

EUREKA STREET

A MAGAZINE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS,
THE ARTS AND THEOLOGY
Vol 15 no 5 June 2005 \$7.50 (inc. GST)

On being in
SOUTH AMERICA

Depression

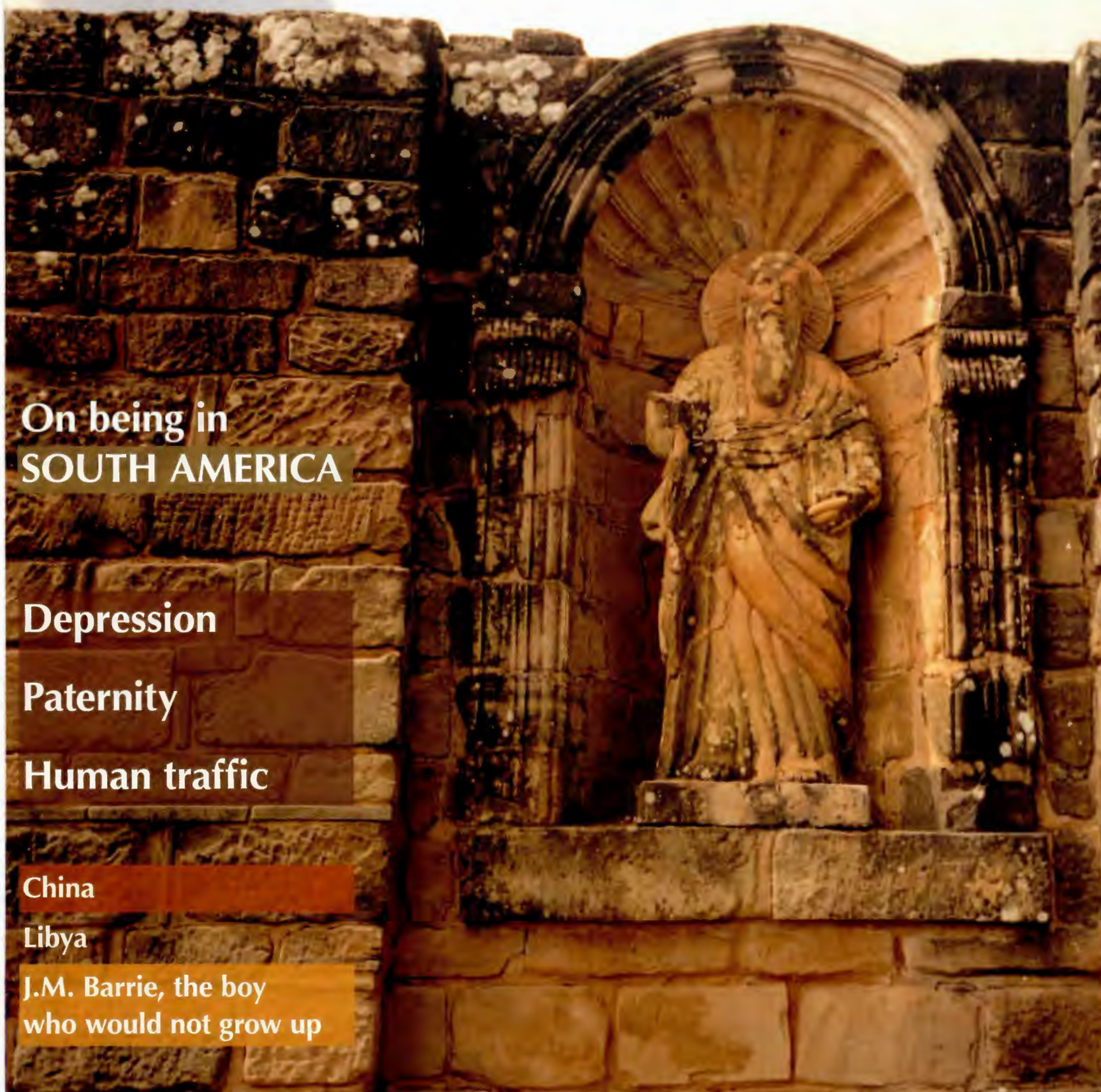
Paternity

Human traffic

China

Libya

J.M. Barrie, the boy
who would not grow up



A new award for young writers

Eureka Street is delighted to announce the inaugural
Margaret Dooley Young Writers' Award

One of the distinguishing features of *Eureka Street* is its encouragement of reasoned ethical argument based on humane values. These arguments ideally address people who own religious belief, and those whose view of the world is secular. To reflect ethically on public issues is a demanding discipline. **The Margaret Dooley Award is offered in order to support the development of young writers who will carry on the contribution of *Eureka Street* in this field.**

Margaret and Brendan Dooley have longstanding connections to the Jesuits and Xavier College. Margaret always appreciated the value of communication and education for young people, based on spiritual and personal values. She graduated from Sacre Coeur College in 1950, commenced nursing at St Vincent's Hospital and, with Brendan, raised four children. Margaret died in 2004. The Dooley family are pleased to support this initiative.

The annual award of \$2000 is open to any writer, previously published or unpublished, under the age of 40. Entrants must submit two previously unpublished articles that offer: **ethical reflection** directed to a non-specialist audience on any serious topic, **appeal to humane values**, such as those that are found within, but are not exclusive to, the best of the Christian tradition, **clear argument** and elegant expression, and a **generosity** and courtesy of spirit **animating forceful argument**.

One article should be of no more than 800 words. The second should be of no more than 2000 words. They may take up the same, or different, topics.

Entries are to be submitted by **5pm Friday, 29 July 2005**, to:
Margaret Dooley Young Writers' Award, Eureka Street, PO Box 553, Richmond VIC 3121.

The award will be made only if the judges believe that the best entry is of sufficient quality. The winner will be published in the September issue of *Eureka Street*. For more information and an application form please go to www.eurekastreet.com.au

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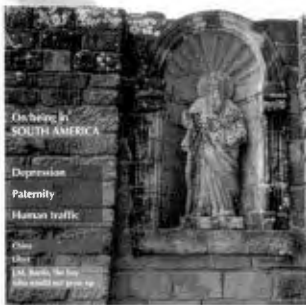


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Patrons Eureka Street gratefully acknowledges the support of C. and A. Carter; the trustees of the estate of Miss M. Condon; W.P. & M.W. Gurry

Eureka Street magazine, ISSN 1036-1758, Australia Post Print Post approved pp349181/00314, is published ten times a year by Eureka Street Magazine Pty Ltd, 300 Victoria Street, Richmond VIC 3121 PO Box 553, Richmond VIC 3121 Tel: 03 9427 7311 Fax: 03 9428 4450 email: eureka@jespub.jesuit.org.au <http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/>
 Responsibility for editorial content is accepted by Andrew Hamilton s, 300 Victoria Street, Richmond
Printed by Doran Printing
 46 Industrial Drive, Braeside VIC 3195.
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Cartoons: Dean Moore p9, p16, p35.

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Us and them

THE STORY OF CORNELIA RAU seemed at first to be an isolated personal tragedy. But we now know that more Australians have been wrongly detained. One Australian woman was deported, and could not be found for some years.

The question initially asked about Cornelia Rau was why an Australian citizen should be treated so badly—jailed, detained, and despite clear mental disturbance, sanctioned as if she was responsible for her bizarre behaviour. This question was morally adrift. We should ask why any human being could be treated in this way. The answer is clear and disturbing. She, and other people wrongfully detained and deported, was not like us.

The Queensland authorities passed Cornelia Rau over to the immigration department because she spoke in German and acted bizarrely—unlike us.

The immigration authorities failed to establish her identity, kept her in police cells, transferred her to Baxter and left her imprisoned for ten months, because she did not look or sound like one of us. She behaved for all the world like an asylum seeker.

The prisoners at Baxter were able to see clearly that she was mentally disturbed, but the 'best of psychological counsel' declared her problems to be behavioural. The former recognise mental disturbance because she was one of them.

We should not be too hard on the psychologists who failed to see what was before their eyes. It is hard for psychologists paid to work in detention centres to retain the moral and human compass which guides their craft.

It is also understandable that Cornelia Rau was placed in a 'management unit'—a small, windowless cell, with only a mattress, in which the subject is under perpetual video surveillance, with the light never turned off. For people who are not like us, such methods work. Like the cells at Port Arthur, they can turn rebellion into whimpering apathy.

