He made Catholics seem winners.

Later on, as is the case with one's first musical and literary passions, my enthusiasm waned. But I was recently stimulated to reread Chesterton by James Schall's celebration of his critique of modern thought (*New Blackfriars*, May 2002), and by the close reading of Chesterton by Slavoj Žižek (*The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*, 2003) who sees the force of his criticism of modernity, but finds his Catholicism ultimately perverse.

Chesterton's favourite literary device is paradox. He often uses it effectively to show how the urge to overthrow religion in the name of freedom often leads to the overthrow of freedom. The paradox also illuminates the current response to terrorism.

But Chesterton's most interesting paradoxes are deployed against the view that at the heart of Catholicism is the oppressive force of law, routine and world-denial. He claims that what in our culture is seen as daring, rebellious, innovative and free is in reality predictable and tedious, while what seems oppressive and prohibitive in fact is adventurous and innovative. 'Civilization is the most sensational of departures and the most romantic of rebellions.' In the same spirit, he argues that paganism, which presents itself as happy and carefree, is deeply melancholic. In contrast, 'the outer ring of Christianity is a rigid guard of ethical abnegations and professional priests; but inside that inhuman guard you will find the old human life dancing like children, and drinking wine like men; for Christianity is the only frame for pagan freedom.'

The image of a dancing space surrounded by a palisade is characteristic of Chesterton's treatment of Catholicism. 'The creeds and the crusades, the hierarchies and the horrible persecutions were not organized, as is ignorantly said, for the suppression of reason. They were organized for the difficult defence of reason ... In so far as religion is gone, reason is going.'

Chesterton's romantic ballads retain their charm. His psychologically penetrating criticism of modernity also deserves reading. But for our contemporaries he is a seductive guide because his rhetoric offers his disciples more than it can deliver and more than they should accept. Chestertonians are tempted with an inside knowledge of the world, one that enables them to see straight what others see crookedly. They are also tempted to believe that no matter how grimly and unforgivingly they defend their faith and belabour their adversaries, their faith secretly endows them with a lightness of heart and a sprightliness in love.

Both are fraudulent. Coercive measures taken to defend reason and faith eviscerate faith and reason. Brutality shapes to grimness the spirit of those who yield to it, even for the best of reasons.

Inside knowledge, too, is of limited use when you are conversing with your fellows. It inhibits good conversation—the mixture of exploration, misunderstanding, mutual discovery, and the shifts of mind and heart that form the climate in which truth can shine. ■

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



## Pet theories

Fearless investigative reporters for a Jesuit magazine become wary when their lords and masters hit the daily newspapers. Of course, those who pack the scrum shouldn't complain about a bit of aggro, but you do feel a bit aggrieved when Jesuit magazines kick own goals, as did *La Civiltà Cattolica* recently in an article on animals as pets. Writing sceptically about pets and their owners is an own goal in any code, even if the article was for animals and only against treating them as human. But the assault on feeding the moggie caviar and hibernating the family python in designer electric blankets restarted old wars between Jesuits and Friars, between the intellectuals and the workers in the church. Thundered Fr Canciani, a blesser of pcts: 'The average theologian is almost always solitary, and closed in his ivory tower.' Historians will note that hostilities began on the Feast of St Francis of Assisi.



## No dice

You could be forgiven for thinking that the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs cribs most of its refugee determinations from a Monopoly 'chance' card: go directly to jail, do not pass go, do not collect \$200. *Refugee and asylum seeker issues in Australia* shows there is more to it than that. The booklet, produced by the Ecumenical

Migration Centre of the Brotherhood of St Lawrence, gives clear and detailed answers to questions such as 'What is the difference between a refugee and an asylum seeker?', 'Why are the onshore and offshore programs linked?', 'What are bridging visas?', 'What happens when a refugee's TPV runs out?', and 'What are the arguments for and against using the current system of immigration detention?'

The writing is straightforward and open, aiming to explain rather than persuade. The booklet could be used as a resource by anyone who wants more information, including asylum seekers and refugees who want to understand their own legal situation and the options open to them. It doesn't assume any previous knowledge, and the direct style allows for people who have recently learnt English as a second language. The complexity of immigration issues is always acknowledged, however. It is a calm, decent and sensible response to emotional issues.

This valuable publication is available through the Ecumenical Migration Centre, (03) 9416 0044.



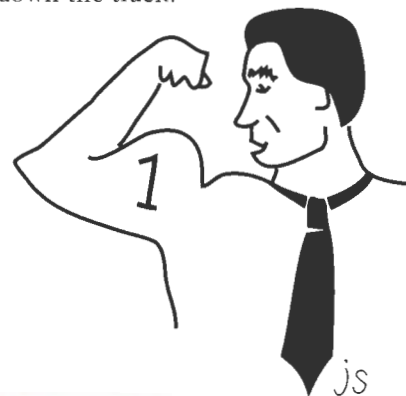
## Go fish!

Experts from the universities of Edinburgh, St. Andrews and Leeds have discovered something remarkable—no longer will fish be perceived as one of the least intelligent species on our planet. Biologists Calum Brown, Keven Laland and Jens Krause go so far as to say that fish are highly intelligent. 'Gone (or at least obsolete) is the image of fish as drudging and dimwitted pea-brains, driven largely by "instinct", with what little behavioural flexibility they possess being severely hampered by an infamous "three-second memory".'

Their results show that fish have remarkable social skills: they can recognise each other, develop strategies for catching prey and even exhibit the knowledge

of using tools and building complex nests. Figuring that fish are the most ancient of the major vertebrate groups, some people may argue that this discovery is not necessarily exceptional.

So the next time you're standing in front of a tank at the local pet shop and joke that the fish inside might not recognise you in three seconds' time, think again. They may even recognise you years down the track.



## True Lies

When Representative Darrell Issa petitioned 1.6 million Californians to request a recall against the Democratic Governor Gray Davis, it wasn't about the \$38 billion deficit, or about the failing education system, it was about securing Republican representation for the presidential campaign of 2004.

Arnold Schwarzenegger's success was due almost entirely to his familiarity. The Republican party couldn't have scripted a better physical presence than ex-Mr Universe, himself. His experience in the political arena is as unconvincing as his acting ability but Californians were not deterred from turning out to the voting booths. They don't care about the absence of quality, theirs is a state of illusion.

To add to the conundrum Schwarzenegger has listed—via national television—his qualifications for the role: 'My movie *Kindergarten Cop* prepared me to deal with education issues, and my role as Mr Freeze in *Batman & Robin* gives me the insight necessary to deal with global warming.' By this reckoning Maxwell Smart ought head the CIA.

With its integrity already in question, the formidable face of America takes a slap to its credibility.

The new Governor of California has promised, while he's in office, there will be no need for another *Total Recall*.





## Floating flock

**I**BET AGRICULTURE Minister Warren Truss is not much given to poetry, but he struck an uncharacteristic note of gloomy lyricism the other day when he told the ABC that Australia's 50 thousand refugee sheep would be leaving Kuwait that morning to begin 'their long journey down the Gulf'.

The unfolding affair of the floating sheep would move most people, even someone named Truss, to poetry, because it is full of echoes, paradoxes and drama. For one thing, the ship itself is called the *Cormo Express*. This is obviously someone's elaborate joke because it is anything but 'express'. On the contrary, it's pottering around the exotic landfalls of the strife-torn Middle East like a romantic tramp steamer.

It's a bit hard on the sheep, because they are behaving, as far as I can see, with a good deal more dignity than the bureaucrats and governments responsible for their marine dilemma, but you can't help thinking of Hieronymus Bosch's 'Ship of Fools'. There, a particularly loathsome group of people are carousing, vomiting, fornicating and being generally futile while their ridiculous craft drifts aimlessly on, symbolic of a mad, debased world.

The sheep's plight invites a comparable symbolism, but only Warren Truss, of all people, has come close to recognising the metaphoric possibilities in the strange voyage of the *Cormo Express*, though he rapidly resumed the argot of Canberra when under pressure. 'We are still examining the options of unloading the sheep at an offshore island,' he told a reporter. 'We haven't ruled an offshore island out of the equation,' he added, nailing it down. No-one seems to have pointed out the extreme difficulty, if not the impossibility, of finding an onshore island but probably that dawned on him later.

Certainly the Prime Minister is in no position to give rein to any metaphoric insights he might be glimpsing as he tries to cope with the ramifying problems of the 'sheep ship' (as an extraordinarily courageous, sure-tongued ABC reporter referred to it). Mr Howard has had many trials associated with ships on strange, illicit, dangerous or otherwise noteworthy voyages and probably he does not wish to remind either himself or 'the Australian people' of past maritime adventures. One of the remedies traditionally available on ships at sea, for example, is to chuck the offending item/person/animal/rubbish overboard. But Mr Howard has good reasons for not wanting us to dwell on what might be called the 'defenestration solution'. Nor can he go down the path of maligning and vilifying the sheep—a standard ploy of politicians seeking to demean opponents. 'Do we

want sheep like this to enter our country?' Mr Howard might have asked, except that that's a question he has already posed in another context and he won't want to be reminded about it. As for just knocking them all off—that, says Mr Howard, 'is just quite impractical and horrendously difficult'.

Well, one of the difficulties about shooting them, though probably not the one that was uppermost in Mr Howard's mind, is that even though sheep, having ceased to be lambs, appear unattractive and dumb (and, speaking as one who has run a sheep property, I can guarantee they are both) they do nevertheless have a rather beautiful eye. In panic, or fear or pain their gaze can be affecting to anyone of romantic or poetic inclination—like Mr Truss, say. So when you shoot them, it's best not to look them in the eye; and don't look at the others queuing up for the bullet either.

In their eyes there will be a knowingness you could do without.

**M**EANWHILE, THE SHIP sails on like a plague ship of old and the gentle-eyed sheep stare inscrutably at the fading ports and anonymous seas and wonder, as well they might, where their shepherd has gone.

*The Lord doesn't seem to be my shepherd/Recently I have endured much want/He has made me to lie down not in green pastures but on hot decks/Yea, he has led me beside still waters/But also by rough waters and choppy waters and broad waters and deep waters and endless bloody waters without ports/He does not restore my soul: I am a mere ruminant and therefore without soul/If these are the paths of righteousness that he is leading me in, then he can stick them: five weeks on a bloody sheep ship in the Middle East!/Yea, though I sail through the oceans of death in the world's hot spots, do I fear evil? My bloody oath I fear evil. I'm scared shitless/(Though the state of the decks would suggest otherwise)/I suppose Thou art with me, but the only rod and staff I know are whacked across my backside and they do not comfort me/Thou preparest a Table, but I think it is for roast lamb/Thou anointest my head with oil but it is diesel from this unravelling tub/The ship's bilges runneth over/The decks runneth over/Everything runneth over/Surely goodness and mercy will follow me to Kuwait/If not for all the days of what looks like being a short life/And I will dwell on this bloody ship forever.* ■

**Brian Matthews** is a writer and academic.



# Idyll times



**T**HE ISLAND OF JERBA, off the southeastern coast of Tunisia, has long been a place of legend. In Homer's *Odyssey*, this was the Land of the Lotus-Eaters where the inhabitants passed their lives 'in indolent forgetfulness, drugged by the legendary honeyed fruit'. Upon arriving on the island, Odysseus lamented that:

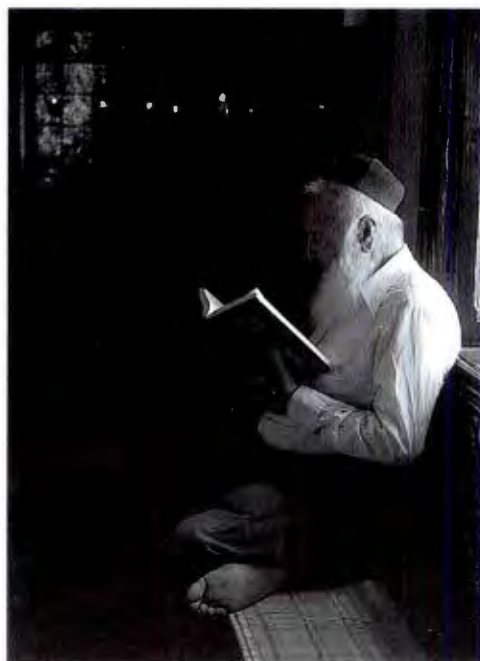
My men went on and presently met the Lotus-Eaters, nor did these Lotus-Eaters have any thoughts of destroying our companions, but they only gave them lotus to taste of. But any of them who ate the honey-sweet fruit of lotus was unwilling to take any message back, or to go away, but they wanted to stay there with the lotus-eating people, feeding on lotus, and forget the way home.

On my way to Jerba, the *louage* (shared taxi) driver, whose kind are not normally counted among the most poetic of people, announced that 'you are going to the island of dreams'.

It is not difficult to see why myths of an idyllic life of indulgence persist. In summer, the island's superb beaches are overrun with holiday-makers from Europe, while in winter flamingos gather in their thousands on the island's north-east coast. Houmt Souq, the main town on the island, is an enchanting mix of uniformly whitewashed architecture, covered *souqs* (markets) and shady, café-filled squares covered in vines.

Jerba's history is also like no other place in North Africa.

In the 8th century AD, the island became a refuge for the Ibadis, a schismatic Islamic Shi'a sect of the Kharijites who were fleeing persecution from more orthodox Islamic forces. The sect was predominantly Berber, the indigenous people of North Africa whose lands have throughout history been invaded by the Phoenicians, the Romans, the armies of Islam and the array of local dynasties which followed in their wake. The Berbers resisted, seeking out island, desert and mountain refuges as well as esoteric sects that expressed their resistance to



orthodoxies of any kind but their own.

Their architecture tells the story of Jerba as a place of refuge. Mosques (more than 200) and *menzels* (fortified homesteads) abound across the island, each built implicit with heavily buttressed walls, squat minarets and watchtowers. Some are even underground. Even at worship, the Ibadis were fearful of attack and ready to mount a defence at a moment's notice.

Today, the Ibadis survive only in the villages of southern Jerba and in the villages of the M'Zab Valley in central Algeria.

Living alongside the Ibadis of Jerba is one of the last remaining Jewish communities in the Islamic world, one of the oldest such communities anywhere outside Israel. The origin of the island's main synagogue—El-Ghriba or The Miracle—at Erriadh in the centre of the island is, suitably for Jerba, cloaked in legend. It is believed that a stone descended from heaven onto this very spot where the synagogue was built under the direction of a mysterious woman who similarly appeared from nowhere. Whether

this occurred in 586 BC, in the aftermath of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem, or after the Roman conquest of 71 AD, local Jews believe that on the day when the last Jew departs from the island, the keys to the synagogue will ascend to heaven.

That day may not be too far away. Many Jews of Jerba migrated to Israel after the Arab-Israeli wars of 1956 and 1967 and scarcely 200 remain. In April 2002, a suicide bomber drove his truck into the synagogue, killing 19 locals and tourists.

**L**ONG BEFORE the events of April 2002, the Tunisian government was at war with the Islamic opposition.

Upon achieving independence in 1956, the leadership of newly independent Tunisia launched a modernisation drive, the central element of which was an assault on the religious authorities of the country.

This policy was the brainchild of Habib Bourguiba, widely regarded as the founding father of modern Tunisia and still one of only two presidents in almost 50 years of independent history. Three times exiled under the French, the charismatic Bourguiba, a Sorbonne-trained lawyer, saw Islam as a regressive force in Tunisian society push towards modernisation.

Islamic leaders were stripped of their traditional positions of influence. Those who did not comply were removed from office or imprisoned. Hundreds of religious schools were abolished while the Islamic college at the Zeituna Mosque in Tunis, a centre of Islamic learning dating back centuries, was subsumed into the Western-style University of Tunis. The sharia (Qur'anic law) courts were also closed, and more than 60,000 hectares of land belonging to religious institutions were confiscated. In 1960, Bourguiba began actively discouraging Muslims from observing the holy fasting month of Ramadan which he regarded as a drain on the nation's productivity.

By the 1970s, an Islamic opposition



party, the Islamic Association, had emerged. It was led by the popular cleric Rashid Ghanouchi and called for a return to Islamic values. At the same time as promising greater freedoms, Bourguiba outlawed the Islamic parties. In 1981, parties backing Bourguiba won all 136 seats in the first multi-party elections since independence. In the election's aftermath, there were widespread anti-government riots, with dissent crystallising around the Islamic opposition.

Thousands of suspected Islamic activists were arrested. Torture, unfair trials and death sentences were the norm.

Alongside the repression, however, Bourguiba was credited by many in Tunisia with ensuring the nation's stability. Tunisia inhabits a tough neighbourhood. Algeria has been devastated by a brutal civil war sparked by widespread support for militant Islamic opposition groups, the Egyptian government has fought a lower intensity battle against similar groups, while Libya is a country still emerging from pariah status among Western countries. North Africa is not a region renowned for its protection of human rights, which have always assumed secondary importance in the battle to defeat the enemy within. Tunisia's population were deeply resentful of Bourguiba's repression, yet also grateful that his pre-emptive strikes had won stability in a region destabilised by extremist Islam.