Those responsible for the detention of asylum seekers have created a culture in which we expect that people who are not like us should be treated differently. They have created a regime of inhumanity.

It is not surprising that Australians who seem to be unlike us are wrongly detained, imprisoned and deported. That is not the scandal. The scandal is that we should fail to be outraged by the distinction between people like us and people who are not like us. And that we should fail to be outraged that any human being, Australian or not, should be subjected to the treatment asylum seekers meet at the hands of our representatives. ■

Andrew Hamilton SJ is the publisher of *Eureka Street*.

**We've met the enemy –
and, in some measures,
it's us.** JOEL ROGERS



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What is to be done?



Held in balance

I enjoyed reading Andrew Hamilton's thoughtful reflection on Marion Mad-dox's *God under Howard: The Rise of the Religious Right in Australian Politics* in *Eureka Street* (May 2005). Fr Hamilton has been very even-handed in his response and has looked at the other side of the coin with an equally critical approach. I especially appreciated the picture he drew of the atheism/idolatry continuum. I can see other relevant continuums here: certainty and pluralism; traditional and radical; spiritual and worldly.

The fact is that all of us are somewhere between the extreme ends of these continuums, and during life our position changes. It is helpful to see it like this because then there is a relationship between both sides, and not mutual exclusion. If so, there is no need to demonise those who belong to one side or the other. In politics, as in religion, the trick is to live somewhere towards the centre where there is a balance of both extremes. The trouble is that we never know where the balance is, because it is dynamic rather than static.

Jenny Close
via email

A voice from within

We can now consider the late Pontiff's repression of women. Scores, and I suspect millions, of women raised in the Catholic faith have just drifted away from it for this reason. We don't speak out on the subject, but try to embrace Christian values, and let the church numbers dwindle until its leadership realises it must change or become entirely obsolete. Alternatively we occupy the pews of churches whose pastors are reprimanded by the Vatican for minor breaches of protocol. Like the fathers of other rigid authoritarian families, the late pontiff was much kinder to those outside his flock than to many members within. It is ironic to think that those in the developing world must endure the shroud we shrugged off decades ago. The Vatican must remember that Jesus was a poor, tolerant political prisoner who upset the authorities and was outcast for empowering the vulnerable.

Dr Marianne Cannon
Ashgrove, QLD

Unbeatable odds

Thank you, Steven Churches, for your very telling article, 'Selective evidence', in the April edition of *Eureka Street* which detailed some of the complexities in establishing the genuineness of the Bakhtiyari family's claims for refugee status.

Those supporting long-term detainees still in Baxter know all too well the flaws of the determination process.

The limited English of most asylum seekers, and the inquisitorial approach often adopted by interviewers, make it difficult for clear, accurate information to be elicited.

Fear for the safety of their families and fear of authorities means that the full facts of a case are often not told at a first or even second interview, leading to seeming 'inconsistencies' which then cast doubts on credibility.

Information supplied by human rights groups and Australian government departments is often at variance, while the fact that interviewers and members of the Refugee Review Tribunal are all employed by DIMIA does not foster a process that is objective, independent or transparent.

What is of serious concern is that decisions made in this process are binding.

As Dr Churches points out, subsequent court proceedings cannot re-examine the merits of the facts of a case, but are restricted only to establishing if due legal process has been followed.

When all legal avenues have been exhausted, the only recourse open to 'failed asylum seekers' is to appeal to the minister to use her discretion and allow the detainee the right to have their case reviewed or to be granted a humanitarian visa.

Since the recently announced Removals Pending Bridging Visa requires detainees to relinquish these rights and to agree to return home when asked, it is unlikely to find many takers.

It is indeed a 'no-hope' visa, as Bob Brown, leader of the Greens, has described it. In such a system hope is a hard quality to sustain.

Beth Flenley
Daw Park, SA



Sleepless nights

I am tempted to ask you not to publish any more articles on the Australian government's treatment of asylum seekers. I read them, and that night I lie awake for hours seething with anger and contempt. The article by Steven Churches (April 2005) was no exception.

The following motion was passed unanimously at the business meeting of the International Association of Forensic Linguists, held on 12 July 2003 at the University of Sydney:

This conference notes that the Australian government is currently engaging several European companies to provide 'language analysis' in the determination of the nationality of refugee claimants.

A preliminary examination of this process by a group of five Australian linguists has raised serious concerns about the underlying assumptions as well as the methods being used in this so-called 'language analysis'.

Delegates at the conference of the International Association of Forensic Linguists unanimously reject this so-called 'language analysis' as unprofessional and unreliable. We call on the Australian government to refrain from using this process, unless and until its reliability has been independently established.

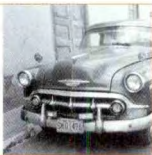
The report 'Linguistic identification in the determination of nationality: a preliminary report' is by Diana Eades, Helen Fraser, Jeff Siegel, Tim McNamara and Brett Baker, February 2003. It is available at www.iafl.org. The text of the above resolution is at the same address.

Gavan Breen
Alice Springs, NT

Eureka Street welcomes letters from our readers. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters may be edited. Letters must be signed, and should include a contact phone number and the writer's name and address.

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the month's
traffic



The Labor split

YOU'RE A FANATIC.' 'You're not a Labor man.' 'Rat!' So the interjections rang out with intensifying ferocity late on the evening of 19 April 1955 as F.R. (Frank) Scully, MLA for Richmond and until three weeks earlier a member of John Cain's Labor ministry, addressed the Victorian Legislative Assembly in support of a no-confidence motion in the Cain Government. At 4.30am the following morning, Scully and his fellow Labor renegades voted with the Opposition parties to seal the Cain Government's fate. Thus the Labor split of 1955 reached its point of no return; federally, it would be 17 years before the ALP regained office, while in Victoria, the eye of the storm, the penance lasted a generation.

Last month, on the 50th anniversary of that momentous debate, Scully, a sprightly 85-year-old, returned to its scene to launch the *Great Labor Split: Fifty Years Later* conference. This time there were no insults, but a hushed silence from the hundred-plus registrants who were acutely aware of a moment rich in historical resonance. To add piquancy to the occasion, sharing the launch duties was another octogenarian and Split survivor, Robert Corcoran. In the 1950s, Corcoran had been one of the earliest whistleblowers on B.A. Santamaria's clandestine anti-communist organisation, the Catholic Social Studies Movement ('the Movement'). This culminated in a decisive appearance by Corcoran before the federal executive inquiry into the Victorian ALP that followed Labor leader Doc Evatt's 'hydrogen bomb' statement of 5 October 1954 outing the Movement.

Old warriors, neither man flinched in asserting that his cause had been true. Scully's shorthand version of the Split fingered Evatt as the chief wrecker. (So much for Gerard Henderson's precipitant

judgment in the Fairfax press that the conference was to be an exercise in 'denial' about Evatt's 'predominant role in this Labor disaster'.) If Evatt had been the culprit, then, according to Scully, the ALP had been the victim. Labor, he lamented, had 'never recovered'—the sloughing off of its Catholic right wing left it susceptible to hijacking by middle-class progressives. Corcoran, on the other hand, was adamant that the blame rested with Santamaria and his disciples, who had deployed the Catholic faithful as a Trojan horse in a sinister attempt to capture the ALP. They had to be confronted.

While the chasm between Scully and Corcoran could not be straddled, the following two days of the conference brought a genuine dialogue on the causes and legacies of the Split. The participants were a diverse lot, ranging from veterans of the conflict and their descendants, Labor Party elder statesmen, headed by national president Barry Jones, former Victorian Premier John Cain jnr and former ALP Senate leader and minister in the Hawke and Keating governments John Button, trade union stalwarts, current representatives of the National Civic Council and Democratic Labor Party, as well as historians and political scientists from across Australia. The opinions expressed were equally catholic, with the discussion roaming over topics including the role of personalities in the Split, particularly Evatt, Santamaria, Frank Hardy, Archbishop Daniel Mannix and Trades Hall Secretary Vic Stout; the distinctive patterns that the Split took (or didn't take) in different states; religiosity and the Split; the Liberal Party's response to the Split; and retrospective assessments of the DLP.

There were highlights aplenty, among them a première documentary screening by Griffith University filmmaker Pat Laughren, featuring interviews with many of the key Split protagonists (some now deceased, such as Santamaria and Jim Cairns) and archival footage; a talk by Robert Murray on his writing of the landmark study *The Split: Labor in the Fifties*; and John Cain's passionate address in launching the companion book to the conference. If Scully's appearance had been powerfully symbolic, by no means less so was Cain's—son of the premier whose government had been destroyed by the Split, a reformer of the Victorian ALP in the 1960s, and Labor leader whose election as premier in 1982

closed the circle opened in 1955. But Cain also spoke with an eye to the present. An outspoken critic of the scourge of factionalism, he warned that the contemporary party exhibited symptoms of the pathology that afflicted the party in the 1950s and 1960s: one mob wanting exclusive control rather than sharing power.

Some of the conference's best moments were unrehearsed: Barry Jones in full flight on the visit of British Labour Leader Clement Attlee to Australia in September 1954 as one of the unrecognised ignition points for the Split, and former communist Bernie Taft reminiscing about his unlikely rapprochement with Santamaria in the latter's twilight years. Particularly memorable was the contribution in the final plenary session by the son (and namesake) of the late Bill Barry, who in April 1955 had led the breakaways across the parliamentary floor. In one of the last acts in that drama, Labor MP Bob Pettiona, a former friend of Barry's, showered him with 30 silver threepences (the coins are on display outside the Parliamentary Library), hissing, 'There you are, you ... Judas.' With an intensity born out of long-nursed grievance, Barry jnr spoke emotionally of the injustice done to his father and late mother Mary, who had also been expelled during the purge of April 1955. To listen to him was to realise how deep had been the wound of being cast from the Labor tribe.

Closure had been a theme of the conference's last session: when, if ever, did the Split end? Like the other topics dealt with, there was no consensus, no easy answers. Yet the spontaneous applause accorded to Barry left one feeling that the conference had been another small step towards a healing of sorts.

—Paul Strangio

The duel within

FROM NOVEMBER TO FEBRUARY, I can pretend that bullfighting doesn't exist. From February to April, it begins to appear on the periphery of my consciousness in the same way that an AFL football pre-season always filled me with feelings of impending gloom. But come April and the months that follow, I can no longer ignore it, particularly in Madrid, where

a festival dedicated to the city's patron saint—San Isidro—marks the pinnacle of a bullfighting season that lasts until November offers some respite.

And yet, my discomfort is not what I would like it to be. My problem is the uncomfortable feeling that I cannot entirely condemn Spain's most infamous national tradition.

Morally, it is easy. Bullfighting is a cruel blood sport, a primitive orgy of death that appears to have no place in modern Europe. A Plaza de Toros—the beautiful arena where bullfights are held—resembles the amphitheatres of Rome, filled with spectators baying for the blood of a frightened wild animal which faces certain death. A British friend and long-time resident of Spain cannot abide bullfighting and likens it to bear-baiting and other brutal pursuits where animals are sacrificed for the entertainment of man. I cannot argue with him.

And yet, there is something, in the words of the bullfighting aficionado otherwise known as Ernest Hemingway, 'elegantly archaic' about the whole spectacle. It is the drama of a man dressed in a *traje de luces* (suit of lights) pitting himself against a 500kg animal that is revered by spectators. It is the strutting interaction between a man with a red cape eager to choreograph his own survival with a statuesque grace and theatrical purity of line and a crowd of highly knowledgeable and sceptical spectators. It is the vividness of death, the compelling sense of absurd tragedy, the duel within me between being unable to watch and unable not to.

I have never been entirely convinced by the moral relativism of Hemingway's defence of bullfighting, whereby he argues that, 'I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after and judged by these moral standards, which I do not defend, the bullfight is very moral to me because I feel very fine while it is going on and have a feeling of life and death and mortality and immortality, and after it is over I feel very sad but very fine.'

Even he acknowledges that 'from a modern, moral point of view, that is a Christian point of view, the whole bullfight is indefensible; there is certainly much cruelty, there is always danger, either sought or unlooked for, and there is always death.'

Flock and key

TO UNDERSTAND THEOLOGY, you need to attend not only to the tune, but to the key it is played in. I was reminded of this by responses to Benedict XVI's inaugural sermon at his enthronement. He quoted John's Gospel in speaking of Christian unity: 'I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must lead them too, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd' (Jn 10:16). Some observers took him to mean that other churches should return to unity with Rome under the Pope, instead of journeying together towards an unforeseeable unity.

It was natural to draw this conclusion. This quotation from John's Gospel was long played in *Barrister's Key*. It was sawed to size and hammered together with other texts about Peter, to argue against Protestants that Peter is Christ's vice-regent and that the Catholic Church is the one true Church. Documents from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, formerly headed by Cardinal Ratzinger, are also often composed in *Barrister's Key*, using texts to build a case.

In his sermon, Pope Benedict explored the symbols entrusted to the Pope in the ceremony: the pallium—a woollen piece of cloth—and the ring. He associated the pallium with the image of the shepherd, and the ring with the image of the fisherman. In the Gospel reading used at the ceremony, these two images are tied to Peter. After he had taken an amazing catch of fish, Jesus invited him to feed his sheep.

In his sermon, the Pope refers to many scriptural texts. He does not use them to make a case, but plays freely with them, allowing them to generate new images. The shepherd, variously identified with Christ, the bishops, Peter and the Pope, evokes the sheep, who are the lost sheep of humanity, Christians generally, and Christ, the sacrificial lamb. The lost sheep in turn evoke the desert, the place where humanity is lost. The images of fisherman, fish, and the sea from which fish are paradoxically rescued, are similarly fluid and generative.

This is theology played in *Poet's Key*. Heard in this key, Pope Benedict's reference to the one flock and one shepherd does not of itself make an intransigent papal claim. Images of the one flock and of the fishing net that remains unbroken naturally generate images of church unity, and have done so since the second century. The association is natural, and the interpretation of the text is fluid. In this key, texts do not define meanings; they open possibilities. The journey to unity is open.

The challenge to any theology played in *Poet's Key* is to find some firm structure in the soup of images. In Catholic theology, the shaping principle of theology is the life of the Church, which involves a complex set of relationships between prayer, liturgy, teaching and history. In life, nothing is lost. So the Pope's play of images echoes interpretations of these images over 20 centuries. Nothing is forgotten, not even the papalist interpretation of the passage. But each interpretation is like a facet on a prism that combines with others to generate new perspectives.

A theology that attends to images is always wild. Augustine, on whom the young Ratzinger went to theological school, believed that scriptural texts trail interpretations like baited hooks, each waiting for its reader. He knew that neither texts, nor fish, nor people swim in straight lines. ■

Andrew Hamilton SJ is the publisher of *Eureka Street*.



Positive influences

HOW DO PEOPLE DECIDE when to stop clapping after a performance? Why was the mobile phone adopted quickly and universally after its emergence? Why did the birth rate in Europe suddenly plummet in the late 20th century?

The common element is an environment where people are susceptible to the influence of others. According to a recent report in the international science news weekly *New Scientist*, two French physicists—Quentin Michard, of the School of Industrial Physics and Chemistry in Paris, and Jean-Philippe Bouchard, of the French Atomic Energy Commission—who were seeking a model for such imitative behaviour found what they were looking for close to home. The progress of fads and fashions—in thought, opinion or consumer behaviour—can be described by one of the laws of magnetism.

It makes sense, when you think about it. Magnetism depends on the behaviour of individual atoms. It occurs when atoms align the direction of their spin. An overall applied magnetic field—from another magnet or an electric coil—coerces the spin of individual atoms in magnetic material to point in a particular direction, but the atoms are also influenced by their neighbours. In other words, the more atoms pointing in one direction, the greater the push for the others to go along.

Now, if you substitute people for atoms, and behaviour for spin, you have a description of imitative behaviour. When Michard and Bouchard checked the predictions of this model against what happened with mobile phones, birth rates and clapping, they found these behaviours conformed to the mathematical pattern established by the law of magnetism. Their model suggests that the rate of change of behaviour accelerates in a mathematically predictable way, and that the speed with which an opinion or technology is adopted depends on how strongly people influence each other.

It started Archimedes thinking about other imitative behaviours—particularly those relating to seemingly intractable problems, such as dealing with climate change and promoting ecologically sustainable lifestyles, or resolving conflicts such as the turmoil in the Middle East.