**T**UNISIAN WOMEN WERE among the strongest supporters of Bourguiba. As part of his program of modernisation, Tunisian women enjoy more freedoms than almost anywhere else in the Arab World. One of Bourguiba's first acts was to outlaw polygamy, as well as the traditional practice which allowed men to divorce by simply renouncing their wives. He once described the veil as an 'odious rag' and banned it from schools and other government-run institutions. Women had to be 17 before they could be married and arranged marriages were severely restricted. By 1986 life expectancy for women had increased from 58 to 70 years, and girls now have equal access to education to boys; from 1966 to 2000, literacy rates for women rose from 17 per cent to 66 per cent. Almost a quarter of the workforce are women, including lawyers, magistrates and teachers.

In 1987 Bourguiba, who had assumed the title of 'The Supreme Combatant, the

Liberator of Women, the Builder of Modern Tunisia', was replaced in a bloodless coup by his Interior Minister Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. Little changed, however, in its policy towards Islam. From 1990 to 1992, a staggering 8000 alleged fundamentalists were detained. Then and until today, human rights groups such as Amnesty International have condemned Tunisia's human rights record. Tunisia became something of an international outcast, with countries lining up to criticise the country's human rights record.

How times have changed. Since September 11 2001, Tunisia is the West's best friend in a world where suppressing Islamic militancy is the prevailing doctrine. Tunisia has a close relationship with the United States which ignores the fact that Ben Ali was re-elected in 1999 with 99.44 per cent of the vote (up from 99.27 per cent a decade earlier).

Today, if you stroll through the streets of Tunis, the capital, the tension caused by repression seems a world away. Parisian-style cafés line the pavements and are filled with young women and men, all dressed in the latest European fashions, mixing publicly in a way that would be unthinkable in most other Arab countries. It is a dynamic society, almost European in its public face and with an orientation towards whatever is new and modern.

Yet if you ask any Tunisian what he or she thinks of Ben Ali and his predecessor, you receive a wry smile and a furtive look

over the shoulder. Most will assert that Ben Ali is a good president and leave the silence that follows for you to draw your own conclusions.

One man who was willing to talk was Bashir in Tozeur in the country's south:

I will tell you something: if you go to drink coffee with me, we cannot talk like this. Of every five men in the café, three will work for the police. I have a friend who is a lawyer. One time he voted against the government. He was sacked from his job. When he tried to open a shop, the government closed it down. If I do not have a picture of Ben Ali in my shop, the government will close it. If someone doesn't like someone, he will tell the police that he is an Islamist, just because he reads the Qur'an or goes to the mosque. That person will be arrested. It has happened to many of my friends. If there was an election, very few people want to vote for the Islamic parties. We are happy that what has happened in Algeria has not happened here. But do not think that this is freedom. This is dictatorship. If there were free elections in Tunisia, many would vote for the Islamic parties. But they would do it just to be against the government.

Back in Jerba, the island is slowly recovering from the April 2002 bombing, an event which locals refer to as 'Le Catastrophe'. The tourists have returned to the island and Muslims and Jews continue to live alongside one another in peace—a mosque lies just 100m from the synagogue's entrance.

After initial denials, al Qaeda was blamed for the attack, confirming local assertions that the bombing was the work of external extremists, pointing out that the local Muslim and Jewish communities have lived in harmony on Jerba for centuries.

But investigations have been unable to rule out Tunisian involvement. When I asked a local man about the bombing, which he deplored, he said that the involvement of disaffected Tunisians in the bombing would nonetheless come as no surprise. 'If you give people no other way to express their beliefs and frustration, this is what can happen.'

In the meantime, Jerba has reverted to the spirit of its fortress architecture. The synagogue is now barricaded and encircled by police, its people again hiding behind the battlements while the lotus-eaters bask on the beach. ■

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





# Deathly silence

**J**ULY 6 WAS the anniversary of one of the shameful events in Australia's relationship with Indonesia. In July 1998 on Biak—a tiny island just north of Australia—the Indonesian military carried out a massacre of more than 100 people, mostly women. And to Australia's shame, despite an intelligence investigation confirming that it happened, the Australian government refused to condemn the massacre, and to this day has refused to release the report.

I was in Biak last year and although the island is visually a tropical paradise, the experience was disturbing. The scars of the horrific events that took place on July 6, nearly five years ago, have not healed. Nor have the scars of 40 years of constant, and at times deadly, intimidation by the Indonesian police and military. In Biak, perhaps more than any other place I visited in West Papua, the fear of Indonesian intimidation and violence is palpable. As I travelled around Biak with my wife, I felt it was eerily unlike other places we had been. Teenage girls and young women did not engage us with their eyes or a smile. Fear and shame were written on their faces.

West Papua, less than 200 kilometres from Australia, was handed over to Indonesia in 1963 following the New York Agreement. This ended a long-running dispute between the Netherlands and Indonesia over the former Dutch colony. In 1969 a hotly disputed vote by just 1025 Indonesian-picked Papuans confirmed that West Papua would remain part of Indonesia. This vote was recently called a 'whitewash' by the United Nations Under-Secretary-General who supervised the hand-over of West Papua to Indonesia.

The Papuan Women's Solidarity Group was established to support victims of the massacre. At a meeting of the group in Biak town, I was told that all Biak

women live with the very real threat of physical or sexual violence every day of their lives, and they have done so for 40 years. The women described the monthly dances in remote villages, organised by the military, that every young woman, including those who are married, must attend. At these dances, or after, often at their homes, the women are raped by the



soldiers—and the families and husbands are powerless to do anything.

The day after this meeting, on a crowded public taxi driven by an off-duty member of Indonesia's paramilitary police, Brimod, I witnessed a minor example of the sort of everyday harassment that's commonplace on Biak. When a young village woman with a basket of freshly caught fish stepped out of the taxi at the local market, the driver

reached across and helped himself to two fish from her basket.

The details of the 1998 massacre are overwhelming. More than 20 women and a few men, victims of or witnesses to the atrocities, crowded into the coordinator's house for the Papuan Women's Solidarity Group meeting. They told me that at 5am the army opened fire on a crowd of sleeping young people at the harbour, who had been guarding their Morning Star flag, raised a few days earlier. The entire population of Biak town was rounded up at gunpoint and forced to the harbour area, where for the whole day they were subjected to physical and sexual abuses, including the young children. More than 100 people—mostly women, some with babies and young children—were rounded up and forced on board two naval vessels, where they were stripped, killed and their bodies mutilated and dumped at sea.

Hundreds were detained in the police station and at an army base for three days after the massacre. Many of the wounded had to go back to their villages without medical attention because the military prevented the hospital from treating them. Many people are still missing.

The community of Biak Island had joined in the independence demonstrations that were taking place across West Papua in July 1998. There was greater openness and a feeling of hope following the overthrow of President Suharto, and new President Habibie had made encouraging moves toward dialogue over East Timor. The Biak women made flags and banners and a Morning Star flag was flown from the water tower at the harbour.

On 2 July, police and military made a tentative attempt to remove the flag and stop the celebrations, but withdrew because they were outnumbered by the



demonstrators. More than 100 armed military reinforcements were brought in from Ambon, and at 5am on 6 July they began their military assault on the demonstrators and the population of Biak town.

**A** WITNESS WHO HAD a physical disability described how he was forced on board one of the naval vessels, but was thrown overboard by a sympathetic sailor as the frigate put to sea. He told how the women were stripped as the ship sailed out to sea. Nobody knows exactly what happened to the people on board, as no one survived. In the weeks that followed, a church report claims that bodies floated ashore, some with limbs cut off, women with breasts removed, men with penises cut off. The bodies of two women washed ashore on an outer island—they were tied together at their legs and their vaginas had been crammed with newspaper. Churches on Biak have documented the recovery of a total of 70 bodies, including those of young children, that either washed ashore or were recovered from fishing nets.

Sketchy reports about the massacre filtered out. But it was not until two

Australian aid workers who were present during the massacre, Rebecca Casey and Paul Meixner, returned to Australia and told their story that a few reports began to appear in the Australian media. *The Sydney Morning Herald* ran a story in November 1998. The two aid workers did not witness the killings and beatings—they had been told by Biak friends to hide in a house for three days. The fate of five Australian journalists who witnessed the invasion of East Timor in 1975 must surely have been on their minds.

Despite having authorised an official intelligence report into the massacre—compiled by Major Dan Weadon, an intelligence officer attached to the Jakarta embassy—the Australian Government refused to publicly condemn the Indonesian atrocities. And despite attempts by the Australia West Papua Association, including an unsuccessful ‘Freedom of Information’ application, the Weadon report has never been made public.

In an article in the *Sun-Herald* in November 2001, Captain Andrew Plunkett, a serving intelligence officer with the Australian Defence Force, claimed that the Biak massacre ‘was a dress rehearsal for the

TNI [Indonesian army] in East Timor’. And, in what the *Sun-Herald* article described as a ‘stunning and unorthodox attack on foreign policy by a serving officer’, Captain Plunkett went on to accuse the Australian Government of ‘giving a green light’ to the Indonesian military’s subsequent atrocities in East Timor ‘by turning a blind eye and not raising an official public protest’ against Indonesia’s behaviour in Biak.

It’s a testimony to the strength and integrity of Papuan people that despite the years of abuse by Indonesian security forces, they have maintained their 1988 pledge to pursue a non-violent struggle based, as they say, on ‘love and peace’.

At the end of my meeting with the Biak women, they told me that they would like to be able to travel overseas and tell the story of the massacre to the outside world—a world that has, for 40 years, ignored the plight of these people. And as I was leaving, in a show of solidarity and defiance the women chanted Merdeka! Merdeka! Merdeka!—Freedom! Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!

**Kel Dummett** is a Melbourne academic and writer.

# WESTON JESUIT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Evan Cuthbert • Master of Divinity • 1999

*Love ought to show itself in deeds more than in words.*

—St. Ignatius of Loyola

1988  
Missionary for child workers and their families, Tacna, Peru.

1993  
Youth Leadership Instructor: Voyageurs Outward Bound School, Ely Minnesota.

1998  
Enrolls at Weston Jesuit School of Theology.

1998  
Founding Member of the Weston Social Justice Forum.

May 1999  
Completes thesis on directing the church's mission to abused children; Graduates with Master of Divinity from Weston Jesuit School of Theology.

July 1999  
Director, Ignacio Volunteer Program, Boston College Campus Ministry Office.



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# Tonga at the crossroads (again)



**I**N RECENT YEARS the Kingdom of Tonga has featured prominently in news reports as a rather sad joke. In Tonga, where political authority is dependent on inherited rank rather than on talent and achievement, criticism of the government has been officially deemed to smack of disloyalty to the nation and to its traditions. In a reversal of *noblesse oblige*, the favoured few blatantly enjoy privileges on behalf of the many. This is an arrangement readymade to support an administrative system that seems to be reconciled to charges of corruption, cronyism and inefficiency, yet which is putatively sanctioned by *faka Tonga* (indigenous custom). Hence the indignant opposition of the oligarchy to the pro-democracy movement and the fiasco over the banning of the *Taimi'o Tonga* newspaper.

The reasons for this state of affairs are deep-seated but readily discernable. The main one is that power resides with Taufa'ahau Tupou IV (king since 1965) and

that he exercises it in association with a small class of hereditary nobles. None of these people is accountable to the 130,000 commoners who tenant their lands and who supply food for feasts—and who constitute the bulk of the population. Thus it is that wild notions (like making money by storing nuclear waste or by incinerating other countries' used car tyres) and misguided policies (like selling passports and appointing a Court Jester) can be countenanced without embarrassment.

There was a time when things were very different, when Tonga could be looked to for setting worthy examples rather than for offering cautionary tales. Taufa'ahau Tupou I, commonly known as King George I, unified Tonga under his rule in 1852. Well before Italy (in 1870) and Germany (in 1871) were fashioned from collections of principalities into nation states, Tonga had shown the way. Then, in his law code of 1862, King George not only freed commoners from serfdom and

curbed the power of the chiefs but made education compulsory for all children. That was eight years ahead of England, ten years ahead of the State of Victoria and 15 years before it became so in New Zealand. In 1875 George enacted a written constitution which entrenched 'freedom of speech and newspaper for ever' (sect.7). By such means and by international diplomacy the king (who lived till 1893) worked successfully to ensure that Tonga, alone among the Pacific Islands, maintained its political independence.

It also prospered. In 1909 one commentator calculated that with an annual *disposable* income of 36 pounds per head 'the Tongans are the richest people in the world'. That figure, because Tongan housing and food costs were minimal, compared more than favourably with the Australian basic wage in 1907. Of 109 pounds p.a., most of which had to be spent on living expenses. Another high point was the reign of Queen Salote, from 1918 to 1965.



George's great-great-granddaughter and mother of the present king, she charmed the world with her graciousness and presided over a renaissance of Tongan culture and collective solidarity. A handsome edition of her poetry edited by her biographer, Dr Elizabeth Wood-Ellem of Melbourne, is



due to be published shortly.

The problems that have beset Tonga since Salote's time, and especially during the last 20 years, derive in large measure from the pervasive and impersonal tide of 'modernisation'. That is not a phenomenon unique to Tonga. But difficulties have been exacerbated by the unwillingness of the ruling group to adapt, to curb its unearned advantages for the sake of the larger common good. Instead, it seeks to repress criticism and probably owes its survival, along with Tonga's present social stability, less to its merits than to the fact that about 50 per cent of all Tongans have chosen to live overseas in order to better themselves.

**Y**ET TONGA'S OWN history offers plentiful precedent for challenge and change rather than for a passive attachment to an ossified and inequitable status quo that shelters under the mantle of the *faka Tonga*. The Tongan experience has not been static. For example, traditions record the assassinations of several Tui Tonga, or

sacred high chiefs, while even the revered King George spilled much blood on his way to power. More benignly, and more reassuringly, the reforms he instituted amounted to a thorough and enduring social revolution. Despite a resurgence of factionalism in the 1880s and again in the 1920s, these measures preserved the integrity of the Tongan nation. That precious legacy of responding flexibly to shifting circumstances now appears to be challenged by the critics of the pro-democracy advocates. The critics seem to assume that the people cannot be trusted to act responsibly or patriotically.

Besides the advantages of reflecting on history, there is another lesson to be drawn from the Tongan case. Despite the often parroted objection that it is a foreign or 'colonial' invention and is inappropriate for a given culture or regime, democracy remains an invaluable and generally applicable principle of government. Democracy enjoins the acceptance of public accountability on those in power. It does not sit easily with conveniently rationalised exemptions from normal standards of good practice. The critics of democracy tend, not surprisingly, to be found among those with sectional interests to preserve, and who also benefit from its absence.

What, then, is the prognosis? My guess is this: since Tongans are a relatively well-educated people with a strong sense of national identity, mounting internal demands and external pressures will lead to the introduction of a more inclusive system of government within five years, and respect for the monarchy will survive any reduction of the oligarchy's entitlements. Or is that being unduly optimistic? After all, it is difficult to understand how anyone with a magnanimous appreciation of the *faka Tonga* could support legislation that might increase public frustration. Yet that is what the proposed amendment to the constitution abolishing judicial review is likely to do.

Meanwhile, what is one to say to those who resent any criticism from Australia

and New Zealand on such matters as an unwarranted intrusion? The answer is clear, as is the evidence. Given Tonga's close links of friendship and kinship with those two countries and the generosity of their assistance to Tonga, and the importance to them internationally of not being deemed to connive at institutionalised injustice, any criticism is meant to be helpful not hostile. It should be considered carefully, for the consequences of rejecting it may not be any kind of joke.

**A**TROUBLESOME FACTOR remains in all this, one that lies beyond the usual calculations of political commentators. It is the elusive—and largely unspoken— notion of *kuonga* (literally, 'era'). This is the expectation, said to derive from the ancient Tui Tonga line of sacred rulers, that each regnal period should be marked from the beginning by a distinctive quality or character, and that this should not thereafter be substantially modified or traded in for something else. For George I it was 'reform'. For Salote it was 'reunion', especially in church allegiances. For Tupou IV, educated at Newington College and at Sydney University, it was 'economic modernisation', but within the social conditions of the time. That these no longer prevail is, from the perspective of the ruling elite, irrelevant. Several decades on, the monarchical *kuonga* of the 1960s has become too narrow. It has created a dangerous blind spot for the government. Accordingly, if significant change is to come without social disturbance, it will be more likely at the beginning of the next reign than in the remaining years of the present one.

Which raises the question: is Crown Prince Tupouto'a, the heir presumptive, likely to favour, say, 'inclusiveness' as the *kuonga* of his reign, and thus sanction the radical political reformation that the times—and many of the Tongans—seem to demand? It is still too early to know. The past has shown that such a move could enhance rather than impair the *faka Tonga*. Official utterances on the ailing king's 85th birthday on 4 July 2003 suggest, however, that Tonga's royalty has little interest in history—or in learning from it. ■

**Hugh Laracy**, a specialist in Pacific Islands history, is an Associate Professor at the University of Auckland.

# Political diplomacy

William Macmahon Ball, 1901–1986

**W**ILLIAM MACMAHON BALL, or 'Mac' as I shall refer to him henceforth, was born in Casterton, in south-western Victoria in 1901, the son of an Anglican minister and the youngest of a family of five. He recalled that he hated going to church, and resented the restrictions placed on Sunday activities, which included a ban on reading anything other than religious literature.

His father retired when Mac was nine, and they moved to Melbourne. He had an undistinguished school career, but was able to gain a scholarship to Caulfield Grammar School for his last two years of secondary education. His lack of scholastic distinction meant that he failed to matriculate. However, the outbreak of war in 1914 led to the enlistment of a large number of schoolteachers. (Schoolteachers have played a large part in providing officers for the Australian army. One of the senior teachers at my own secondary school, A.H. Ramsay, became a brigadier in the Second World War and later Director of Education in Victoria.) The shortage of teachers meant that youngsters like Mac were in demand. He recalled that he taught school during the day and attended a coaching college at night, which enabled him to teach the subjects he had failed for his matriculation examination. He finally matriculated and was admitted to the University of Melbourne.

Mac distilled his own experience by reminding people that school performance was no guarantee of university success. In his own case, he fulfilled this proposition by doing well at university and gained honours in philosophy, psychology and sociology. He was also a foundation member of the Labor Club, along with other well-known characters such as the historian Brian Fitzpatrick. He was soon appointed to a lectureship in psychology, logic and ethics, and quickly established a reputation as a brilliant teacher. In 1929, he was awarded a Rockefeller Travelling Fellowship in political science, and spent two years at the London School of Economics and Political Science under the tutelage of Harold Laski, probably the best known teacher of political

science in Britain during his lifetime. (Laski was the mentor for political activists from all over the British Empire, and many of his students became political leaders in their own countries.)

Laski had an abiding influence on Mac. One of his main concerns was to expose the abuse of power by governments. In his largest and most influential work, *A Grammar of Politics*, first published in 1925, Laski emphasised that agents of the state are as fallible as any other citizens. 'The danger of leaving to the State a sovereign position lies in the fact that it must always act through agents, and those agents are drawn from a body of experience which is not necessarily coincident with the general interest of the community. As Rousseau said, it is the natural tendency of all governments to deteriorate. To leave to the State the final control of all other wills in the community is, in fact, to leave to a small number of men an authority it is not difficult to abuse.'

Laski returned to this topic in a later book, *Liberty in the Modern State*, which was republished in 1937 as one of the earliest Pelican paperbacks. Some of his remarks could have been written yesterday. The state, he said, cannot be relied upon to act as the 'guardian of tolerance'—a notion which has reappeared on the public agenda through the speeches of the Commonwealth Treasurer, Mr Costello. 'In a time of crisis,' Laski wrote, 'when the things we hold most dear are threatened, we shall find the desire to throw overboard the habits of tolerance almost irresistible.' He went on to link liberty in general with freedom of speech in particular. The crux of the matter was that the free exercise of opinions is vitally dependent upon the truthfulness of the facts available to us through the news media. Laski warned against the use of stereotypes, which create a miasma that is impossible to penetrate, and concluded that the control of the media by special interests may make prisoners of men who believe themselves to be free.

In 1938, Mac himself took up this topic in his introduction to a collection of essays called *Press, Radio and World*

*Affairs*. A tightening of international tension, he observed, produces a worldwide degeneration in the news. The maxim that truth was the first casualty of war was an understatement. Truth becomes a casualty long before the outbreak of hostilities. It is suffocated by the atmosphere of anxiety and distrust that goes with preparations for war. As an illustration, he cited the statement made by H.V.C. Thorby, Minister for Defence in the Lyons government, following the resignation of Anthony Eden from the Chamberlain government in Britain in protest against its policy of appeasing Hitler. Mr Thorby declared that it was impracticable for the public to be fully informed on delicate international discussions, based on secret information. To this, Mac responded that democratic government requires an informed public opinion. If democracy is to mean wise government as well as good government, it is important that public opinion should be educated on important current issues.

**M**AC WAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED with the right of the ABC to air discussion of political events, and the contemporary relevance of his comments on the coverage of international affairs is painfully obvious. There was, he remarked, one very good pragmatic test of whether a broadcasting system allows the measure of freedom which the avowal of democracy would imply, and that was whether there was freedom for speakers to broadcast criticism of government policy.

I first encountered Mac through listening to the ABC while I was still a schoolboy, and his mellifluous voice and style were familiar to me long before I actually met him. In 1940, after teaching a course called Modern Political Institutions during the 1930s, he was appointed director of short-wave broadcasting services in the newly-created Department of Information, and headed a remarkable team of radio men, journalists and anti-Nazi European refugees, who were technically enemy aliens. The Europeans were responsible for monitoring and translating



foreign-language broadcasts. Mac remained as leader of this team when it was taken over by the ABC in 1942, and stayed on when Arthur Calwell, now Minister for Information, reclaimed it in 1943. In no time at all, Mac came into conflict with the new director of the service appointed by Calwell, and resigned. Mac was never one for suffering fools gladly.

In 1945, Mac returned to Melbourne University, but was soon drafted back into government as an adviser to the Australian delegation at the San Francisco conference that drew up the charter of the United Nations. He returned again to the University, but was drafted once more to go to Indonesia as an observer on behalf of the Department of External Affairs.

His favourite anecdote about this period relates to the fact that the Australian waterside workers were black-banning Dutch ships which were taking supplies to the Dutch forces in Indonesia. Mac claimed that he went around Indonesia declaring that he was an Australian waterside worker, which opened all doors. It is fairly clear that Mac did not have a very high opinion of President Sukarno, and was much happier in the company of the socialist prime minister, Sutan Sjahrir. Sukarno got rid of Sjahrir in due course.

The pattern repeated itself once more when the new Australian prime minister Ben Chifley asked Mac to represent Australia and the other Commonwealth countries on the Allied Council for Japan. The British government, as the senior partner, should logically have nominated a representative, but they apparently decided not to risk conflicts which they believed, correctly, would inevitably break out as the result of the dictatorial methods of the Supreme Allied Commander, General Douglas MacArthur. (He was soon nicknamed The Mikado.) An American magazine, describing Mac's appointment, characterised him as an aggressive Australian with a mind of his own. Mac was in the job for about 18 months, but finally resigned in disgust when his political boss, Dr H.V. Evatt, failed to back him up. According to Mac, one of his friends said at this point that at least he had the Christian virtue of resignation. Mac's book *Japan: Enemy or Ally?*

gives blow-by-blow descriptions of his fencing matches with the General.

Yet again, Mac was asked by Ben Chifley to lead a goodwill mission to south-east Asia during 1948. This mission helped to lay the groundwork for the Colombo Plan and also for the decision by the Commonwealth Government, in 1952, to subsidise the teaching of Asian languages at Australian universities.



I can speak about that directly, as I was an official of the Prime Minister's Department in 1951–52, and was one of the people who handled the files on the subject.

**B**ACK IN AUSTRALIA, Mac was invited by the Melbourne *Herald* proprietor, Sir Keith Murdoch, to become its resident expert on foreign affairs. It will surprise nobody to learn that they soon clashed, and Mac registered yet another resignation. He then gave a series of lectures on international affairs to the undergraduate students in political science at Melbourne University, which was where I first encountered him in the flesh. His lectures became the book on Japan. Shortly afterwards, he was appointed foundation professor of political science, and his career of resignations came to an apparent end.

Mac's clashes with authority did not end there. He returned to the ABC as a

regular commentator on Pacific affairs, with a weekly slot on Sundays. I was a regular listener. In 1952, he referred to a report by the Red Cross which examined allegations about the use of germ warfare by the French in Indo-China, and suggested that they should be looked into. According to the story which I was told by people at the ABC, the broadcast was heard by the Minister for External Affairs, R.G. Casey, who was infuriated and put pressure on the ABC. It was even said that Mr Casey had been shaving at the time and was so disturbed that he cut himself. At all events, Mac's weekly program was discontinued and he became an occasional commentator on international affairs.

I joined the Political Science Department shortly after this episode, at Mac's direct invitation. (Life was simpler in those days.) I stayed there until 1956, when I moved to Canberra. I remained in close touch with Mac and with the Melbourne department, because at the time the Canberra University College, where I taught until it became part of the Australian National University in 1960, was under the tutelage of Melbourne University. In later years, Mac was invited by the Public Service Board in Canberra to arrange seminars for senior public servants and asked me to become one of the regular lecturers.

Mac's views on international affairs remain as valid today as they were in the 1930s. In 1936, he published *Possible Peace*, in which he examined justifications for the use of force. Discussing the shortcomings of the League of Nations, he observed that if a world community were to come into being, it would be justified in establishing a world police force. But it is impossible to regard existing armaments as part of such an international force; they are the instruments of national power, dedicated to serve national ends. To build an alliance is not to create a system of collective security. The world will never be civilised until collective security becomes a reality.

We can all say amen to that. ■

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# The war of the willing

**T**HE FAILURE BY THE United States to find any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq raises disturbing questions for Australians. Our intelligence agencies should be reeling from the massive failure in US and British intelligence. Why was their advice so wrong? Was it simply incompetence, or was it the result of political interference?

One hopes our agencies are also deeply concerned about the cavalier attitude of our government which seems so blasé about such a catastrophic intelligence failure. Whatever happened to political accountability? And our military personnel must be wondering why their lives should be so incompetently placed at risk.

Ignoring the UN teams that had for years been looking for any weapons of mass destruction, the US sent the 1400-member Iraq Survey Group to scour the country for these weapons. After five months, its CIA representative, David Kay, reported in October 2003 that they had found none. Kay wanted another \$US600 million to continue the search, bringing the total cost to about \$US1 billion. Few observers now think any significant WMDs will be found, but it is a measure of the desperation of the Bush administration that it is prepared to consider squandering such sums when they could be much better spent in reconstructing Iraq.

President Bush has changed the rhetoric and is now making much of the fact that Iraq had retained a *capability* to make such weapons, claiming that this justified the war. But the existence of such capability is news to no-one, since the US and other Western countries helped supply many of these weapons programs in the first place. As the quip goes, the Western countries still have many of the receipts for such weapons and programs. It seems that Saddam had destroyed his chemical and biological weapons by the mid-1990s, and that he had no active nuclear program.

Even after Saddam in the 1980s had used chemical weapons against the Kurds and Iranians, the US continued to supply Iraq with weapons and support, especially critical battlefield intelligence. It is during this period that Saddam perpetrated most of his mass killings. The US did not then call for

humanitarian intervention to overthrow him. Moreover, the US did nothing to protect members of the Muslim Shii sect from Saddam, when it provoked a revolt in southern Iraq after the Kuwait war. Thousands of Shii died while the US forces watched. No wonder that new US attempts to justify the invasion on humanitarian grounds are seen as deeply hypocritical.

The lack of justification for the war should be of immense concern to the churches, as the just war tradition provides the key moral framework for judging the legitimacy of war, and has been one of the churches' most significant contributions to Western culture and political theory.

Yet the 'coalition of the willing' rushed into war against the widespread opposition of the mainstream Western churches, even in the 'coalition' countries. This has never happened in the Western democracies before. The Pope himself, buttressed by leading Vatican officials and a spontaneous chorus from Catholic bishops' conferences around the world, repeatedly opposed the intervention in Iraq.

**T**HE CHURCHES WOULD have been even stronger in their opposition but for the fact that the US, British and Australian governments repeatedly claimed that they had incontrovertible evidence that Iraq posed an urgent and immediate risk with its weapons of mass destruction, and/or was linked with the al Qaeda terrorists. But whenever these governments offered any so-called evidence, it was almost immediately challenged by UN or other weapons experts. Only when war was imminent and still no firm evidence had been produced were the churches and other groups able to declare more definitively that war was not justified. By then, of course, the political decision to invade had long been made.

The US Bush administration is now sinking under the weight of its misrepresentation of the intelligence and the justification for war, as well as the quagmire of occupation in Iraq. Prime Minister Blair has also been fighting for survival in Britain. Yet the Howard government, walking away from its responsibilities as an occupying power in Iraq, tells us it is all past history.



As Brian Toohy wrote in the *Australian Financial Review* (4–5 October)—a paper that has maintained the highest standards of critical commentary on the war—this was ‘one of the worst intelligence failures in modern history’. ‘The staggering level of incompetence makes it extremely difficult to see why Australia should take any notice of anything emanating from British intelligence agencies.’

But the Australian government seems remarkably unconcerned about this.

**M**OREOVER, AS ONE OF only three countries with significant forces invading Iraq, Australia had added responsibility, and could have used its influence to insist on incontrovertible evidence and UN backing before joining the invasion.

All three ‘coalition of the willing’ leaders are now seeking to cover themselves. Politicians will be politicians after all. But recall how eager our Australian government was for war, and how even in mid-2002 Mr Downer accused those who questioned the evidence about WMDs of anti-Americanism, adding ‘only a fool could support appeasement’. It was Mr Howard who declared on 14 March 2003 that were Saddam to rid himself of WMDs, there would be no war.

The Howard government has a long track record of not knowing or telling the truth—over East Timor, *Tampa* and the asylum seekers, as well as Iraq. No-one is expecting that Mr Howard will confess all to the Australian people, that his government misjudged the situation badly, and will now

make some compensation to the people of Iraq.

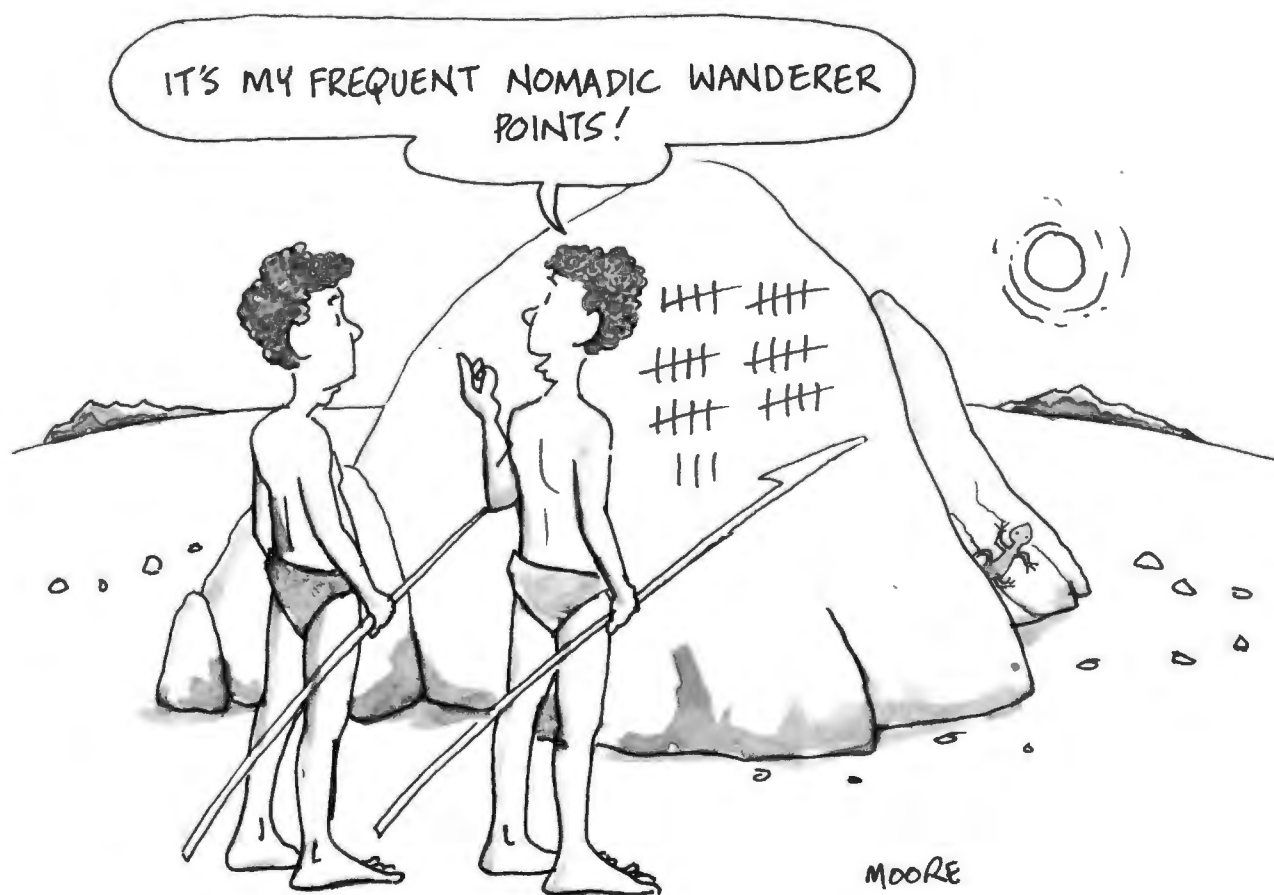
But what has happened to the social conscience of other members of our political parties? Was there a single public word of dissent about our intervention in Iraq from members



of the Coalition parties, or did I miss it? At least in Britain, members of the Labour Party are able to debate the issue. In Australia, do members of the Liberal Party still have a right of free speech?