If Michard and Bouchard are right, their model supports the idea that small, but significant, public acts of responsibility can be highly influential. Just as the dying away of applause at a concert begins with a few people deciding enough is enough, so the revolution demanded by climate change needs more people to take small decisions which can influence their neighbours.

No one seriously thinks ratifying the Kyoto Agreement will solve the problem of greenhouse emissions. But it can influence people in making small, but important, personal decisions. In fact, the work of the French physicists actually affirms that time-worn environmental slogan: Think Global, Act Local.

As Daniel Lubetzky, at the Alfred Deakin Innovation Lectures, admirably illustrated, such thinking may even work to soothe the world's flashpoints. OneVoice, his project supporting the expression of moderates on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian divide, contributed to the election of a moderate as political leader of the Palestinians, thus helping to ease tensions.

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

Where I can concur with bullfighting's most passionate and eloquent defender of the indefensible is his assertion that 'it is impossible to believe the emotional and spiritual intensity and pure, classic beauty that can be produced by a man, an animal and a piece of scarlet serge draped over a stick'. Indeed, it is true that never has death been more picturesque and so sordid at one and the same time.

Spanish writers have proven to be of little help in my quest to resolve my discomfort. I eagerly agree with Pio Baroja, who denounced the practice of fighting bulls as brutal and cowardly, even as I nod with conviction at the words of Ruben Dario: 'The spectacle is sumptuous, there is no denying it ... the vast circus in which work those jugglers of death ... gives off a Roman courage and a Byzantine grace.'

Federico Lorca, the sublime Spanish poet who was murdered by the soldiers of the dictator Francisco Franco, spoke of 'a religious mystery ... the public and solemn enactment of the victory of virtue over the lower interests ... the superiority of spirit over matter, of intelligence over instinct, of the smiling hero over the frothing monster'. Antonio Machado described it as 'a sacrifice to an unknown god'.

But none of these can justify a practice that leads to the deaths of 40,000 bulls in Spain every year, leaving me akin to Montoya, a character in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*: 'He always smiled as though bullfighting were a very special secret between the two of us; a rather shocking but very deep secret that we knew about. He always smiled as though there were something lewd about the secret to outsiders, but that it was something that we understood. It would not do to expose it to people who would not understand.'

But it was Henry James who truly spoke to my ambivalence, understanding it without ever resolving it: 'The national pastime of Spain is extremely disgusting. One has taken a certain sort of pleasure in the bullfight, and yet how is one to state gracefully that one has taken pleasure in a disgusting thing, an unusual splendour? A bullfight will, to a certain extent, bear looking at, but it will not bear thinking of.'

In the meantime, I long for November.

—Anthony Ham

Future justice

THE CHALLENGE FOR BENEDICT

MANY PEOPLE were disappointed that the cardinals did not choose a pope from the Third World to highlight the desperate plight of its impoverished peoples. Cardinal Ratzinger had not previously attended extensively to global social problems as he was engaged with more theological writing and teaching.

However, he had been involved in some social controversies, notably on the war in Iraq, and during the liberation theology debates on problems of hunger and poverty. He presumably played a key role when his Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith reviewed the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, drafted by the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace and released late in 2004.

With Pope John Paul II, Cardinal Ratzinger strongly opposed the US invasion of Iraq as morally unjustified. He was also disconcerted by leading US neo-conservatives, especially George Weigel and Michael Novak, interpreting the *Catholic Catechism* to mean that only governments, not the Church, could make the final decision about the justice of recourse to war. As one of the most influential neo-conservatives in the Bush camp, Novak adopted a politically partisan role in disputing the Pope's views. To prevent such blatant misreading of the text, Ratzinger considered that these sections of the *Catechism* might need to be rewritten.

In a clear reference to the Iraq war, the *Compendium of Social Doctrine* states that 'engaging in a preventive war without clear proof that an attack is imminent cannot fail to raise serious moral and juridical questions ... International legitimacy for the use of armed force ... can only be given by a competent body'.

Further, with obvious implications for the sanctions against Iraq which claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of children, the *Compendium* declared: 'Sanctions must never be used as a means for the direct punishment of an entire population.'

It appears that Benedict will continue John Paul II's opposition to the unilateralist foreign policies of the US neo-conservatives and the Bush Administration.

Perhaps Cardinal Ratzinger is most controversially known for his interventions

against versions of liberation theology. The point that was at times overlooked in the ensuing controversy and anti-communist media frenzy was that his documents were also highly critical of injustice and oppression in Latin America.

Cardinal Ratzinger was no friend of the often rapacious and cruel practices of capitalism as it existed in many Third World countries. His *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation* in 1984 insisted that the Gospel 'is a message of freedom and a force for liberation'. 'In itself, the expression "theology of liberation" is a thoroughly valid term' (III:4), and the document did not hesitate to call Christ 'our Liberator'. It urged: 'More than ever, it is important that numerous Christians ... become involved in the struggle for justice, freedom and human dignity.'

The second document, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* (1986), wished to 'set in motion ambitious programs aimed at the socio-economic liberation of millions of men and women caught in an intolerable situation of economic, social and political oppression'. It called again on richer countries to help poorer ones, especially through aid and fairer trading relationships.

Pope John Paul II wrote to the Brazilian bishops on 9 April 1986 that 'the theology of liberation is not only timely but useful and necessary'. The poor 'feel the urgent need for this Gospel of radical and integral liberation'.

The conundrum, is why the Vatican has not appointed more bishops who can carry forward this social justice agenda in Latin America and elsewhere.

The new *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* has shifted emphasis from opposing communism to critiquing capitalism, poverty and social inequalities.

The *Compendium* insisted that the Church's social

doctrine is 'an integral part of her evangelising ministry'. None of the great social issues 'is foreign to evangelisation'. The social doctrine 'is not a marginal interest or activity, or one that is tacked on to the Church's mission, rather it is at the very heart of the Church's ministry of service'.

Quoting John Paul II, the *Compendium* declared: 'At the beginning of the New Millennium, the poverty of billions of men and women is "the one issue that most challenges our human and Christian consciences".'

With more than 70 per cent of Catholics living in developing countries, Pope Benedict must highlight the social justice agenda. Watch carefully then to see how he can draw on the vast expertise available to him to help mobilise world opinion to tackle problems of war, poverty, hunger and injustice.

—Bruce Duncan

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Boxed in

IN A LIFE LIBERALLY STUDED with trips in cabs, I have found cabbies to be in general an amiable lot. Some are given to philosophising, like the man who, once I was settled alongside him and we were on our way, said, 'If God is perfect and free from defect then He must exist because not existing would be a defect. Whaddya reckon?' Many are knowledgeable but dismissive about politics, their attitude being one of generalised complaint in the ironic Australian manner or, even more attractive, in the blunt multiculturally Australian manner. As one cabbie put it to me recently, 'I am in kebs from 12 years and what am I thinkin'? Bastard government for me done nothink, that's what.'

The other day I flagged down a cab, hopped into the front seat, belted myself in, told the driver to take me to Bundoora and prepared to chat idly without necessarily getting trapped in discussions about Camilla and Charles, the criminal affluence of the Vatican, or Howard and Costello. I needn't have worried. As we swung out into the traffic, he said, 'I mean, you'd have to be just a bit off the wall, wouldn't you, one chop short of a barbie? There'd have to be an undescended testicle involved, wouldn't you say? An occipital trauma that has at some stage necessitated a lobotomy?'

Apparently he would go on trotting out these metaphors and speculations unless throttled or physically gagged.

'How do you mean?' I said astutely. But even as I spoke, I realised that his comments referred to the bloke on the corner of the city intersection where our journey had begun, who was accosting people and explaining to them how he had been saved. I'd passed him earlier in the day so I knew his story, which was that he had been a heinous sinner. Sinners keen to confess their outrages to the public world are very fond of the word 'heinous'.

Above the traffic roar and the tramp of feet and the shrill yackety-yak of voices plunging and braying into mobile phones, he announced that he had defrauded, conspired, assaulted and robbed. He would undoubtedly have admitted to garroting and defenestration if he'd been given a little encouragement. He had, as he put it, 'known the hidden parts of women', causing a passing larrikin to shout, 'Half your luck, mate, what's the secret?'