The whole Iraq adventure is fast becoming a fiasco. I believe that Mr Howard will go down in the history books as having committed Australia to an unnecessary war, gullibly or otherwise, at the cost of hundreds of millions of dollars, making Australians a larger target for terrorists, damaging the United Nations, and possibly further polarising much of the Muslim world against the West. ■

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# Another Waugh brings up a century

**E**VELYN WAUGH, who was born 100 years ago last month, could be wonderful, even when he was being obnoxious. He was once asked by the BBC about his views on capital punishment:

Interviewer: You are in favour of capital punishment?

Waugh: For an enormous number of offences, yes.

Interviewer: And you yourself would be prepared to carry it out?

Waugh: Do you mean, actually do the hangman's work?

Interviewer: Yes.

Waugh: I should think it very odd for them to choose a novelist for such tasks.

When asked by the BBC in the same interview how he wanted to be remembered he said 'I should like people of their charity to pray for my soul as a sinner'. But I suspect he hoped to be remembered for other things as well.

Waugh was born at Hampstead on 28 October 1903. After a more or less conventional childhood, he spent three drunken, homosexual years at Oxford, where he got a bad third class honours degree. He tried teaching (at a number of schools), journalism and trained as an artist and a carpenter. He was a failure at more or less everything.

In February 1927, at the age of 23, he was sacked again. Shortly after, he wrote in his diary:

I have been trying to do something about getting a job and am tired and discouraged. It is all an infernal nuisance ... it seems to me the time has arrived to set about being a man of letters.

By 1930 he had published a biography, two novels and a travel book. He had married, his wife had an affair and he was divorced. A few months later, he was received into the Catholic Church. In the remaining pre-war years Waugh travelled widely, through North and

South America, the Arctic and Africa. His first marriage was annulled, he remarried and, after military service, settled down in the English west country and raised six children.

Along the way, he offended most of his contemporaries: he wrote of Stephen Spender, 'to see him fumbling with our rich and delicate language is to experience all the horror of seeing a Sevres vase in the hands of a chimpanzee'. Waugh was asked to endorse the first edition of *Catch 22*. He replied, 'you may quote me as saying: "This exposure of corruption, cowardice and incivility of American officers will outrage all friends of your country (such as myself) and greatly comfort your enemies."'

By the time of his death in 1966, he was viewed largely as an anachronism. He described himself as follows in his

autobiographical novel *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*:

His strongest tastes were negative. He abhorred plastics, Picasso, sunbathing and Jazz—everything in fact that had happened in his own lifetime. The tiny kindling of charity which came to him through his religion sufficed only to temper his disgust and change it to boredom.

He left behind him 13 novels, three novellas, six travel books, three biographies and a volume of autobiography, as well as essays, short stories and reviews. But by the time of his death, almost no serious attention had been paid to him or his work.

It is largely by accident that his work is so widely read and regarded now. Shortly after his death his widow, believing she had been left impoverished, sold Waugh's





extensive private papers to the University of Texas. There his diary was discovered, and excerpts from it appeared in the *London Observer* in 1974. These largely established the popular conception that Waugh was a beast, but curiously also created a renewal of interest in Waugh the man. A fuller version of his diaries (omitting over 40 libellous or offensive references) was published the following year. Since then, we have had his letters, complete short stories, selected journalism and three lengthy biographies, running to well over 4000 pages of posthumously published material. The interest in Waugh the man fuelled interest in Waugh the writer, and all his novels are still in print today, more than 40 years after he wrote his last word of fiction.

He said in a letter to Anthony Powell, 'I am sure one could write any novel in the world on two postcards'. The plot of all but two of his novels can be summed up in one sentence: a solitary male protagonist descends into chaos in barbarous surroundings. The barbarous surroundings change from novel to novel. They are Wales (in *Decline and Fall*), Mayfair (in *Vile Bodies*), Ethiopia (in *Black Mischief*), rural England and South America (*A Handful of Dust*), journalists (*Scoop*), Forest Lawn cemetery (*The Loved One*), a sea cruise (*Gilbert Pinfold*) and the Second World War (*The Sword of Honour Trilogy*).

His writing shows all his failings. His outlook was narrow and snobbish. In one travel book, he wrote:

I believe that inequalities of wealth and position are inevitable and that it is therefore meaningless to discuss the advantages of their elimination; that men naturally arrange themselves in a system of classes; that such a system is necessary for any form of co-operative work.

His snobbery flows through to almost every aspect of his work. Waugh knew nothing of working life or working people, he found it difficult to create likeable or believable virtuous characters and his few descriptions of romantic love are patriarchal and chauvinistic: ('So at sunset I took formal possession of her as a lover'—*Brideshead Revisited*). The societies of which he wrote are all essentially extinct. Why then, with so much to dislike about Waugh, are his novels so readable now?

First, his objective in writing was primarily commercial. This means that his

works are never an exercise in self-expression. They are always aimed at communicating with readers. His objectives were not, however, purely commercial. As he wrote in the introduction to his travel book *Ninety-two Days*, 'the truth I think is this—that though most of us would not write except for money, we would not write any differently for more money'.

However conservative the man was, Waugh the writer was essentially modern. When he was 17, he said in a letter to a school friend, 'Try and bring home thoughts by actions and incidents. Don't make everything said. This is the inestimable value of the Cinema to novelists ...'. He used this cinematic technique from his first book to his last, and he always left some work for the reader to do. Take this passage from *Vile Bodies*:

'What is *not* clear to me, sir' said the Inspector, 'is what *prompted* the young lady to swing on the chandelier. Not wishing to cause offence, sir, and begging your pardon, was she ...?'

'Yes,' said Judge Skimp, 'she was.'

'Exactly' said the Inspector.

And in almost every page of every book there is something that is genuinely funny, from *Scoop*:

'Can you tell me who is fighting who in Ishmaelia?'

'I think it's the Patriots and the Traitors.'

'Yes, but which is which?'

'Oh I don't know *that*.'

Waugh is not all froth, though. He had something serious to say. At the heart of it is a desire to explore the nature of human weakness and the possibility of redemption. His last novel, *Unconditional Surrender*, is based on Waugh's own experience of Yugoslavia in the period up to Marshall Tito's takeover. Its conclusion summarises all Waugh's own hopes and fears about the Second World War:

'It seems to me that there was a will to war, a death wish, everywhere. Even good men thought that their private honour would be satisfied by war. They could assert their manhood by killing and being killed. They would accept hardships in recompense for having been selfish and lazy ... I knew Italians ... who felt this. Were there none in England?'

'God forgive me,' said Guy, 'I was one of them'.

This occasional seriousness saves his work from absolute frivolity and makes his narratives sustainable. It distinguishes his work from other humorists of his time and background, like Saki or Ronald Firbank, both of whom I now find almost impossible to read.

A lot of good Catholics find Waugh's version of Catholicism hard to deal with. Like everything else about him, the externalities of his religious observance were snobbish and reactionary. He recoiled at the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. He wrote in his diary, 'Pray God I will never apostatize, but I can now only go to church as an act of duty and obedience'.

In fact, Catholicism is only directly evident in *Brideshead Revisited*, *Helena* and *The Sword of Honour Trilogy*. But an essentially Christian world view marks all of his novels, even the two that pre-date his conversion. He said in an interview that being a Catholic 'affects every minute of my day'. He said his religion 'isn't a sort of added amenity to the Welfare State that you say, "Well, to all this, having made a good income, now I'll have a little icing on top of religion", it's the essence of the whole thing.' However, for a non-Catholic it is only necessary to note that those were his beliefs. Just as it is not necessary to agree with Robert Graves' theory of the White Goddess in order to appreciate his poetry, you don't have to be a Catholic to enjoy Waugh.

His impeccable technique makes his work brilliant. It is, however, his absolute personal honesty that above all gives his work permanence. He saw himself as coldly and dispassionately as he saw others. In March 1962, Evelyn Waugh was sitting alone in the hall of White's Club, in London. As he noted in his diary:


A member known to me by sight but not by name, older than I, of the same build, but better dressed, said: 'why are you alone?' 'Because no one wants to speak to me.' 'I can tell you exactly why; because you sit there on your arse looking like a stuffed pig.'

That's why I love to read Evelyn Waugh. He was terrible, but he knew how terrible he was. For that reason, his books will always be welcome in my house. ■

Mark Carkeet is a Brisbane solicitor.



# Consumers



**A**BOUT 20 YEARS ago I gave my copy of M.F.K. Fisher's *The Art of Eating* to a couple of friends employed by a university in DeKalb, Illinois, which as everyone knows is the Barbed Wire Capital of the World. The book had been prized, but what else could you do for people in such straits? More recently, another couple took my measure, and when I celebrated their wedding they gave me a later edition of that work. Not everyone would think this an innocent action, but I choose to see it so.

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Gwen Harwood, as wise as she was good, produced late in life a buoyant poem 'In Praise of Food', in which as usual she was flying the flag of an enthusiasm. In it she writes,

'Preserve us from indifferent cooking/by those who have no love of food,/who never spend a moment looking/with firm desire, in solitude,/at the great marvels earth produces,/its grains and nuts and oils and juices,/its fowls, its fish, its eggs, its meat,/reflecting that the food we eat/is what we will be: living tissue/that paints and chisels, writes and sings/the splendour of substantial things/and immaterial thoughts that issue/as if from some angelic birth/but are in fact the fruits of earth.'

Writing like this, Harwood is of course singing 'the splendour of substantial things', and in so doing is joining in the concert audible when one reads a multitude of writers, in prose and in verse, over the centuries.

The present American Poet Laureate, Billy Collins, for instance, has a poem called 'Osso Buco' which begins,

'I love the sound of the bone against the plate/and the fortress-like look of it/lying before me in a moat of risotto,/the meat soft as the leg of an angel/who has lived a purely airborne existence./And best of all, the secret marrow,/the invaded privacy of the animal/prized out with a knife and swallowed down/with cold, exhilarating wine.'

I know that thousands of advertisements for foods which we have all encountered dilate, on the one hand, on the sensuous reality of their products, and on the other on the supposedly visionary

virtues of the confections: but it needs a certain deftness of touch—comical or not—really to give the senses and the mind the run they would both like. Collins the fantasist is also Collins the listening, watching, tool-wielding creature, and as such he is too a standard-bearer for others. Glad to be for a while at home in the world, at the world's table, he finds that even then he is a congenial stranger. Forking in reality, he is also plying a wand of a kind.

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Another friend, the cancer heavy upon him, says to me, 'You don't know food until you can't eat'. True as it stands, this is also a chastening reminder of the precariousness which has always been ours and always will be, here under the moon. By the same token, on a planet where, as Auden said, 'to most people/I'm the wrong color' and where for many if not for most hunger is a harrying neighbour, the gourmand stands self-condemned. But none of that changes the fact that food—its providing, its transforming, its sharing—is potentially eloquent of 'immaterial thoughts that issue/as if from some angelic birth', and of the great good that may warrant those thoughts. It is God himself who, in the Christian tradition, is called 'bread of angels', and the metaphor loses most of its pungency unless one takes bread and its earthiness, its carnality, seriously.

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In a Book of Hours made in Burgundy in the 1430s for Catherine of Cleves, a portrayal of St Bartholomew, and a prayer to him, are surrounded by a chain of pretzels and biscuit breads. The foods are there because of the standard medieval likening of reading to eating. The 'bread of the word' is almost as widespread and obvious a metaphor to those readers as the 'journey of life' is to us. For many nowadays, that confidence in reading as nutriment has pretty well vanished—or so it is said. But the old notion that the tongue's two works—speaking and tasting—are somehow allied ought to survive, and often does.

'Tasting' is allied as a word with 'testing', and there is a good deal of word-testing in contemporary Australia, especially among the ironic and the





## fruits of earth

sardonic. It was part of the monastic discipline in the Middle Ages that one should 'ruminate' language, should chew it over to extract all of its juicy significance. I presume that some of them, whether the writers who left records or the readers who did not, also developed an expertise at spitting out the tainted language. It is a proficiency always desirable for the sake of good intellectual, and emotional, health.

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Nubar Gulbenkian, the oil tycoon, said once that the ideal number for a dinner party was two—'myself and a damn good head waiter.' I hope that such a view never becomes orthodoxy. If it threatened to do so, the visual artists would surely mount a revolt: for even those thousands of gustatory 'still lifes' usually carry the trace of vanished guests—companions, 'bread-sharers', for a while. The motif of mortality may be powerful in such paintings, granted a toppled glass or flies about the fruit, but even that is received as part of the common lot, 'the way of

all the earth'. And of course there exists as well a cornucopia of paintings and the like which exult in the whole affair of our being 'convivers', a word which deserves to exist.

In the Art Institute of Chicago there is a painting, 'Thanksgiving', by the American artist Doris Lee, who died in 1983. It is a work of about 30 inches by 40, in which, with great brio, a band of women bustle about a kitchen, with children as witnesses, the floor a bright checkerboard of red and white, and the hulking range a magician's chest of transformations. It might be the theatre of the world in little, and indeed it is, where turkey and pumpkin, vividly themselves, are also the tokens both of our needs and of our converging to address them. A little girl, crouching on a stool and clinging to a table's edge, offers a morsel to a cat. This is the human comedy; and acting it out, Lee's lively figures are giving thanks indeed. ■

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# The cola jihad

**A**MERICA IS NOT exactly flavour of the month at the moment, least of all in the Islamic world. This disenchantment, for reasons that are clear enough to all except busloads of nonplussed Nebraska tourists clambering over European cathedrals, was confirmed by a study commissioned by the Bush administration that showed plummeting approval ratings for the US among Muslims worldwide. The BBC reported in October that one per cent of Jordanian respondents thought favourably of the US, down from 25 per cent during the middle of 2002; this in a country with a Westernised and not unpopular monarch in King Abdullah.

Each brand is aimed to appeal to Muslim consumers guided by a sense of Islamic identity rather than by their aspirations for prosperous Western life.

Yet while there is opposition, ranging from dissatisfaction to outright dissent, it has not yet deteriorated to the point of Muslim consumers in the global south eschewing those enduring symbols of America—Levis, burgers and Coca-Cola. Maybe it is because these brands in the FMCG sector (for the uninitiated that means Fast Moving Consumer Goods) are now global and as such have transcended their national origins. Muz Daud, marketing lecturer at the Indonesian Management Institute in Jakarta,

suggests that this is not a contradiction disaffected Muslims feel the need to reconcile.

The consumer can make a distinction between what is written on the label of a bottle and what is said by a politician, they are two different things. It is not an unthinking approach but a rational one.

Daud's argument might offer comfort to the anxious CEOs of global giants Procter & Gamble, Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Xerox and McDonald's who convened with US embassy officials in Cairo during March to discuss the potential costs of the Iraq conflict for American firms. In recent years American

brands have realised the need to adjust their products (McDonald's selling lamb burgers in India, for example) for fear of losing out to competitors that cater to local tastes.

American brands are part of the global cultural superstructure. The products sold under these brands are, naturally, eaten, drunk and worn on the TV shows and films we see (or unnaturally in the gratuitous case of product placement), and

We are asking consumers to liberate their taste buds from the multibillion dollar marketing machines.

have been promoted as the accoutrements of an idealised life through the clever image-creation of advertisers. But now there are competitors looking for new ways to locate their products within the consumer's sense of self in order to get the 'love mark' that—according to Kevin Roberts, the global CEO of the premier advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi—the consumer gives to products they purchase automatically. The new players are taking on two of the globe's mightiest brands in Coke and Pepsi by portraying themselves as the Islamic alternative.

**Q**IBLA, ZAM ZAM, AND the unequivocally entitled Mecca Cola, have emerged in Europe, the Middle East and Asia to sell cola to the world's 1.5 billion Islamic consumers. Though they have different histories—Mecca and Qibla were founded in Europe in the last 12 months by smart entrepreneurs, while Zam Zam is a product of the Iranian revolution—their aims are similar. Each brand is aimed to appeal to Muslim consumers guided by a sense of Islamic identity rather than by their aspirations for prosperous Western life.

Mecca Cola is the brainchild of French Tunisian businessman Tawfiq Mathlouthi who exhorts





# Qibla-Cola Qibla-Cola Company Ltd Mecca-Cola ca-Cola Mecca-Cola

customers 'not to drink like idiots' and pledges ten per cent of proceeds to Palestinian charities. The company website reads like a billboard for political Islam.

Mohammed Haider, Chief Business Development Officer at Qibla Cola, baulks at suggesting customers are idiots for drinking the well-known brands but would ask that they think before they drink.

We donate 10 per cent of our profits to charity and we are doing this because when profit is the sole driver it is not good for the community. We are asking consumers to liberate their taste buds from the multibillion dollar marketing machines.



Haider concedes that US policies have opened the door for Qibla and other brands in the Muslim market and goes further in suggesting big business itself is contributing.

All sorts of events have catalysed a thinking process—the Enron scandal, the war in Iraq, even Kyoto—and it is a global phenomenon. People are starting to question the behaviour of multinationals and this can affect what they buy.

Qibla, a transliteration of the Arabic word for direction, has hit sales of a million units a month since its launch in February by securing independent retailers and restaurants. While operating from the former technical college that is their office in the English Midlands (no expense has been wasted on remodeling save for the addition of a well-worn prayer mat in one corner), their goal is to take the brand global and do it fast. For the last three months Qibla has been selling in the Netherlands and it is looking to take its idea to the rest of western Europe in the next year. But the real opportunities, according to Haider,

are in the large Muslim markets such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and Indonesia.

Helping the cause of the cola upstarts has been the use of the commercial symbols of America in protests around the globe. In Indonesia at the outset of the Iraq war in March, protests regularly targeted Coca-Cola and the fast-food outlets that mark the key points of Jakarta as they do in every other major world city. One particular group sealed off a California Fried Chicken outlet in West Java to make their point. In Malaysia there is a more caustic mood with the Muslim Consumers Association announcing a boycott of Coca-Cola in December last year. It was all the incentive Osman Ahmed at Zam Zam Malaysia needed.

We are struggling to keep up with demand and maybe it is because, though we don't declare it openly, we support all in the world who are oppressed by imperialists and we let other people make their choices about that with our product.

The bottom line is that the people at Coke and Pepsi are unlikely to be hitting the panic button, or even the switch of mild concern, given their extraordinary dominance of the fizzy drinks market. A Harvard Business School study estimated that in 1999, of the 31 billion cases of soft drink sold worldwide, Coke sold 53 per cent and Pepsi 21 per cent. Yet the arrival on the scene of these new, conscience-pricking alternatives might add weight to other efforts, such as the fair trade campaign, in altering consumer choices. Their success would see the end of the dream of American-cool and the beginning of the desire for items that show that the good things in life can be found closer to home. ■

Jon Greenaway is a freelance writer and consultant based in London.

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Their success would see the end of the dream of American-cool ...

# Where continents collide

**T**HE PLANE WAS DELAYED and the Istanbul gate (56) is the most distant of all at Heathrow's Terminal One. Rough patches punctuated the flight and the visa process in Istanbul was messy. Have \$US20 in hand. If you are an American, have \$US100. The insult is calculated, though still swallowed by many. In Turkey, one is aware of elements of national interest that may seem trivial in an American imperium: Kurdish separatists in Iraq, the question of Turkish deployment to Iraq despite the country's deep opposition to the war, the role of Turkey in mediation between Israel and the Palestinians. It's a long way from Texas.

The cab tracked down by the Sea of Marmora. On the other shore the driver identified 'Asia'. At Istanbul, famously, two continents meet—but as Turkey presses to be considered by the end of 2004 for membership of the European Union, its Asian land mass and the Muslim religion of most are being used against it. Especially by the right: a French politician asked how a Eurasian nation could be part of Europe, while a German warned that ten million Turks would head for his country if acceptance was granted. Sober EU commissioners talk, instead, of human rights problems and a 22.7 per cent inflation rate.

The hotel recommended to me was in the Sultanahmet district. At breakfast time, on the eighth floor, seagulls as big as chickens strutted the balcony. Behind them were the Blue Mosque, Aya Sophia, the Topkapi Palace and the Bosphorus, with ships lying in its roads in a warm haze. This was once Byzantium, then Constantinople as the capital of the Roman Empire moved east. Nearby are the great works of Justinian's rule—the cistern (525 AD), the dome of Aya Sophia and across the Golden Horn, the Galata Tower, captured by the forces of Mehmet

the Conqueror 550 years ago, when Constantinople 'fell'.

The boat trip up the Bosphorus to Anadolu Kavagi, on the Asian side, at the entrance to the Black Sea, is one of the great (and cheap) journeys in the world. There are palaces and fortresses, luxury hotels and residences coming down to the water in a manner oddly reminiscent of Venice. The end



of the trip is a small village with cheap fish restaurants. Through this strait the Allies intended to provision Russia in the Great War—once the Dardanelles, the narrows between the Sea of Marmora and the Aegean, had been forced.

The magazine promoting Sultanahmet declared that 'the aborigine deserves a special mention as perhaps being the cardinal vegetable of the Turkish kitchen'. Ern Malley's hand did not seem far away. Nor was Gallipoli, although the often interrupted trip took half the day's light. Travel is in part about knowing who has been there before you, and what they said. At Gallipoli the legend of a nation born in battle and—ideologically—out of a Germanic Romanticism—was urged into being. For the visitor who has read of this action, the signal advantage of coming in person is to see the topography, climb the slopes, imagine the intimate combat in the hills, then look away to the islands of the Aegean, down to what might be calm suburban beaches in Australia. And on this day, the waters of Anzac Cove echoed with the shouts of an Australian snorkelling instructor.

The tour went the next morning to 'windy Troy', still 90 per cent unexcavated but finely marked. Here are the plains where the armies fought, the walls, towers and ramps of the nine levels of the city. Not far away are the Scamander River and the Hellespont. Back in Istanbul, it was time for a walk



across the Galata Bridge, lined with hundreds of fishermen catching nothing bigger than sardines. There were bread-sellers and street photographers, shoe-shiners and men with weighing machines, children set to beg with 'lost' legs and in surgical masks. Leaving this throng, climbing up a steep hill, there were narrow flights of stairs that resembled Montmartre. Abruptly the mass of the Galata Tower, re-built in 1348 by the Genoese, loomed. It is 61 metres high, 140 metres above the Golden Horn. A lift goes seven floors up and then it is stairs past the restaurant and 'night clup' to an unenclosed balcony with wonderful views of



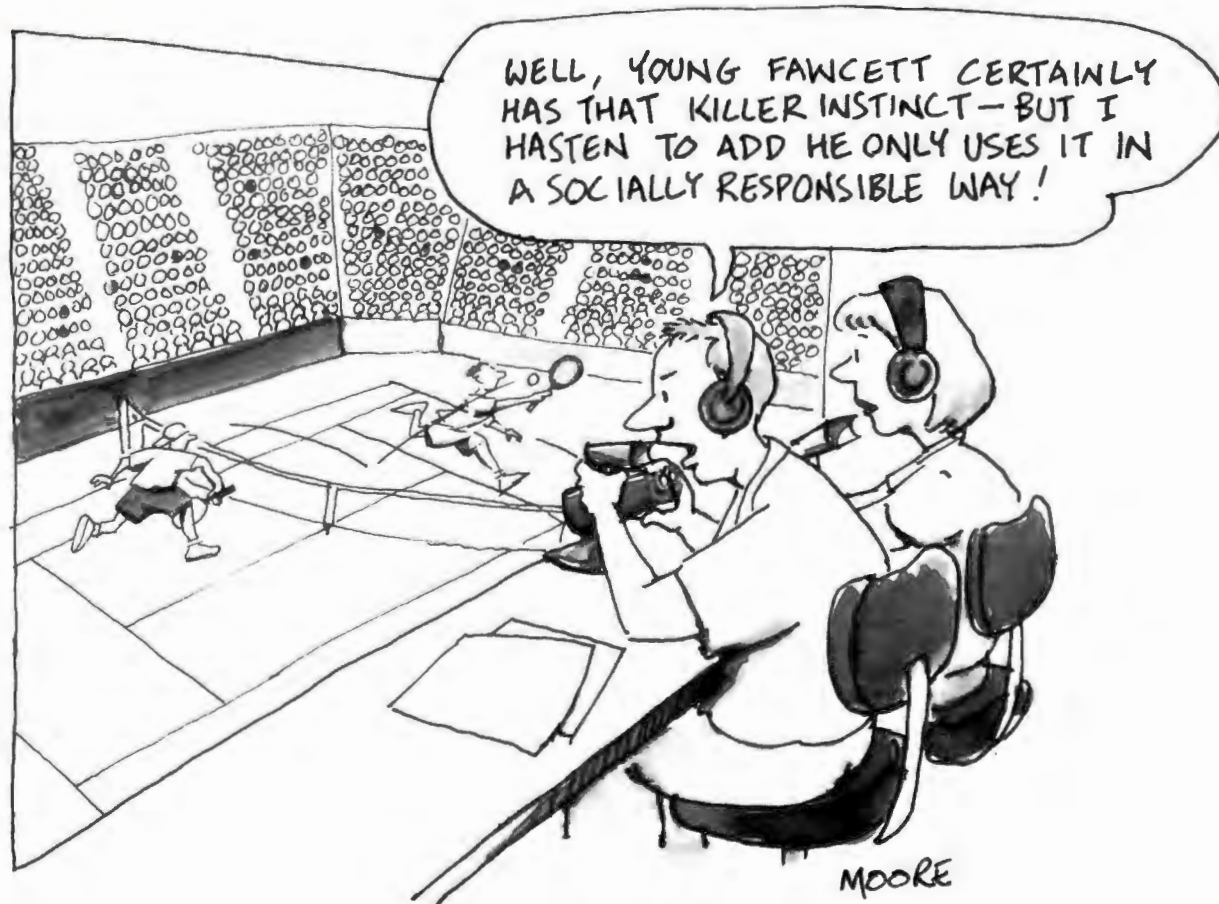
the city. Perfect, too, for a vertigo attack. Sadly the Captain Ahab Bar at the base of the tower was not yet open.

The walk went on into the most European quarter of Istanbul, to Istiklal Street, with its elegant covered arcades, luxury shops, couples promenading and a toy tram running down its length from Taksim Square in the north. There, in 1999, two Leeds United supporters were stabbed before a soccer match against Galatasaray. That sad event might portend a European destiny for Turkey: it could have happened anywhere in the EU. But for now, and all around, were confident young Turks, perhaps content with the ambiguity of



their country's place in two continents and far from seeing a national reincarnation as 'the sick man of Europe', as Turkey's foes may bark. ■

**Peter Pierce** is Professor of Australian Literature at James Cook University, Cairns.





## My Lady's Aubade

There's little tremor in the backyard trees;  
November doing what November knows,  
I dream and then wake up, and then I sneeze.

While dawn's white body unravels from its ease  
A thought should be as natural as a rose:  
There's little tremor in the backyard trees

Reading from their own anthologies,  
Leaf after leaf. Lately comatose,  
I dreamt, and now wake up, and now I sneeze.

Doubt can arrive in pomps and panoplies,  
High as a parrot or as crude as crows.  
But little tremor shakes the backyard trees.

Awareness dominates the mysteries  
Every night. Puck flits by on his toes  
While I dream. And then wake up. And then I sneeze

Wishing the pollen cancelled by disease  
And all spring's poetry rolled back to prose,  
I dream and then wake up, and then I sneeze.  
There's not much tremor in the backyard trees.

**Chris Wallace-Crabbe**

# Three

## Cicadas

November trees  
were choc-chip  
with these early decorations,  
evening throbbing  
with their clamour  
like a hammered thumb.

Green Grocers  
in their wetsuit fluros,  
Brown Bakers—  
dusty as carob—  
Black Princes,  
ugly, like oversized house-flies  
and equally common.

We thought them ripe  
for picking: each  
parting from its tree  
with the sticky reluctance  
of a fridge magnet,  
the flickering zurrrr  
of a handshake buzzer.

For some reason,  
they seemed worth owning  
so we placed them  
in ice cream containers where  
they burnt-out faster  
than flashlight batteries.



# Poems for 1986

## Sneaking out at Night

Easy to steal past the open door of sleeping parents and meet  
each other on an a.m. street;  
the vague idea of galaxies above the cover of volty-orange and  
blown continents of cloud;  
the kingdom of night divided amongst the three of us.

To look down from the top end of Garden Avenue on the web of  
city lights;  
the highway like a sea turned down low.  
To hear whatever it was humming beneath the days.

## Girls

It was about that time  
you began  
to notice

the light  
of certain windows

Desire's  
small suburb  
redrawn

The phone book  
weighty  
with promises

This ache  
was pure and general

The flash,  
the glow,  
the force-field  
that surrounded you.

**Aidan Coleman**

# Goodly profits

**H**OW DO THE Nikes, Westpacs, McDonald's and Fords of the global economy engage with the wider community, and is this good for business? That has been the focus of the corporate citizenship debate over the last few years. Corporate citizenship is about companies understanding and taking account of their influence on society and integrating social, ethical, environmental and economic values in their core decision-making. More recently, the focus has shifted to the relationship between public policy and corporate citizenship. In other words, is there a role for government?

There is a role for government to play, although—as much as it may disappoint some—that role is not necessarily a regulatory one. Corporate citizenship has traditionally been regarded as something that companies engage in voluntarily. However, the growth of the 'corporate citizenship movement' has led to increasing pressure on governments in several countries to regulate corporate social behaviour.

A leading proponent of a greater role for government in corporate citizenship in Australia is the Shadow Treasurer, Mark Latham. In his book *From the Suburbs* (Pluto, 2003) he argues that government should impose higher levels of corporate social responsibility as part of the 'Third Way' approach to embracing pro-market and social democratic values. Although short on details, Latham's contribution is welcome because at least it recognises that corporate citizenship is an important area for public policy.

It's not easy to find an appropriate role for government in



corporate citizenship. This is partly because definitions of corporate citizenship are fuzzy, varied and constantly evolving. Nevertheless, just as companies need to understand the advantages to business before they embark on various citizenship activities, governments should understand the public policy case for corporate citizenship.

The first public policy argument for corporate citizenship relates to a key concern of governments—national competitiveness. There are many reasons why some nations are more economically successful than others. Recent evidence suggests that the widespread adoption of corporate citizenship practices can contribute to the competitive advantage of a nation. At the micro-level, studies show that corporate citizenship practices improve a firm's financial performance through their influence on reputation, staff morale, motivation, recruitment, turnover, consumer confidence and risk management. The message is that companies can do well by doing good.

At the macro-level, there are Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) clusters. Research is now focusing on the positive effects these can have on regional and national economies. Clusters are concentrations of interconnected organisations in one place that share a variety of resources and relationships. CSR clusters allow firms to address collectively the issues that relate to corporate citizenship, such as managing stakeholders, environmental impact and social investment in ways that increase expertise and decrease costs. A good example in Australia is Insurance Australia Group's approach to sustainability. As a major national insurer, IAG influences the social and environmental practices of its extensive supply chain, such as car repairers and white goods retailers, which in turn influence the behaviour of its policyholders.

**T**HE SECOND PUBLIC POLICY argument for corporate citizenship has to do with the new trend in civil governance. The shifting balance of power between the state, market and civil society has led to different ways of providing societal direction. Traditional relationships based on hierarchies are being replaced by more complex and fluid patterns of interactions, alliances and partnerships. Partnerships are central to the reasons companies embark on corporate citizenship, the community issues they focus on, how they engage in community activities and how they measure their social performance. So corporate citizenship is central to models of governance where government is part of a 'network' rather than controlling through centralisation and hierarchy. Policy-makers who want to encourage this 'governing without government' should therefore be interested in corporate citizenship.

The third public policy argument for corporate citizenship is that it is popular with the electorate. While governments should not support only the policies that have widespread political appeal, good public policy needs broad appeal to be successful. Public opposition to socially irresponsible business practices has increased. It is a key factor in companies following the corporate citizenship route. Voters may also be employees, be consumers of products and services, have savings in managed funds, and donate time and money to community and environmental causes. Corporate citizenship practices touch each of these dimensions.

Employees are increasingly demanding that their workplaces be ethical, be safe, provide family-friendly hours and support their local communities. Consumer boycotts of products that are made by child labour or genetically modified are commonplace. Similarly, people are choosing to invest their money in socially responsible investment funds. Policies that promote corporate citizenship are popular with the electorate precisely because they touch *multiple* spheres of people's lives. This is not about governments increasing their popularity by 'business bashing', but about recognising that people's level of trust in big business is at an all-time low. Policies that encourage good corporate citizenship will help restore public confidence in key institutions of society.

The final public policy case for corporate citizenship is that the scale of the social and environmental challenges facing society is



too vast to be effectively dealt with by governments alone. Corporate citizenship is a way for governments to increase economic competitiveness while also ensuring good social and environmental results. By embedding things like corporate philanthropy, social venture capital, social entrepreneurship (such as the work of Richard Pratt and Ian Kiernan around the environment), community investment and employee volunteering within a social policy framework, corporate citizenship can be more effective in addressing poverty, inequality and environmental degradation.

So what are the options for public policies in corporate citizen-



ship? One is the traditional approach of legislation and regulation. This path is already being followed by several governments around the world and is the preferred approach of NGOs. Much of the proposed and existing legislation in this area relates to mandatory social and environmental reporting for publicly listed companies. In France and South Africa, for instance, listed companies are now required to report extensively on their environmental and social impact and other countries are following suit.

**I**N AUSTRALIA, a recent example is the unsuccessful attempt by the Australian Democrats to introduce a Corporate Code of Conduct Bill that aimed to regulate the activities of Australian companies operating offshore with respect to human rights, environment and labour standards. Although the Bill was defeated in 2001, a revised version will be introduced in the Senate this year. Another recent Australian example is *The Financial Services Reform Act 2001*. The Act imposes obligations on superannuation, life insurance and fund management companies to disclose the extent to which they take account of environmental, social, labour and ethical standards in their investment decisions. Such regulations are in addition to the myriad of voluntary codes and standards of corporate citizenship behaviour. According to some, the codes are ineffective precisely because they are voluntary. The idea of enshrining aspects of these codes in legislation has received support even from sections of business—they see it as a way to create a level ‘corporate citizenship playing field’ for all. It would also simplify the confusing array of voluntary codes.