In the few minutes it took for the lights to change, he owned to so many crimes and misdemeanors that I felt like calling a copper. But, he had survived into glory and I have to admit I lingered a while to hear the manner of his salvation. Which, as you have probably guessed, was a great disappointment. An extraterrestrial craft had materialised in an alleyway where he had been getting to know the hidden parts of a bottle of firewater and the 'crew' had carried him into this intergalactic vehicle and operated on his brain. They were of course emissaries of ... But need I go on?

When I revealed this to the cabby, he was unsurprised.

'What do you expect?' he said. 'It's the times we live in. Take the cardboard box,' he said.

He delivered this *non sequitur* as we pulled up sharply at an intersection. The combined forces of the laws of motion and the cabby's sublime disregard for narrative cohesion would have put me through the windscreen but for the safety belt.

'Like human beings, the cardboard box is capable of an almost infinite diversity within a defined and set pattern. You can have long, thin cardboard boxes—like those ones they put strip lights in—or squat, no-nonsense smaller jobs, like book boxes, or large, imposing and capacious boxes about tea-chest size or, indeed, huge buggers that machinery comes in, like motor mowers and fridges, and so on. Your cardboard box, in short, is a kind of paradigm of humanity. We take its diversity for granted, only occasionally recognising what must be actually a divinely instilled quality of endless variation.'

'WHAT DO YOU RECKON about Howard and Costello?' I said.

'Now,' he went on, 'very few people indeed have recognised the cardboard box in this light. It has remained, for most, merely a species of receptacle, and in that regard indistinguishable from, say, other containers like assortments of bags or sacks. But, of course, bags and sacks are subject to fashion. They come in different guises, different manifestations. Unlike the cardboard box whose boxness, you might say, is never lost no matter what the size or shape involved ...'

'Did you watch the Pope's funeral?' I said.

'Now, given,' he continued, 'that very few people have recognised the essentially human, if not potentially divine, dimensions of the cardboard box, it follows that anyone who does will be at a considerable advantage. And so it proves, so it proves. Where did you say you wanted to go? Box Hill?'

'This'll do me here,' I said, looking to escape from the cardboard prison.

He looked at me with an expression of weary pain.

'All right,' he said, 'all right. Costello hasn't got the guts to face down Howard, the Pope's funeral was a waste of money, Camilla and Charles are a pair of over-privileged bottom feeders and St Kilda will win the premiership. Now, where are we going?'

'Box Hill,' I said. 'What the hell.' ■

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Selling the silver

THE LARGESSE IN THE BUDGET and the redistribution of monies back to the electorate shouldn't have proven a surprise, even if conventional wisdom is that budgets following elections are the ones in which governments make tough decisions. The economic cycle is out of sync with the political cycle and the money has been rolling in, thanks to high commodity prices, the high value of the dollar and company profits which have grown far faster than the economy. It won't always be like this. Large tax cuts are one way of keeping the accumulation of surpluses from ultimately getting into the hands of an interventionist Labor Party, making any reversal of the structural changes in the economy all the more difficult. So too is locking up spare money in Futures Funds, and handing over their control to independent boards.

The Futures Fund has the appearance of great prudence, just like the efforts to cut government debt. Public servants contribute to their superannuation, but at nothing like the rate which it costs. The difference is paid out every year from consolidated revenue. In about 20 years, according to the actuaries, the accumulated liabilities will be about \$100 billion—not all, or course, to be paid out at once. Is it not simply good management to put aside money now so that those liabilities can be met? Especially while there are large surpluses? Does it not make further sense that the proceeds of assets sales, such as the remainder of Telstra, are put into funds given that they are no longer needed to retire debt? If the proceeds of Telstra's sale were simply to fund government spending, would that not be, in Lord Avon's words, selling the silver to pay the grocery bill?

It certainly is a good idea to put money into assets and infrastructure which provide the nation with a net return. But it is by no means certain that treating the proceeds as investment money to be played with on national and international stock exchanges—or in inflating the value of real estate, as will happen if it is locked up in a 'commercially-focused' fund run 'independently' by business—will produce a better result for the nation than investing it in roads and railways, schools and universities, hospitals and health-care facilities; perhaps even, given the source of the proceeds, in communications and technology.

The alternative argument—that we should tighten our belts, and reduce people's expectations of what government or community can deliver—is often code, not for saving for the future but for dismantling the welfare state. Anyway, why restrict our savings for public servants' and politicians' pensions? Why not all aged pensions, or the costs of running universities and technical colleges? Or road maintenance?

Cutting into welfare is also an essential part of the Budget strategy. There are moves to get invalid and single-parent pensioners back into the workforce by changing a system of entitlement into one of discretion based on efforts to find jobs.

The original ideas were far tougher. Under the direct influence of John Howard, however, many existing beneficiaries have been quarantined from the changes, and the system will be buttressed by cash, initially at least, for education, retraining and child-care assistance. In a decade, John Howard has completely changed Australia's social security system from one of entitlement and rights to, at best, a safety net for the temporarily dislocated. It's as revolutionary as the Hawke government's shift from systems of universal entitlement towards targeting, means testing and the non-stop search for shirkers and bludgers. The changes, under Howard, have involved the effective privatisation of many of the state's delivery services, and most of the changes have been popular in traditional Labor constituencies. Even those changes, begun under Labor but furthered by Howard, of returning a great deal of the cost of tertiary education to the consumer.

THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES with attempts to rein in public health costs, and will find it easier after July 1 with its Senate majority, to cap rising costs of pharmaceuticals, subsidised medical capital and types of health care. Health-care costs are rising faster than inflation, not only because of the slow ageing of the population, but because technological change and improvement are producing better outcomes. The demand for hip replacement surgery is growing faster than mere ageing would suggest, because such operations are increasingly effective in extending people's mobility and making their lives more comfortable. Likewise, new drugs are more effective in controlling lifestyle conditions, such as hypertension and high cholesterol. Yes they are expensive—very expensive—and in many cases there was simply no provision made for them a decade or two ago. But then, no one predicted what a difference the mobile telephone would make, or that we would, on average, triple our expenditure on takeaway food.

The government response suggests that demand can be contained by rationing services, by putting limits on the number of new health machines allowed to be used or by requiring greater amounts of co-payment. Economists tend to regard ill-health as a mere cost whose utility is unable to be easily measured.

Yet health is a major part of the economy. Its outcomes, whether in good general health for all, in successful intervention in cases of trauma and ill-health, or in the orderly care of older and less mobile, or less abled, citizens, is at the very least as important to the economy as the personal computer, the McDonald's hamburger or the plasma television—all goods whose arrival on the market, or propensity to dip deeper into our pockets, excite no worry or concern at all. ■

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The story of an unknown Libyan

For many years a pariah, the nation run by Colonel Mu'ammār Gaddafi has suddenly become the darling of the West

FEW COUNTRIES HAVE undergone such an extraordinary transformation in recent years as Libya. It is a transformation made even more remarkable by the fact that Libya has been presided over by one man—Colonel Mu'ammār Gaddafi—for almost 37 years. No other country—with the exception of Cuba and Gabon—has lived for so long under the rule of a single leader. And rarely has a country been so overshadowed by the overbearing presence of one man.

What is known about Libya is often little more than the eccentricities of Colonel Gaddafi—known simply as 'the man' by the trendy young on the streets of Libya—who has for almost four decades borne his country along on a tide of international unpredictability.

From the early days of his 1969 revolution, Colonel Gaddafi—then just 27 years old—rallied the Libyan people to his side with an anti-imperialist message, catching the popular mood of the times with the possibilities of pan-Arab nationalism as preached by the charismatic Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Colonel Gaddafi's first moves were to close all British and American military bases on Libyan soil, nationalise Libya's lucrative oil industry and expel 30,000 Italian settlers.

As was often the case with revolutionary Arab and African governments in the 1970s, the international hostility generated by Colonel Gaddafi's anti-imperialist policies obscured the finer points of a country seeking to follow its own path.

Within Libya itself, Colonel Gaddafi championed the fight against inequality and attempted to steer a middle path between communism and capitalism—Colonel Gaddafi humbly called his philosophy the Third Universal Theory. He also took on what he described as 'the problem with democracy', his slogan of 'committees everywhere' promising political participation by all Libyans rather than a representative system.