The alternative to legislation is non-regulatory activism. This approach takes the view that while corporate citizenship should remain a primarily voluntary activity, government has an important role in providing for its support and development. The best example is that of the British government, which has a range of policies and systems in place to encourage responsible business practice. There is a Minister for Corporate Social Responsibility, whose role is to promote corporate

citizenship as well as co-ordinate policy across the whole of government. The government also helps to develop the skills and knowledge needed by CSR professionals. It funds research and creates incentives for the development of CSR clusters, as well as formulating ‘soft’ or ‘enabling’ legislation.

The British Government’s strong non-regulatory support for corporate citizenship has meant that proposals for ‘harder’ regulation have been unnecessary. Legislation can lead to a culture of compliance where business may avoid genuinely engaging with its community. In Australia government support for corporate citizenship has been ad hoc and minimal, primarily limited to the operations of the Prime Minister’s Community Business Partnership.

A third option is for governments to act as models of best practice in corporate citizenship. This might include government agencies adopting Triple Bottom Line reporting, using government procurement and tender policies so that companies that wish to do business with government will need to have a demonstrable corporate citizenship strategy.

The Australian government needs to understand the public policy case for corporate citizenship better and to avoid the ‘legislation versus voluntarism’ rut. Lack of policy activity will only increase pressure for legislation from the electorate, inadvertently hindering the long-term development of genuine corporate citizenship. While there is a role for enabling legislation, governments can do much more through supportive and co-ordinated policies and leading by example. ■

**Dr Gianni Zappalà** is the Director of *Orfeus Research*, a consultancy providing research, evaluation and training services to socially responsible organisations, [www.orfeusresearch.com.au](http://www.orfeusresearch.com.au).

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# The 'conscious pariah'

**T**HERE HAVE BEEN few more significant intellectuals in the 20th century than Edward Said, who died in Paris on 25 September.

His was a life lived in exile—a Palestinian Christian who was born in Jerusalem and grew up in Cairo, but who spent most of his adult life in America. Indeed in his biography, *Out of Place*, he spoke poignantly of always packing large amounts of luggage, even for an overnight stay, because of an ingrained fear that he was again going into exile and would never return home. It was this awareness of exile, his identity as a Palestinian and an outsider, that most strongly characterised his prolific output as a writer and activist.

First employed by Columbia University in New York in 1963, he rapidly rose through the ranks to become University Professor of English and Comparative Literature, a position which he held until his death. Said was also an accomplished musician, an erudite and internationally respected music critic and a man widely published in the fields of literature, international politics, philology and psychiatry. And all of this from a man who battled against leukaemia for the last decade of his life.

The work that thrust him onto the international stage was his 1978 book *Orientalism*. This was a true revolution of ideas, a paradigmatic shift in the way we see the world beyond our own borders. The central pillar of his book was a refusal to accept that our understanding of other cultures could ever be objective. Elegantly taken to its conclusion, Said's argument revealed the way Western knowledge of other cultures served as a weapon in the armoury of empire—how knowledge in the service of power reduced entire cultures and religions to essences and

legitimate targets of violence.

In his follow-up book, *Covering Islam*, Said brought the full force of this argument to bear upon US foreign policy and media coverage of events in the Islamic world. In a statement as relevant today as when it was published in 1981, he wrote: 'What we have is a limited series of crude, essentialised caricatures of the Islamic world, presented in such a way as, among other things, to make that world vulnerable to military aggression.'

Said's identity as a Palestinian gave his statements a forceful personal edge. It also exposed him to fierce criticism. His Israeli critics frequently pointed to Said's former membership of the PLO's Palestine National Council, all the while ignoring his resignation in protest

against the corruption, lack of democracy and inadequate human rights commitments within the Palestinian leadership. His critics tried to diminish him by labelling him an anti-Semite, again ignoring the fact that Arabs are Semites and that his entire working life was spent fighting against racial and religious stereotypes. His opposition to Israeli government policy similarly exposed him to accusations of tacitly supporting the destruction of Israel, even as he mounted collaborative projects with Israelis, most notably the famous Israeli musician Daniel Barenboim, and argued for the peaceful coexistence of peoples.

His critics came also from within the Palestinian community. Said's opposition to the Oslo Peace Accords lost him the ear of the Palestinian leadership. His refusal to sanction terrorism as a weapon of liberation also ensured that he had few friends among the extremists of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Among his more famous pronouncements was that he had not spent a lifetime fighting for Palestinian freedom only to surrender it to another corrupt and undemocratic Arab

one-party state. If that were to happen, he said, he would prefer not to see a Palestinian state.

But it was his deep sense of humanity that marked him out as a special figure. Friends spoke of his loyalty, warmth and genuine care for friends, family and all whom he encountered. His more reasonable opponents never faulted his generosity, accessibility and ability to listen even as he eloquently refused to compromise on matters of principle. Even in his most infamous moment—on a recent visit to the Lebanon-Israel border, he (somewhat self-consciously) threw stones in the direction of the Israeli border post as an expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people—it was difficult to see him as anything other than an utterly human figure who never lost touch with the frustrations and aspirations of his people.

Said's legacy is demonstrated by the way he met his own test, which he formulated in *Covering Islam*: 'the choice facing the individual scholar or intellectual [is] whether to put intellect at the service of power or at the service of criticism, community, and moral sense.'

The answer was provided by Egyptian writer Ahdaf Soueif, a friend of Said who accompanied him recently to a literary festival:

'... people were coming up afterwards just to touch him. It was as though he was a talisman. He laughed it off: "You know me, I'm just an old demagogue," he said. But he wasn't. He was a guide and an example. In the most private conversation, as well as in public, he was always human, always fair, always inclusive. "What is the matter with these people?" he asked after a recent debate. "Why does no-one mention truth or justice any more?"'

Edward Said put such apparently outdated concepts back at the centre of public debate and transformed the world as a result. It's just a pity that he never got to go home. ■

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





# Heavy penalties

**R**ECENTLY IN PERTH, Carl Morrison, a 12-year-old Aboriginal passenger in a stolen car driven by his 14-year-old friend, was killed when the vehicle crashed after being pursued by police. Premier Geoff Gallop, rather than leaving the family to their grief, moved to exonerate the police and to blame the parents. 'The issue wasn't about the police chase. The issue yesterday was about those youngsters stealing the cars and then going on a joy-ride when they should have been at school.' Western Australia is in the grip of a moral panic about delinquent youngsters, particularly from Indigenous backgrounds, hanging around in public places. A moral panic was defined famously by British sociologist Stanley Cohen as:

A condition, episode, person or group emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnosis and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes visible.

The curfew introduced for Perth's entertainment district of Northwood, and the current policing of Aboriginal youth in Perth, can be seen as part of the process of moral panic.

In the face of evident public support for Gallop's uncompromising response, relatives and friends of Carl Morrison struggled valiantly to humanise the children. His family had just moved into a government home after years of homelessness. He had a disabled sister. He had recently learned to read. He loved art and soccer. Loved his family. His father said, 'Me and my wife have eight kids and we try our best with them'. But Gallop was implacable: 'I'm a strong supporter of reconciliation ... but what happened in the past is no excuse for this sort of behaviour, and I think it should be described for what it is—it's bad behaviour, it's offensive behaviour, it's putting the youngsters at risk, it's putting the broader community at risk and we need to confront it and deal with it.' (*The Sunday Times*, 22 August 2003) He found common ground with John Howard by declaring that history could not be held up as an excuse for contemporary Indigenous social problems and criminality.

One of Gallop's lieutenants, Michelle Roberts, took up the cudgels against the driver, a boy with a history of substance

abuse and psychiatric problems, who had survived the accident: 'My view is that he needs to be permanently detained. He should not be free to go and steal another car and wreck anyone else's life. I personally do not think he is someone who should be at large at all.' (*The Sunday Times*, 22 August 2003) Given there was a chance the boy could face charges, it was extraordinary that Roberts, who is both Police Minister and Minister for Justice, could have shown such contempt for judicial process and the separation of powers.

Another of Roberts's titles is Minister for Community Safety.

*... it is appalling that politicians respond to acts of juvenile delinquency only with moralising and coercion ...*

**I**N A 'CIVILISED' COUNTRY like Australia it is appalling that politicians respond to acts of juvenile delinquency only with moralising and coercion and that compassion seems to have fallen out of the repertoire. It is also bitterly ironic that in spite of our tendency to sentimentalise childhood, those who are most likely to be demonised are those who are just out of childhood in that awkward phase of life known as youth or adolescence. The point at which someone crosses the line is unclear. It seems to correspond with the point at which you can be held individually responsible for your actions. But if we accept that young people who engage in resistant or illegal behaviour are victims of life circumstances, whom do we blame? The fashion

in recent times, even among some Aboriginal leaders, has been to move away from the language of victimhood and to embrace ideas of self-responsibility. In my view, however, it is dangerous to dispense completely with the language of broader social responsibility.

Bob Hawke once declared that by 1990 'no Australian child will live in poverty' but 13 years later many still do. For many, this is not only material poverty. It is emotional poverty, neglect and profound social marginalisation. While it is easy to feel compassion for young people in the Third World, it is less easy to do so for those who disrupt the streets of our cities and seem to threaten our safety. But if the only response of the state is to castigate and punish, then nothing will change. ■

**Dr George Morgan** is part of the staff of both the School of Humanities and the Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney.



# Colourful ties

**The Bright Shapes and the True Names: A Memoir, Patrick McCaughey.**  
Text Publishing, 2003. ISBN 1 877008 71 0, RRP \$32

**P**ATRICK MCCAUGHEY HAS endeared himself to Melbourne people with his wit, good humour and generosity of spirit. What is more, given his many successes, he has survived the habitual Australian consequences of the 'tall poppy' syndrome. Perhaps this is because he is only too willing to admit a variety of flaws and failings. He does so, unabashedly, in his recent publication *The Bright Shapes and the True Names: A Memoir*.

An uppish schoolboy who saw his peers at Scotch College as divided into 'the philistine majority and the civilised minority', he became a laid-back and somewhat under-committed undergraduate at Melbourne University. 'I was lazy about my academic work, doing only what interested or came easily to me.' He admits to a casual decision to combine Honours in English and Fine Arts to avoid 'bad' and boring things like Old Norse. He became a brash and, some would say, overconfident art critic and nurtured a snobby attitude to suburbs like Caulfield, Burwood and Box Hill—and even Ivanhoe where, for a time, he enjoyed free lodgings at the university's McGeorge House.

Stacked up against these characteristics are the obvious positive things. Melburnians of my generation do not need the book to be reminded of McCaughey's tumultuous impact on the local art scene from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s. I believe that in the first decades of his career he was probably the youngest art critic appointed by *The Age*, the youngest scholar to land a professorship in Visual Arts at a leading university and the youngest arts administrator to become Director of the National Gallery of Victoria. Influential critic, senior academic and leading museum director—all in double-quick succession and, to an extent, without the traditional prerequisites. In

those days, as he says, 'Everybody got his or her own way'.

Part of this run of successes might be put down to the luck of the Irish (and there is a charming Irish lilt throughout the entire book), but even more important was the fact of felicitous timing. McCaughey entered public life in the 1960s—that decade of kaleidoscopic change when young people felt they could do and achieve anything, and usually did.

Against the tide, Vincent Buckley declared the 1950s less grey and eventless than we all thought and it does now appear that this homely, parochial, less-travelled and under-electronically-connected decade bred a generation bursting with self-confidence and open to the unique opportunities of the 1960s. So many of the 'bright shapes' and 'true names' catalogued in the book enjoyed this same context and rose to equal heights in their respective fields. Among them were Olivia Newton-John, Anthony McNicoll, Peter Corrigan, Hilary McPhee, Bernice Murphy, Winsome McCaughey (née Howell), Peter Steele, Chris Wallace-Crabbe, Jaynie Anderson and Margaret Plant. 'I used to say', writes McCaughey, 'nothing moves in Australia unless you kick it but the opportunities to kick something were limitless'. Ambition was not a dirty word. 'The desire to be known was the besetting narcissism of my time ... There was a free masonry of the "talented ...". 'The cult of talent led quickly to the prizing of "promise" and the "promising".'

**A**T MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY where much of the story is set there was an answering generation of notable elders—'true names' whose magnanimity towards their protégés was profound. In Patrick's case these 'true names' begin with his parents, Davis and Jean McCaughey, and then

extend to John Sumner and Wal Cherry in the Union Repertory Theatre Company and Vincent Buckley, Evan Jones and others in the English Department. Then there was Franz Philipp and Joseph Burke in Fine Arts—and Bernard Smith who, in 1966, launched Patrick's professional career by offering him the opportunity to write art criticism for *The Age*.

This post led to a timely relationship with contemporary exhibiting artists. It was akin to that he already enjoyed with the poets. The late 1960s to early 1970s collision of some young art historians, critics and artists was fortuitous. It set the scene for the emergence of the then underdeveloped (but soon to burgeon) curatorial profession—putting people like McCaughey in a prime position to undertake museum management. This tendency was assisted by his years, from 1974, as a Trustee of the National Gallery in Canberra when it was under the inspired direction of James Mollison.

Among the 'true names' and perpetrators of the 'bright shapes' were the artists of *The Field*, the now legendary opening exhibition at the new National Gallery of Victoria on St Kilda Road. It formed a symbolic watershed between all that was old and new in the visual arts. Notwithstanding his deep and abiding appreciation of artists like Roger Kemp, Leonard French and Fred Williams (the brightest of the 'true names') and his affinity with the RMIT group (Jan Senbergs, George Baldessin, Les Kossatz, Andrew Sibley—and Tate Adams and the Crossley Gallery to which he pays special tribute in the book), it was to the 'bright shapes' of the colour-field abstractionists that he became attracted as a critic.

Robert Jacks, Michael Johnson, Alun Leach-Jones, Robert Hunter, et al. now had a mentor who, like them, hurdled the

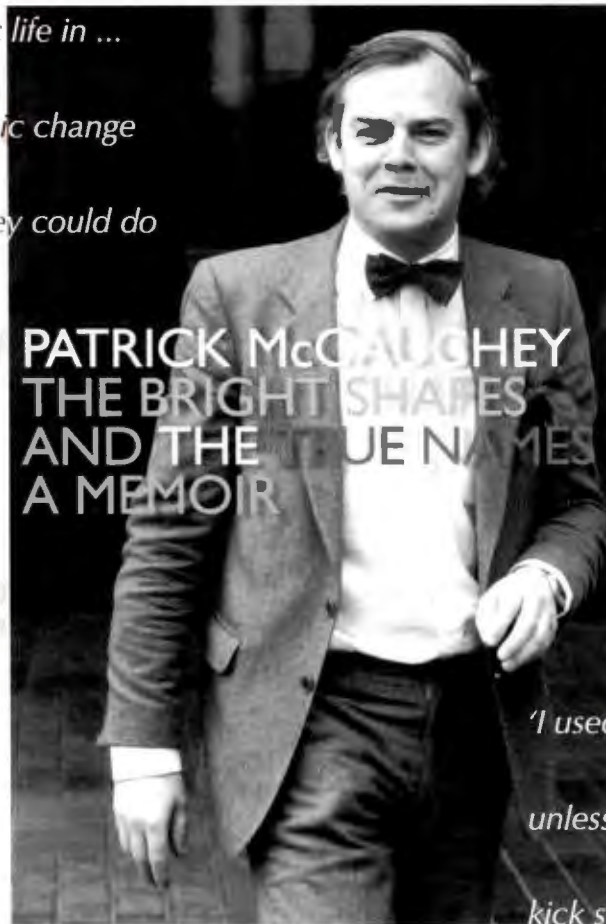


McCaughey entered public life in ...

that decade of kaleidoscopic change

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*'I used to say ... nothing moves in Australia*

*unless you kick it but the opportunities to*

*kick something were limitless'*

divide and launched into the colourful new world of international sensibilities centred in New York. There, from 1969 to 1971, on a Harkness Fellowship and living in Greenwich Village, he added the critic Clement Greenberg, the museum director Henry Geldzahler and artists Clyfford Still, Richard Diebenkorn, Morris Louis, Frank Stella and Sol de Witt to his list of 'true names'.

In 1971, back in Melbourne and 'pen-nyless', his luck continued. Joseph Burke offered him a Fellowship in Fine Arts, *The Age* re-employed him and Margaret Plant gave him some teaching at RMIT. Thus he enjoyed an easy transition into the experimental art world of the 1970s. A list including Peter Tyndall, Dom de Clario, Mickey Allen, Peter Booth, Kiffy Rubbo, Bruce Pollard and Marianne Baillieu conjures up some of the 'true names' identified with that period. Via a brief directorship of the Visual Arts Board, he addressed an Australia-wide spectrum of contemporary artists and, in 1974, with the unfailing support of Joseph Burke, was appointed Professor of Visual Arts at Monash University. The

'true names' of this academic interlude included Grazia Gunn, Jan Minchin, Jenepher Duncan, Judith Trimble, Paul Taylor, John Walker, Memory Holloway and Christine Abrahams.

When appointed Director of the National Gallery of Victoria, McCaughey writes, 'I had never worked a day of my life in an art gallery and had never managed more than a dozen people'. However, he soon made enduring friends among 'a succession of presidents or chairmen of trustees' and developed an atmosphere of trust that saw him through the much-publicised theft of Picasso's *Weeping Woman*. The public loved his bow-tied, televised performances in front of works of art.

The book is bright and optimistic. The sour notes are few. Brief mention is made of 'the fractious nature of the National Gallery of Victoria's staff', 'the unsmiling' art critic Alan Warren with whom he exchanged a few gruff words, 'dreary Caulfield', 'the wilds of Burwood and Box Hill', 'the tedium' of Joseph Burke's first year course and the reputation of Roy Grounds for having 'unshipped his partners' once awarded the commission

to build the Victorian Arts Centre. Though he muses over such matters, he does not dwell on human failings. He actively seeks the 'bright shapes' and bestows the 'true names' with a spirit of generosity and grace sometimes thought to be unusual in the art world and in Australian society in general.

If this review is somewhat selectively biased in favour of the art world, others will address another aspect of McCaughey's intellectual life—his involvement with poetry and the poets. His literary appreciation developed at an early age, at home and in school. It was nurtured in the English Department at Melbourne University and it is expressed in the writing of his book. The memoir is beautifully written, full of personal response, popular expression, sardonic humour and intellectual critique. It proves to be an affectionate documentation of several very important decades in Melbourne's cultural history. ■

**Jenny Zimmer** is the art publisher with Palgrave-Macmillan Australia and an arts writer.



# Caught in the Act

**I**'VE TOLD YOU before not to drink your juice that quickly! Juice is expensive, Paul—if you're going to drink that quickly, you can have a glass of water.'

The parental incantation above has long reverberated around the nation. What it demonstrates is not that kids guzzle their juice, but that despite living on the planet's second driest continent, we continue to undervalue and fundamentally disrespect its water resources.

In particular, the environmental values of rivers and wetlands receive scant attention compared to consumptive uses of water. In Victoria, which has the mainland's greatest density of rivers and streams, 78 per cent of the state's total river length is in moderate, poor or very poor condition. Put another way, 44 per cent of river basins have less than ten per cent of river length in good or excellent condition.

Victoria's legislative framework is simply not geared to ensuring that rivers remain healthy. It is the only state—except the Northern Territory—that does not assign the environment a baseline volume of water sufficient to sustain ecosystem values. Instead, the environment is forced to compete with other users for entitlements to water. Indeed, Victoria's *Water Act 1989* (Vic) prioritises water for domestic, stock and irrigation uses above that for the environment.

Even where the environment does hold an entitlement to water, there is no guarantee that it will receive its share. A telling example is that of the Kerang Lakes—a group of wetlands on the Murray in north-west Victoria that are listed under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Significance.

The Kerang Lakes has the state's only self-contained environmental allocation. But despite this, the area's water entitlement, first issued in 1987, was not used again until 1995. Since that time, 10,000ML or more of the area's annual 27,600ML allocation has been sold on the temporary water market three times. Justifications for the sales have included

limited need for the water owing to natural ecological cycles. But service delivery costs facilitated by the Act were at least as relevant. In 2001–02 they totalled an enormous \$122,647—a figure well beyond the environment's capital resources.

The current legislative arrangement is clearly not a satisfactory one. The Act will need to be reformed to place a higher emphasis on protecting, and where possible restoring, in-stream values of water. How this is to occur is a huge problem, and continues to be the subject of conjecture.

First, the Act needs to guarantee the environment a baseline level of flows sufficient to maintain aquatic ecosystems. Second, consumption needs to become more ecologically accountable. Domestic and stock water is available free of charge to certain landholders for uses including cattle watering.

A person has a right to take water, free of charge, for domestic and stock use where that person has access to a watercourse by public road or reserve, where a watercourse flows through or adjacent to the landholder's property, where the landholder's property is in an irrigation district, or where, in the case of a groundwater bore, that person occupies the land on which the bore is located.

The current venerable status of domestic and stock water might need to be altered to one more reflective of economic and environmental realities. The Murray-Darling Basin Commission's Education Centre has estimated that whereas, on average, fruit, vegetables and dairy products all require 0.50ML or less of water to make a \$100 profit, non-dairy pasture requires 2.75ML.

As far as irrigation water is concerned, accountability might mean guaranteeing the environment a percentage of any sales water. Sales water is water



made available for purchase once irrigators' annual entitlements have been met. Given irrigation's large consumption of water—77 per cent of the state's total—and the already over-extracted state of the vast majority of the state's rivers, it is inequitable that the environment should suffer further violation.

Third, the Act should protect currently existing environmental water. Charging the environment for its own water is patently improper, especially in the context of internationally-recognised wetlands, and given that the environment itself receives no payment when it is used to transport water for consumptive use. The provision of the Act that allows for this requires repeal.

These suggestions are just a taste of the improvements that could be made to the Act. Without healthy rivers, any exploitative use of water is robbing Peter to pay Paul. As the engine driving agricultural and industrial production, river health acts as a fixed limitation on societal development. To that end, improving river health is an important goal economically as well as environmentally. All that is needed is the injection of political will. ■

**Paul Martin** is an Arts/Law student at the University of Melbourne who last year completed an Internship with Environment Victoria investigating reform of the *Water Act 1989* (Vic) to improve the protection and restoration of Victoria's rivers and aquatic ecosystems.



# Unbounded love

**White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth Century India**, William Dalrymple.  
Harper Collins, 2002. ISBN 0 006555 096, RRP \$27.95

I first met Willam Dalrymple while travelling in Turkey. He accompanied me in my carry-on baggage in the form of *From the Holy Mountain*, pressed on me at the last minute by a relative with an urgent 'you must read this'. Read it I did over the course of four weeks, often longing to get back to our little apartment off Istiklal Caddesi in Taksim, or for my driving shift to end so I could gobble up more pages between one glorious ruin and another. Dalrymple overtook us on his journey from Greece to the Sahara in the footsteps of John Moschos, the 6th-century monk who visited his brothers in monasteries throughout the Byzantine world.

One of those awesomely informed writers who is adventurous enough to follow his passions, Dalrymple's writing style is part *Boy's Own Annual*, part doctoral thesis, inquiring yet undogmatic.

He traces his restless and excited questing partly to his education at Ampleforth in North Yorkshire. The Benedictine monks there were as given to hunting and beagling as they were to inculcating a passion for history and words in receptive charges like young William. They also introduced him to Robert Byron's great travel classic *The Road to Oxiana*, which clearly provided the inspiration for his first book, *In Xanadu*, written during Cambridge term breaks.

Religion is an important theme in all Dalrymple's books, from the early Christians to Hindusim, Islam and various sects with blurred theological borders from Greece to China. Extensive travels in the Islamic world and living in India have left this self-described wobbly Catholic open to all religious faiths, observing many other paths up the mountain. Now he speaks as a fervent advocate for Islam as lived by the vast majority of its adherents, reminding those who need to be reminded, of its similarities to Christianity. He condemns the bigotry and poor journalism that perpetuate a huge misrepresentation of Islam in the West as much as the damage

caused from within by the Wahabi mullahs in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and Afghanistan who have marginalised moderate Islam over the last 20 years.

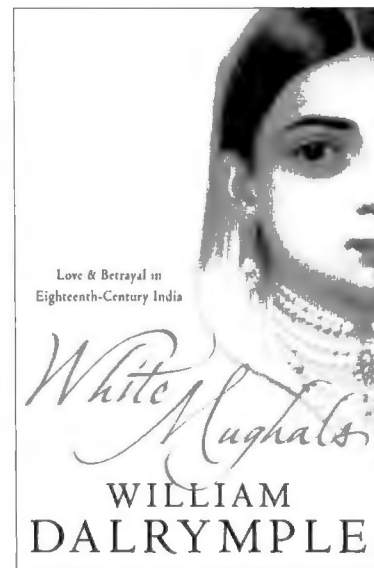
In his earlier books, Dalrymple hangs his travels on history in the best In The Steps Of ... tradition. He locates and visits the remarkable stopping points of much earlier travellers, sometimes at huge inconvenience. It is detective work in walking boots with his tattered original source in his rucksack, distracted from the main route by side trips into history and cultural commentary.

*White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth Century India* departs from the travel genre, though it was a trip to Hyderabad that inspired it. His nose for significant ruins led him to the late 18th-century Residency of the East India Company:

a once magnificent but now seriously decrepit villa built in the Palladian style by one Lieutenant Colonel James Achilles Kirkpatrick. Behind the villa were the remains of the women's quarters where Kirkpatrick's Muslim wife, Khair un-Nissa, lived in strict purdah. Further fossicking revealed a fragment of the plaster model of Kirkpatrick's villa, built in Khair's garden so she could admire the lovely palace she was unable to visit.

Dalrymple was touched by this evidence of an unusual love, and further stimulated by the fact that this part of India remains relatively unstudied, at least in English. He set off trawling through vast archives of documents and correspondence—in English and Urdu, on two continents—to discover more about this marriage and the context in which love between an English administrator and a Muslim teenager was not only tolerated but celebrated.

As the later British Raj emerged from under the wing of the East India Company it relegated the people of India to a lesser status, proscribing access to many institutions (including intermarriage)



which would have given them any sort of equality.

[The] willingness of its predecessors, then, to embrace Indian life so naturally was a revelation. Dalrymple's tale of pre-Raj India takes us into a period of tolerance, respect and mutual admiration, where British residents were frequently literate in several Indian languages, wore Indian dress, converted to Islam if it suited them, intermarried, and cherished and nurtured their Anglo Indian children.

It is hardly surprising that many East India Company men stayed on and lived as Indians in this colourful, ceremonial, perfumed, leisurely land when you consider what they would have returned to: grey, socially constrained, industrialising Britain.

This is a fascinating, though not always happy love story on which Dalrymple hangs a 'painstakingly thorough commentary on the lives and times of two societies, their politics, occupations, intrigues, public and private lives'.

Given the current interest and prejudice circling around Islam, it is also very welcome. ■

**Anna Griffiths** is a NSW art consultant.

# White man's law

**The Legal Labyrinth**, Nicholas Hasluck.  
Freshwater Bay Press, 2003. ISBN 1740082400, RRP \$24.95

**T**HE LEGAL LABYRINTH is a promised land of alliteration. It provides an account of the author's experiences writing another book, *Our Man K*.

The 'Kisch' case, about a Czech who jumped ship in Melbourne, is examined in part 1. Kisch's story is the focus of *Our Man K*. A depressing symmetry is evident in the migration jurisdiction of 1934 and now. Kisch was a Czech journalist, born in Prague on 29 April 1885, who arrived in Australia in November 1934. As a requirement for his visa, Kisch sat a dictation test in a European language. By decision of a departmental officer under the then *Immigration Act 1901* (Commonwealth), he was required to sit a dictation test in Scottish Gaelic. He took his case through the court system and the High Court ultimately held that Scottish Gaelic was not a European language and the test was invalid. Hasluck draws out well the contemporary themes of arbitrary and unjust decision-making in the application of migration law.

Part Two is a day-to-day account of the author's experiences travelling in Vietnam

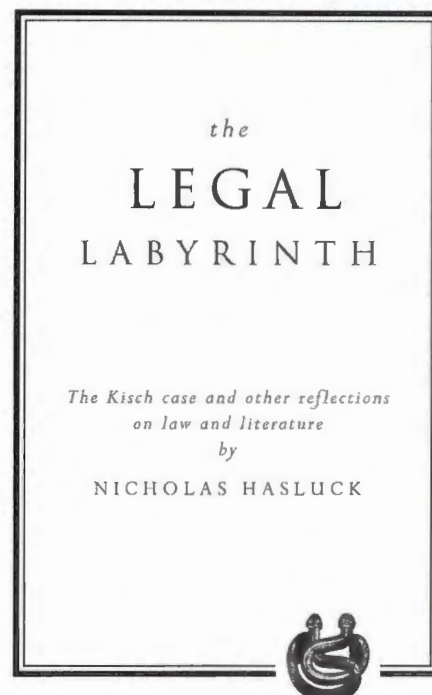
for about one month. I read this at about the same time I attended a play called *Vietnam: a psychic guide*. The insightful playwright and actor Chi Vu noted:

Some travellers go to exotic places to pretend that people do not suffer deeply from their poverty and that they do not at times cheat and lie to try to escape it. Some people travel to let go of understanding what's happening around them, to be as nude and deluded as children. It is easy to watch them walk with an air of stupidity about them, smiling at everything. There are those who travel to exotic places to feel sorry for the natives

I wonder whether there is a sense of those travellers in Hasluck? For example:

We are approached, then pursued, by a small posse of grubby, half-naked street urchins. These are not just persistent hawkers of the kind we have become accustomed to in Hanoi, street kids on the make, but good-humoured; here we are confronted with the outstretched hands and the feral looks of the outcast.

Does he lean towards the first category? Part Two is the weakest part of the book, reading largely like a series of postcards written to a person he doesn't know very well. It lacks depth, insight and reflection. That said, he uses the words 'I feel like a character in a novel' in the introductory words to Part Two.



Perhaps his observations are intended to read as those of a character in a book who has no capacity for reflection?

In Part Three, Hasluck enters the realm of fiction. It takes me back to memories of third year law school. He refers to the introduction to *Bleak House* by Dickens, read out ominously in my first dispute resolution and legal ethics class by Chief Justice Phillips of the Supreme Court of Victoria. The false distinction lawyers are required to draw between feeling, fact and fiction is apt: 'The law tries to measure intent, but it cannot measure what you might call the swerve, or the inclination of the soul.'

If you have an eye for the world of possibility presented by every unread book, I recommend exploring this labyrinth. You never know where this 'choose your own adventure' in three parts might take you. ■

**Eliza Bergin** is a lawyer with the Office of Chief Parliamentary Counsel (Victoria).

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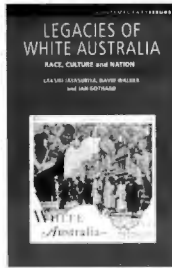
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**Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation**, Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard (eds). University of Western Australia Press, ISBN 1876 26896 4, RRP \$38.95

The collected essays in this book came out of a symposium that was held during the centenary year of Federation. This also marked 100 years since the Immigration Restriction Act (1901) was passed and the birth of the White Australia Policy. These essayists attempt to trace the political, social and moral legacies of the infamous policy. What emerges is a picture of certain cultural trends that arose from the earliest period of European settlement and have continued to influence Australian political life. David Walker describes these as 'invasion narratives': the fear some white people have of being overrun by dark-skinned foreigners. Ien Ang argues that Australians have a profound 'spatial anxiety': there is not enough space for all these foreigners who may endanger the great Aussie dream of the quarter-acre block.

Such narratives and such anxiety have contributed to the inhumane detention policy we now have. Robert Manne understands the Howard government's refusal to allow the *Tampa* 'to unload its refugees on Australian soil as represent[ing] a true turning point in the history of Australia'. He speaks of 'a kind of respectable xenophobia' that has emerged to make incarcerating asylum seekers seem a legitimate and humanitarian part of refugee policy. Across the essays, there is a strong emphasis on putting our current immigration and asylum seeker policies into a global geopolitical framework. This excellent book makes it clear that the spectre of White Australia still haunts us.

—Kirsty Sangster



**The Uniting Church in Australia: The first 25 years**, William W. Emilsen and Susan Emilsen (eds). Circa, 2003. ISBN 0 958 09382 2, RRP \$49.95

At the 1997 Assembly of the Uniting Church, Emilsen watched and wondered at the way members of different synods reacted to the discussion of sexuality. In response, this history examines the Uniting Church's first 25 years state by state.

The various chapter authors include historians ranging from a postgraduate student to an emeritus professor, a sociologist and a journalist. So the chapters are in a variety of styles: academic, participatory, and in at least one case, there is a suspicion that the author is settling scores.

The sections on New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia all provide background to the way the synods have reacted to the 2003 Assembly decision on sexuality. The one on Victoria, however, focuses on the minority neo-evangelical view, and gives few explanations as to why the majority of members in Victoria have taken the Assembly decision in their stride.

The book tells of conflict experienced and survived. The discussion of sexuality is only the most recent of the debates that have challenged the church—debates over politics, abortion, infant baptism, and the ordination of women. The Uniting Church has survived all these, and this history suggests that it will survive the sexuality debate as well.

—Avril Hannah-Jones



**Landscapes of Memory: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered**, Ruth Kluger. Bloomsbury, 2003. ISBN 0 747 56005 6, RRP \$35.00

As a starving and near-naked 12-year-old, Ruth Kluger stood before a tall soldier and lied about her age in the hope that she would be let loose from Auschwitz and selected for another labour camp. She writes of the soldier: 'Later I saw the selector's image in Kafka's door keeper, who won't grant a man entrance to his own space and light.' This book makes it clear that the Holocaust deprives even those who survive it of any space and any light. Kluger remains the child standing in a roll-call of the dead.

The narrative is fragmented. Past, present and future all become tangled up together as if she is in dialogue with all her selves at once: pre-Holocaust child, concentration camp dweller, retired literature professor. Her life as an academic runs together with the shooting of her brother in Riga, her experiences in the camps, and the disappearance of her father. In her pitiless use of language she refuses to sanctify the space of Auschwitz or the memory of all those who were murdered. She is unforgiving of her dead relatives, insisting on her right not to forget their petty cruelties towards her before the war. Nor does she forgive her mother whom she perceives as paranoid and selfish despite having saved her daughter from the gas chambers. She tells it how it is for her—child survivor—without adornment. She dares the reader to feel any 'pity' for her. This is essential reading.