Perhaps the experiment would have been allowed to continue were it not for Colonel Gaddafi's insistence that Libya's struggle be exported beyond Libya's borders. Assassinations of political opponents took place across Europe and, most notoriously, revolutionary agents took over the Libyan Peoples' Bureau in London in April 1984, prompting a ten-day siege and the shooting of police officer Yvonne Fletcher. Libya's descent into international opprobrium and isolation dates from this event, with the Lockerbie bombing in 1988, the bombing of a French airliner over the Sahara the following year and alleged involvement in a string of terrorist attacks merely confirming Libya's status as an international pariah.

In the midst of these events, the United States launched air strikes on Tripoli and Benghazi on 15 April 1986 and Libya appeared to be condemned to a similar future of confrontation with

the West that would later become Iraq's destiny. Libya's refusal to soften its rhetoric or rein in its agents would see it subject to debilitating UN and US sanctions. Libya's, and Colonel Gaddafi's, fate as an enemy of the West was sealed.

TALK TO ANY LIBYAN and you will find his or her nation's story in microcosm.

Mohammed, a 36-year-old Libyan from Tripoli, was born two months before Colonel Gaddafi seized power and has only known a life under the Colonel. He remembers the long years of sanctions—when the economy was becalmed and regularly experienced negative growth, and prices soared to unprecedented levels—with a child's eye for detail.

'You know, back when I was a child, we had nothing. There were no shops like you see today. There were only government shops and when you heard that there was meat or milk, you would go to the shop and find 100 people waiting there and you had to fight them to get anything. If you heard that some dresses had arrived, the same thing, except that you couldn't ask for large, or small. You would fight your way to the front and then find that they gave you a dress for a child. This continued when I got older. One time I went to Turkey and I brought back bananas as a gift, but I could only give them to my closest friends and family because they were such a luxury.'

Looking back now on the sanctions which the Libyan government says claimed 21,000 lives and cost the country over US\$30 billion in lost revenues and production capacities, Mohammed is careful to apportion blame not only to Colonel Gaddafi, but to the Libyan people themselves.

'When Gaddafi went to the people and spoke to them at the People's Committees, he said that we could have everything in the shops, but we would have no money to buy them. He asked the people if they wanted this or the simple life. The people—I don't know why—they said that they wanted a simple life. I think that it is because we are a simple people and we like the simple life. I don't know what he was thinking or what we were thinking.'

Did the people have a choice? Did they have the freedom to say to Colonel Gaddafi, 'No, we want things to be different?'

'I don't know. You know, the Libyan people, we are simple people and when Gaddafi he said this, we followed whatever he said.'

As he grew older, Mohammed began to become aware of a world beyond Libya's borders, but with international airlines forbidden from flying into the country and Colonel Gaddafi's singular ability to alienate Libya's neighbours, this awareness was a bitter realisation for ordinary Libyans.

'From the 1980s, the life was very difficult. From then, the country was closed. We were enemies with Tunisia, with Egypt, we were at war with Chad. From Europe we were closed. There was nowhere we could go and no one could come. Libya was like a prison.'

For Mohammed, mixed with the bitterness of such memories, however, is an unmistakable pride in the fact that Libyans learned a new self-sufficiency and discovered the deep roots of community that sustained them through the dark years and which may otherwise have been lost: 'In Libya, if we wanted to fix a car, we learned to do it ourselves with whatever we had. If we needed to build a house, we called everyone in the family together and we built it ourselves. We didn't ask anyone for help and everything we built we can look at and say, "We did this."'

It is clear that Libyans like Mohammed also developed an eye for opportunity.

'As the embargo went on, we found out that you could get many things from Tunisia and Egypt, but no one knew where to find them. We found out and set up a business, selling these things to people.'

His friends went on to become rich, but Mohammed decided that smuggling was not his future and went to university to study engineering. Although the economy was crippled, Libya's large oil reserves and limited international sales ensured that some infrastructure projects continued. The most grandiose—and controversial—of these was Colonel Gaddafi's signature project, the Great Man-Made River, whereby water from giant natural aquifers underneath the Sahara Desert was—and still is—pumped across the desert to Libya's coastal cities.

But like his country, which has changed its identity numerous times—turning to other Arab states for support, taking on the leadership of African unity and now transforming itself into a friend of the West—Mohammed would change his career path yet again.

As a result of Libya's decision to hand over its agents for trial, compensate the families of the victims of the Lockerbie disaster, assist Europe in fighting illegal immigration from African shores and, most stunningly, renounce its nuclear and chemical weapons program, Libya is suddenly the darling of the West. Western businesspeople are flocking to the country eager for a slice of lucrative oil contracts, following in the footsteps of Western leaders keen to forget Colonel Gaddafi's past.

PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY for a country so long sealed from the outside world, Libya is booming as a tourist destination. By 2010, Libya is expected to receive one million tourists every year.

Mohammed, a man accustomed to making the most of the times in which he finds himself, has secured a foothold in the tourism industry and sees it as the way of the future. In one sense, this is economic.

'Yes, the new times are good. My life is good, but for me, I could live anywhere or sleep anywhere. If you give me bread and water I would live. You know, in Libya we have saying—if you have bread and water, you are OK. But is for my children that I hope for the better life.'

Yet Libyans like Mohammed are also excited just to be able to interact with people again. 'Before I could not travel to other countries because of my Libyan passport. Now it is very expensive.

But now all the world comes to me. I am lucky because I travel to all the countries—America, Japan, Italy, England—but I stay in my country.'

Such is the rate of change in Libya that the newfound optimism is also regarded with caution, a desire that economic development and international rehabilitation don't come at the cost of traditional values.

'We are Libyan and we have our way of life. Yes, we all want a comfortable life. We want our country to be clean, to be developed and everything to make life comfortable. But I am Libyan and I want to still eat like a Libyan on the floor from the communal plate, to dress like a Libyan, to be able to go to my friend's house after I don't see him for a long time and arrive without ringing first to see if it is OK. You know, in Libya, we have a saying—if you have a good heart, one spoon can feed 100 people. If a friend arrives and he hasn't eaten, you will cook something for him. It is more important to see him than to worry whether you were expecting him. But if we change too much, we lose this, we lose our roots.'

As in most conversations in Libya, the figure of Colonel Gaddafi appears like a guest whom no-one quite knows how to treat. Mohammed is sanguine when asked about whether the Leader of the Revolution has been good for Libya and, like most Libyans, Mohammed has a grudging respect for 'the man'.

'They always say that it is better to have the one you know than the one you don't. If we get a new leader now, I don't know, maybe we have to go back and start again from nothing. If we have professional democracy, with parties, maybe, but at least we know how is Gaddafi. I don't care if we have Gaddafi for another 100 years. If he wants to be emperor, I don't care. As long as he lets us live. Before it was difficult, but Libya is exciting now, the life is changing. And Gaddafi, we know him. The Libyan people are simple people. If he lets us live—that is all we want—then we can live with Gaddafi.'

Mohammed pauses, lost somewhere between memories of a bitter past and dreams of an exciting future.

'I am proud of my country and there are so many opportunities here. All the world is coming. I want to help build my country and now is the time to be here. Libya now is not like before. My children, God willing, can have a good life now.'

Anthony Ham is a freelance writer, living in Madrid.



Libyan leader Mu'ammur Gaddafi.
AAP/EPA/Eric Gaillard

Paternal instinct

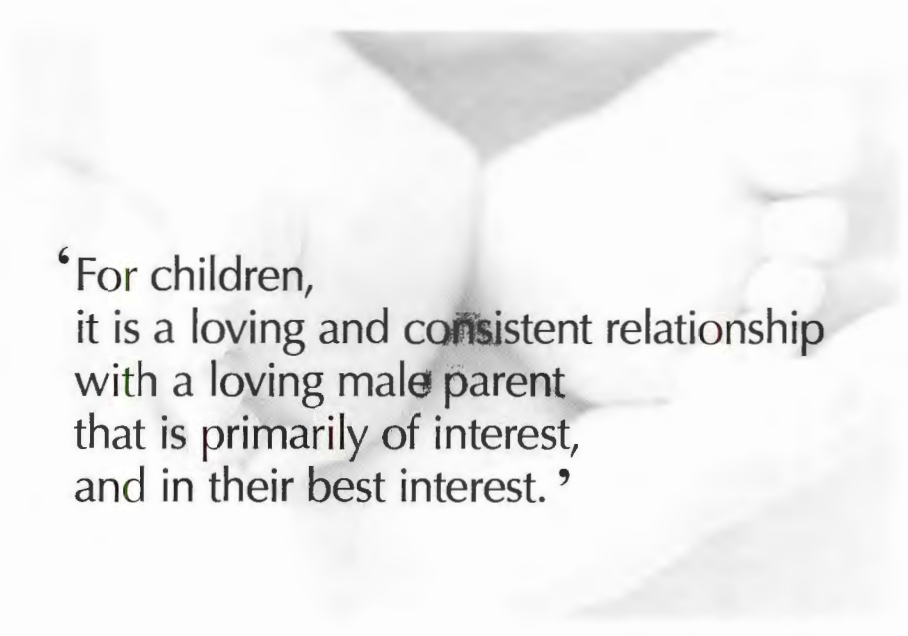
Who's the real father? Men's rights, women's quandaries and the truth about misattributed biological paternity

PATERNITY FRAUD HAS BECOME the rallying cry of the Fathers' Rights Movement. Utilising the radical feminist insight of the 1960s that the personal is political, Fathers' Rights activists have seized on the experience of a small group of men, who discover through genetic testing that they are biologically unrelated to the children they are parenting, as a paradigm through which we should understand the power balance between the sexes on critical

issues of sexuality, reproduction, marriage and divorce. Denied, deceived, humiliated, cheated and used: paternity 'defrauded' dads are poster-children for how the Fathers' Rights Movement sees men in the post-patriarchal world. They are the *cause célèbre* for men who feel disempowered by current social and legal norms and practice concerning marriage, divorce, sex and reproduction, and want to reassert control.

At the heart of the paternity fraud story are radical—though poorly understood—changes to law and practice governing child support and access arrangements after divorce. The 1970s saw a steep rise in divorce rates and numbers of single women opting to keep their children rather than adopt them out. By 1988 the growth in households headed by single mothers had left large numbers of children living in poverty and the government with a spiralling welfare bill.

Enter the Child Support (Assessment) Act and the Child Support Agency, whose role it was to use freshly minted DNA



'For children, it is a loving and consistent relationship with a loving male parent that is primarily of interest, and in their best interest.'

testing technology to match every child to its biological father's wallet, thereby ending what one family law specialist called the 'happy-go-lucky days' when Australian men could boast that they didn't even know how many children they had. With power to deduct payments from men's wages and via the tax system, the Child Support Agency also ended the optional nature of child-support payments by divorced dads. At the heart of the Act was a radical reconfiguration of how Australian society defined fatherhood. With the stroke of a pen—and with only the best interests of 'taxpayers' in mind—lawmakers had transformed the age-old definition of father as the mother's husband to the man whose sperm was implicated in conception. The only exceptions are state and federal laws that exempt sperm donors from the legal rights and responsibilities of parenthood, and allocate it instead to the husband of the woman undertaking IVF.

Cases of misattributed biological paternity—where a man is shown to be

biologically unrelated to the child he parents—are an artefact of DNA testing and the new legal arrangements that drive and justify it. The new world order in which dads have been reduced to sperm donors provides motives for both mothers and fathers to test—motives that would not exist if social rather than biological definitions of fatherhood ruled.

Mothers sometimes test in the hope that a 'negative' result will prevent their ex-partners having further

contact with the child. They may even, according to researcher Dr Lyn Turney, of Swinburne University of Technology, enlist the assistance of the biological father in the process, 'despite him having had no previous contact or relationship with the child'. Interestingly, it was this possibility that first worried men when DNA paternity testing came on the scene, with one male legal theorist proposing legal strategies and recommending legislative reform 'to protect the marital father's developed relationship with his child against interference or termination through ... non-paternity actions'.

Fathers also initiate DNA testing, though not always, it seems, because they are really in doubt that they are biologically related to their child. According to Turney, estranged male spouses will sometimes demand paternity tests both to insult their estranged wives and, on the advice of their lawyers, to delay payment of child support. As one woman told Turney, her ex used the test to avoid having:

... to pay anything for the time being. There was never any fear in his head that the child wasn't his. It was just that he'd been told somewhere along the line that if he put it off that way, he could stall things for a while.

While Fathers' Rights activists insist on assigning mendacious motives to single women who 'out' the child's biological father to the Child Support Agency—leaving him with the obligation to either disprove biological paternity or pay up—such women have no choice. The federal government is determined to recoup as much of the money it invests in single-parent payments as possible, and if a mother fails to identify her inseminator, she'll lose her benefit.

Men may also initiate testing to escape previously accepted child-support obligations. Men who feel abused by the Child Support Agency's determined pursuit of payment (it can access bank accounts and use the tax system to extract payments) and the refusal of the Family Court to tie support payments to access orders, see the discovery of biological non-paternity—and thus the removal of fiscal obligation for their children—as a way of reasserting control over their finances. Says one man Turney interviewed:

Men recognise family law settlement and ongoing child support as a sentence into financial hell, and while wanting to support their children, equally do not wish to support someone else's. DNA testing provides a means of distinguishing between real biological links and often-concealed third-party liaisons that have produced children outside the established relationship.

Misattributed paternity may also be discovered by accident, via a genetic test taken for other reasons. For instance, the diagnosis of a genetic disease in a child may lead to carrier status tests on the parents and the consequent discovery of a lack of biological relationship between the child and the male parent.

How are we to understand, in political and moral terms, the motivation various stakeholders have to test? And what are we to make of the results?

First the facts. While academics and Fathers' Rights activists repeatedly cite figures of between one in ten and one in four children affected, such claims lack a reliable evidential basis.

According to Professor Michael Gilding, of Swinburne, the data on which such generous estimates are based is tragically flawed—marred by biased sample selection and illegitimate analytical methods. Indeed, in some instances, according to Gilding, the numbers have simply been plucked from the air by private testing companies well aware that male anxiety about female fidelity is good for business. The real Australian figure, says Gilding, is likely to be about one per cent. A 2003 large-scale survey of 19,307 Australians lends credibility to Gilding's estimate. It found that 95 per cent of men—and 97 per cent of women—expected they would remain faithful to their regular partner and that nearly all kept their word, with only 2.1 per cent of partnered men and 0.6 per cent of women having sex with others outside their committed relationship.

The implications of such low estimates of misattributed paternity are vast. The basis of proponents of Fathers' Rights calls for changes to social attitudes and policy surrounding marriage and divorce are high rates of 'paternity fraud', and

However, the small incidence of paternity fraud should not lead us to completely dismiss the claims of the Fathers' Rights Movement. First, while cloaked in anger, the 'paternity fraud' discourse can also be read as an expression of pervasive male anxiety about their role in women's lives and in the business of forming and raising families—an expression to which compassion and validation would be the appropriate response.

Men must also be urged to reverse their passive incorporation of the legal re-inscription of fatherhood as a biological relationship into their social understanding of it—an understanding embedded in the 'crime' of paternity fraud. Do men, women or children really understand a father to be a sperm donor and believe that the man who parents and loves a child is not entitled to both social and legal recognition as the child's 'real' father?

I think not. Women's behaviour in cases of misattributed paternity clearly suggests that the man they hope is the biological, and want to be the social, father of their child is their partner, not their ex,



Health Minister Tony Abbott endures the media glare following the announcement that he is not the father of Kathleen Donnelly's child. AAP/AP/Mark Baker

what such figures suggest about the fate of female sexual and reproductive ethics when women's behaviour is not properly controlled. But if only one per cent of women are 'guilty' of paternity fraud, the case for change is seriously undermined.

one-night stand or even lover. That women see their child's father as the male parent, not the child's sperm donor, was shown clearly in the Abbott adoption story. Despite Kathleen Donnelly's knowing there was a possibility that it wasn't the

Health Minister's sperm that was implicated in Daniel's conception, she seems to have firmly convinced herself that it was (so firmly, that she exposed herself, Daniel, Abbott and Daniel's biological father to considerable public scrutiny and ridicule). Why? Because Abbott was her regular partner and the love of her life, and this is what she wanted to be the case.