—Kirsty Sangster



**A girl, a smock and a simple plan**, Chris Daffey. Penguin, 2003. ISBN 0 14028 961 5, RRP \$22.95

Chris Daffey has stolen my childhood. This is the conclusion I reached after reading *A girl, a smock and a simple plan*. He doesn't mention learning maths by Cuisinaire and compulsory marching for all students (an episode which has left me with a loathing of brass bands), but otherwise, this too is my experience of Grade

Six. If you are not convinced that schooldays are indeed the best of our lives, relive them in these pages and believe.

Part novel, part autobiography, *A girl, a smock and a simple plan* is the story of a normal boy who falls in love with a normal girl and goes to abnormal lengths to win her affections. 'The Plan' has all the cunning of a *Blackadder* plot and about as much chance of success. We follow our hero through his senior primary year as he walks the fine line between childhood and the terror that follows.

Daffey's writing is sharp and his characters well observed. We enjoy the company of the best friends (the sporting hero and the equally lovable and infuriating nerd), the family and the story's standout, Pop. Daffey seamlessly stitches together the minutiae of life as an 11-year-old: falling in love, cricket, Holden cars, avoiding the school hit man and *Star Wars*. If you were ever baffled by the logic of boys at primary school, this book solves the mystery.

Daffey is a lawyer-turned-writer and this is his first book.

—Marcelle Mogg





## Desert bloom

*Japanese Story*, dir. Sue Brooks. *Japanese Story* seemingly starts out as just another road movie—the laziest and most overdone of all the genres in Australian cinema—but it soon turns into a very satisfying journey of the heart.

Sandy (Toni Collette) is a geologist working in the masculine world of the Western Australian mining industry. She's a workaholic singleton, so wrapped up in her career that she can't see her life is idling in neutral. Somehow she finds herself chauffeuring a Japanese businessman, Hiromitsu (Gotaro Tsunashima), around the outback, in the vain hope he'll purchase her company's software package. This odd couple in a four-wheel drive eventually discover a rapport that blossoms into an affair after the Australian

desert nearly destroys them.

And then, just when you think you've got the film sussed, the film-makers supply a twist which is so elemental and frightening that it flies off in another direction entirely. Many Australian films have no third act, no reason to keep you in the cinema for a further 20 minutes—thankfully *Japanese Story* does.

The script by Brooks' long-time collaborator, Alison Tilson, is beautifully structured, but unfortunately it does suffer from some wooden dialogue and a couple of speeches about the Australia-Japan relationship do little to advance the drama. The film overcomes these problems: partly due to Sue Brooks's wonderful eye for the strangeness and beauty of the Pilbara, and partly because of Toni Collette's work as the female lead.

At the moment of the story's key turning point she pulls off a performance of such rawness and truthfulness that it transcends acting. Without recourse to any tricks of the trade, Collette makes you think that you've stumbled inadvertently upon a woman in genuine distress.

In a year full of inept Australian films, at last we have one worth recommending.

Instead of a lame, commercially driven, so-called 'comedy', *Japanese Story* offers a mature and insightful film for adults, not unlike that other recent Australian classic, *Lantana*. Though maybe not as good as Ray Lawrence's multi-layered drama, *Japanese Story* runs a damn close second.

—Brett Evans

## Shyster's paradise

*Gettin' Square*, dir. Jonathan Teplitzky. My favourite scene in this film is when ex-crim Dabba and his hardman Crusher go all gooey over Dabba's twin baby daughters—the effin byootiful ones. Timothy Spall makes such a good ex-crim and Richard Carter (better known in *White Collar Blue*) is such a great old granite face that the scene has the effect of pantomime. Pantomime is an art form that relies on familiarity rather than the schlock-new: *Gettin' Square* walks on ground broken by *Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels* and *Snatch*. But the journey is gentler, more like *The Italian Job* (the old good one, not the thin new one). You know it's going to be a caper-heist movie with lots





of swearin' and threatenin' because you've seen the trailers if you haven't been in an enclosed order or at Guantanamo. You expect twists in the plot, not too hard to get your head around, and you expect some nasty villains along with some dupable cops and lovable rogues.

What you don't expect is how sharp and funny it is, and how outstandingly good the art direction: the shonkiness of the Gold Coast conveyed by inspired camera work with hard colours and strong sun. In one scene the hero, Barry Worth, paroled from a long manslaughter sentence after being verbally abused by the bad cop De Viers ('Devious'—get it? Pantomime), sits in his dead mother's bedroom. The room's faded florals and dated furniture have nothing to do with shabby chic or retro. Performances shine: David Field's De Viers, Gary Sweet's evil Chicka Martin, Barry's dead mum's ex-lover who really did the crime. Gretel Killeen's two-minute cameo, as the vengeful wife of an unfaithful accountant whose downfall is going to bring a lot of Gold Coast shonks, is a joy. And of course David Wenham is going to run away (he does a lot of that in the film) with the AFI Best Supporting Actor Award next year for his fantastic grotty performance as John 'Spit' Spiteri, not-completely hopeless junkie. The whole thing's as flash as a rat with a gold tooth, so comeuppances are moral rather than legal. Which makes them all the more enjoyable.

—Juliette Hughes

## Zombie madness

*28 Days Later*, dir. Danny Boyle. Horror film or satire, zombie flick or love story? I was confused by Danny Boyle's newest cinematic offering. What was it all about?

The story was straightforward enough. Animal rights activists break into a primate experimentation laboratory intending to free a swag of lab monkeys but instead unleash an horrifically contagious rage virus that infects an entire continent and beyond in but 28 days. Britain and, we assume, much of the rest of the world is overrun by zombie-like humans that do nothing but bite, scratch and infect.

Needless to say, *28 Days Later* provides us with the obligatory handful of hero survivors to identify with but not nearly enough metaphorical richness or heart-stopping terror to create more than

fleeting moments of cinematic grace. Never once did I turn from the screen or feel anxiety for the future of the human race—I came close on occasions, but sadly no cigar.

To give credit where it's due, *28 Days Later* did have a keen sense of the absurd and when it was played for awkward laughs it worked. Little moments of domestic normality sprinkled through the film's zombie madness reminded me what a film-maker Danny Boyle can be at his best (remember *Trainspotting* and *Shallow Grave*). Had he really worked the film for those moments it might have been a fine piece of genre bending, but sadly they were but scattered vignettes gobbled up in the end by dull gore and ninja theatrics.

Anthony Dod Mantle's (of *Dogma* fame—*Feston*, *Donkey Boy* and *Mifune*) cinematography is quite a piece of work. The opening sequences of London, devoid of its population, are genuinely breathtaking. His ability to wield a digital camera (in this case a whole swag of them) with gritty attention to beauty is a feat worthy of praise.

Oh, and if you go, don't leave till the credits have rolled, there is a little surprise that is worth waiting for.

—Siobhan Jackson

## Flinty fellas

*Matchstick Men*, dir. Ridley Scott. Ridley Scott has a long and distinguished career as a film-maker, and has directed at least two bona fide classics (*Alien* and *Blade Runner*), though he seems to have shifted into 'epic theatre' of late. Films like *1492*, *Gladiator* and *Black Hawk Down* have emphasised the sheer spectacle of film-making over almost everything else, so it's interesting to see him shift into a more intimate, everyday mode with his new release *Matchstick Men*.

Nicholas Cage plays Roy, a career con artist who, with his protégé Frank (played



by Sam Rockwell), plays off the greed and naivety of his marks to build himself a substantial nest egg. He also has a startling array of ticks, compulsions and phobias—which he somehow manages to keep under control when he's on the job. The compulsively tidy existence he's created for himself starts getting messy when he discovers the existence of his 14-year-old daughter Angela (Alison Lohman, who makes a pretty convincing 14-year-old for someone who's actually 24), who seems to have inherited some of his professional talents.

I've never been a great fan of films that rely on a sudden 'surprise' twist at the end to prove how clever they are, and in any case it's not all that surprising for a film about con men to try and put one over on its audience as well. All three leads put in a strong performance, though Rockwell's character seems a little peripheral to the story for most of the film—which, as it turns out, is something of a three-card trick on the part of Scott.

As you'd expect from Scott, the film looks great, though I'm not sure what to make of the self-conscious anachronism of Roy's 1950s modernist dream house (even though the film has a contemporary setting, you'd swear from the opening shots that it was set in the '50s). It's a pleasant enough film, but, like Steven Spielberg's recent *Catch Me If You Can*, it feels more like Scott was taking a holiday from his own seriousness than anything else. After the spectacular tedium of *Black Hawk Down* and *Gladiator*, that may not be such a bad thing.

—Allan James Thomas



**T**HE FAMILY KEEP threatening to take away my newspapers if I don't clean up my language at the breakfast table. 'OK, Fred,' I said to the husband as he protested recently. He walked right into it (always marry a straight man, in more ways than one, ladies).

'Fred?' he said, obligingly.

'As in Nile,' I said, trying for hauteur but settling for triumph. And then for a while I really did try to moderate the flow of filth. But when I read George Monbiot blaming David Attenborough for the parlous state of the world's wildernesses I swore like an Osbourne. It seems that Monbiot felt that, in constructing scenarios of wild animals in their habitats, Attenborough had deceived us into thinking that things are OK in the rainforests of the world. When I had exhausted the single syllables I started thinking whom else we could blame for the state of things. We could blame the Dalai Lama for the Chinese atrocities in Tibet; we could blame the Hollows Foundation for the eye problems of the Third World; and let's not forget that the Enron thingy, the war in Iraq and global warming are all because of Michael Moore. Maybe Monbiot has despaired of denting the military industrial complex that really does the environmental damage, and has decided to just take it out on someone who, well, really doesn't.

Watching Attenborough in his second series of *The Life of Mammals* (ABC Wednesdays at 8.30pm) I couldn't help noting that tinge of sadness in him; he knows the fragility of what he shows us. His whole life's work is to help us love the wild, to show us the wonders of our planet—whales making whoopee still wow me. How can people fight to protect something if they don't even know about it? David Suzuki's Cassandra approach would probably satisfy Monbiot but there are dangers in telling the dark side of the story all the time. Not that I don't respect Suzuki and his programs, but too much bad news, and the punters are going to turn over to watch *Funniest Home Videos*.

Which must be pretty desperate for dinkum home vids if the one I flicked onto last month was representative: the night's prize went to two brats brawling on a trampoline, and the presenter was promising \$500 to anyone whose video even got an airing. (Trampolines must buy more Porsches per annum for orthopaedic surgeons than a whole season of AFL knees and groins.) They filled up the holes in the show with horrible stuff brought in from America: people falling

## Like Attenborough

off things and into things. How anyone could find some of the incidents funny is beyond me, especially the ones where children seemed to get hurt. Nasty show, won't watch again.

But I will watch Attenborough, as much for the man and his love of the world as it should be, as for the wonders he shows us. I watched his *Zoo Quest for a Dragon* in black and white on the BBC in England when I was about ten. And I remember, in another series back then in the days before Borneo's forests were razed to make coffee tables and bedroom sets, the mouse deer he filmed. Wonder is the word again—joy, a catch of breath. I carried the picture of it in my head ever since, a fairy creature, exquisitely miniature. David Attenborough has been helping me to love the natural world for most of my life.

**T**HE PAST TEACHES US how little we ever learn about looking after the natural world. Human folly comes up again and again in *Meet the Ancestors* (SBS Sundays, 8.30pm). Sometimes it's more about archaeologists being whizzo clever-clogs than about the subject matter, but you do catch something of their enthusiasm about the discoveries. The oldest house in Britain gets a going over this month. They scrape away layers of fireplace ash to find what and when our 500-times great-grandparents ate. A scorched hazelnut shell gives an exact date, the year of its growing when the rellies roamed the post-Ice Age forests 10,000 years ago. The top ten ancient treasures are to be proclaimed in the 16 November program, including of course the Sutton Hoo burial ship, and various hoards of coins and artefacts.

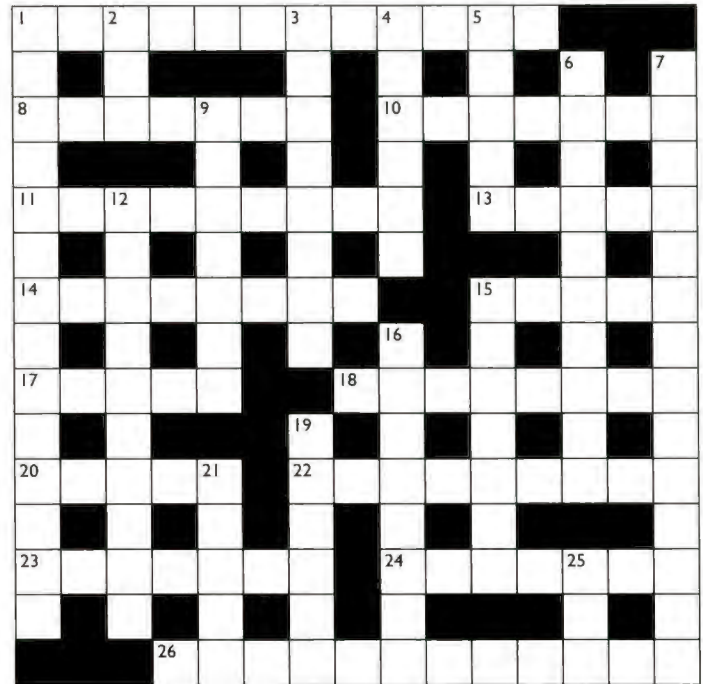
People must have coveted these hoards, which is why they were hidden in the first place. Unearthed, treasures become unearthly; they become temptations to unnaturalness, to selfishness. And all because we always want what someone else has got, whether it's money, or a flash house, or a mahogany forest that gives life to animals that never bothered us and don't owe us a thing and don't need us to do anything but leave them in peace. Seeing the smashed grandiosities of *Meet the Ancestors* recalls from my own past, a mere wink of time ago, reciting Shelley's 'Ozymandias' at school: 'look upon my works, ye mighty, and despair.' But no, don't despair. Never do that. Be like Attenborough. ■

**Juliette Hughes** is a freelance writer.



ACROSS

1. & 18. Take a bound—rushing to the seasonal celebration. (6,6,8)
8. Possibly enlarge the premises for use by someone like Cosgrove. (7)
10. Criminal with aquatic animal, reportedly, engaged in cover-up. (7)
11. On the untidy verge, Reza took the cattle to eat—too much? (9)
13. In France you go on the hill train. (5)
14. Legendary story that people relate—in part. (8)
15. Short officer in charge seems to be suffering pain. (5)
17. Put mat beside the TV so that we can watch the game—with the rest of the world? (5)
18. See 1-across.
20. It's a catastrophe, in other words, to have lost Pluto for the sake of a flower! (5)
22. Could be Santa on the sill? No, this feast for everyone is too early for Santa. (3,6)
23. Measure and count, for instance, to raise the rank. (7)
24. Piper with a pain could still perform with flamboyance! (7)
26. Radio title is confusing. He should possibly rephrase it and express an opinion. (12)



Solution to Crossword no. 117, October 2003



DOWN

1. Write your name in the register in order to receive your pay. (4,2,3,5)
2. Doing this fast for 3-across! (3)
3. Concerning chargeable action—is that trustworthy? (8)
4. Hidden store at the square receives official seal. (6)
5. Group has zero time to practise? (5)
6. Try this number for the field against India, for instance. (4,6)
7. Secretarial situation from the point of view of the ministry? (8,6)
9. Carries ungainly girth extremely loosely—and correctly so! (7)
12. Frees someone from ignorance about how to take things less seriously. (10)
15. Bubbly tonic an alcoholic drink to hold! (7)
16. Ring one for every splint or compass used? (8)
19. Such flagrant licence about copyright! (6)
21. Crooked braid on garment really makes me mad! (5)
25. Greek character found in Machiavellian romance! (3)

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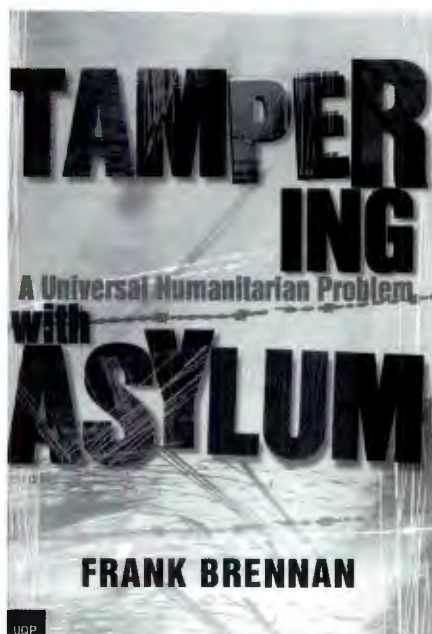
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Thanks to University of Queensland Press, *Eureka Street* has ten copies of *Tampering with Asylum* to give away. Just put your name and address on the back of an envelope and send to: Eureka Street November Book Offer, PO Box 553, Richmond VIC 3121. See page 42 for winners of the September Film Offer, and page 11 for details of the launch of *Tampering with Asylum*.

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