What men incensed about paternity fraud seem to focus on is the woman's failure to have sex exclusively with their partner and thus ensure he is their child's only possible genetic father. But this overlooks the significant fact that women do choose their partners to be their companions through life and to be the men who parent their children. My research suggests that, for women at least, this latter choice is by far the weightiest one, with numerous women I've interviewed over the years preferring to terminate a wanted pregnancy rather than continue one to a man who wants to parent, but with whom they cannot bear the thought of an ongoing relationship.

For children, it is a loving and consistent relationship with a male parent that is primarily of interest, and in their best interest. Indeed, in the early years, children will have no comprehension of and little interest in which man's sperm contributed to their creation. Of course, they may ultimately need or want to know the truth about their biological heritage, but this is not an argument for privileging

genetic over social fatherhood, but rather truth above lies. Thus, in the same way that children born from donor sperm, and who are adopted, are entitled to the truth about their conception (which, it should be added, many never get), this information must have neither social nor legal implications for their male parent's status as the 'real' dad.

Finally, evidence suggests that even men don't entirely, perhaps even largely, conceive of fatherhood as a kinship rather than a social relationship. Among the Australian men interviewed by Turney who have used their discovery of biological non-paternity to disavow their fiscal responsibility for their children, few thought this shedding of legal paternal obligations meant the children they loved weren't really theirs. Said one man:

... fathers are caught between a rock and a hard place, because in most cases they love the children and have bonded with them and vice versa ... and they don't want that to end.

Agreed another:

The [test] results ruined my life when my ex-wife then ordered the child never to call me 'Dad' again. And worse still, she is never allowed to see me again ... I still think of her as my daughter.

Indeed, the early focus of legal experts on the capacity of mothers to use DNA testing to lock devoted fathers out of

ongoing legal and emotional relationships with their children suggests that at one point at least there was recognition among some men that the loss of emotional—not kinship—ties with their children is the real harm. Legal theorist Dr Wolfgang Hirczy has argued that the law should recognise the man who assumes 'responsibility for the pregnancy and the child' as the real father, a sentiment with which the fathers of donor-conceived, adopted and stepchildren are likely to concur. Certainly, this would be the position of those who speak in the name of the Men's Rights Movement, which has long argued that active fathers—parents, not sperm donors—are essential to the well-being and achievement of children, especially boys.

SO WHERE DOES all this leave us? There is little doubt that the biologisation of fatherhood by child-support laws has profoundly impinged on the way some men understand the nature and value of fatherhood. Governments have a key role in sustaining workable relationships between parents, and thriving ones between parent and child after divorce. There seems evidence that the redefinition of fatherhood as a biological rather than a social relationship does not contribute to this end—putting a handful of father-child relationships at risk in the face of unexpected results from genetic testing, and more broadly undermining men's understanding of themselves as valuable to their children as parents, not just providers, at a time of significant emotional upheaval.

The solution seems clear: support laws need to be rewritten to allocate parental rights and responsibilities to men on the basis of their paternal commitment and behaviour, not pedigree. Sure, taxpayers may be up for slightly higher costs, because, while every child has a biological father, they don't all have social ones. But the protection of the father-child relationship that such a change could offer is clearly worth it. ■

Dr **Leslie Cannold** is an ethicist, writer and commentator working at the University of Melbourne. Her most recent book is *What, no baby: why women have lost the freedom to mother and how they can get it back*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2005.





The Mermaid

No, I wasn't surprised
when I hauled her in
gleaming rose and emerald,
opalescent in the net.

She smiled at me and that I see now
is why I would risk everything
for the mermaid.

For weeks I'd been trying to catch
one or more of her kind
out there with the flap of the sails,
the slap of the prow on the waves.
I knew the weather was right –
there are some things experience tells –
you can't have been fishing so long
without an inkling of how to catch
a deck full of scales. The miracle of it.
Her smile and her elegant tail
hitting the deck in a rhythm
as strong as a poem.

Her hair wasn't seaweed at all
though it did have a green bow
tying a clump behind one of her ears.
On a breast an oyster had settled
a natural beautiful brooch
which I wouldn't have dreamed of disturbing.

Why did I want the mermaid so badly
giving up having a car, cleaners, insurance
and the rest of the trappings.
I wanted her
as a horse wants to run.

To some, I know, she's a myth
they've never seen her
and what they don't see they don't believe
yet like radio, the mermaid exists
sleekly ravishing, gasping and smiling
knowing that I'd write this
and then let her go
watching her swim away
in her own muse the water.

—Kate Llewellyn

The challenge of reconciliation

If Pope Benedict XVI can continue the work of both his immediate predecessor and his namesake, there will be cause for thanks

DESCRIBING RELIGION in the People's Republic of China is a bit like eating peanuts with chopsticks—it is a difficult process, even for the most adept. Talking about the Catholic communities is more complex still.

Confucius, in his Analects, valued above all else the right naming of things—the 'rectification of names'. As such, it is important to dispatch some of the unhelpful terms that are often used to describe Catholicism in China. Throughout this article I refer to the 'Catholic communities' as a way of side-stepping the problematic dichotomies that have been applied to these faith communities—dichotomies like 'patriotic' and 'suffering', 'loyal' and 'schismatic'. These words have been used since the 1950s, when the Chinese Communist Party sought to separate the Catholic communities from the universal church. This process of wedge politics, the application of 'united front' doctrine, was not without its successes and certainly not without its costs, at times terrible ones.

Simplistically, in the People's Republic of China there are Catholics who belong to 'official' communities, ones which have been recognised by the government through a process of registration; there are members of 'unofficial' communities (the so-called underground), which refuse to register with the government; and there are yet more Catholics who live in an undefined area in between, participating in both types of communities.

Nevertheless, to continue to describe these official Catholic communities as schismatic, as does the United States-based Cardinal Kung Foundation, for instance, is both unhelpful and erroneous. Interestingly, for an organisation that prides itself on its devotion to the See of Peter, such descriptions also hinder the desire of the previous pope, John Paul II, for unity among the Chinese Catholic communities.

Throughout his papacy, John Paul II consistently recognised the difficulties faced by Catholics in China, praised their faithful witness and asked everyone in the church communities to work towards reconciliation. At the World Youth Day in Manila in 1995 he addressed the following words to the church in China:

Your witness will be all the more eloquent if it is expressed in words and deeds of love. Jesus said so: 'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (Jn 13: 35). Love among yourselves, first of all, but love also for all your Chinese brothers and sisters: a love which consists of understanding, respect, forbearance, forgiveness and reconciliation within the Christian community, a love which involves service, self-sacrifice, fidelity, hard work, honesty and justice in society as a whole.

Some Catholics outside the country are often less eager to implement such a program of reconciliation, and continue to talk of a divided church—dogmatically using words that

hinder rather than enhance mutual understanding. Eminent China church scholar Jean-Paul Wiest comments further on this problem in an article in the January 2003 issue of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*:

There are no perfect terms to identify these two clearly distinct manifestations of the Chinese Catholic Church. I would recommend avoiding labels such as 'patriotic church' to describe the government-recognised segment of the church because it implies either that all its members wholeheartedly support the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association or that the underground church is not patriotic minded, neither of which is true. Likewise, the names 'suffering church' and 'loyal church' to describe the underground segment of the church are wrong and divisive, as they falsely imply that the government-recognised church has not suffered or is not loyal to the pope.

A consensus is forming among China church-watchers and, more importantly, among the Chinese church communities themselves, that it is best to talk of one church, wounded but not torn asunder, and hopefully on the road towards reconciliation, as Wiest describes it.

Those who continue to maintain their either misinformed or malicious divisive linguistic distinctions often appeal, in the last resort, to the process of the appointment of bishops to demonstrate one section of the church's 'orthodoxy' over another. This too is a complex area, but reliable analysts equally dismiss this as a basis for claiming the existence of a schism.

Fr Jerom Heyndrickx is an Immaculate Heart of Mary priest, director of the Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation (part of the China-Europe Institute of the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium) and a long-time China church watcher who has often taught pastoral theology in seminaries in China. In an article in *The Tablet* on 15 January 2000, he wrote: '[T]wo-thirds of the Patriotic bishops (appointed by the CCPA and the government) have already secretly applied for and received recognition from Rome. Doubts about faithfulness remain only of a few CCPA leaders.'

More recently still, in an article written after John Paul II's death, the *Washington Post's* bureau chief in Beijing,



Philip Pan, wrote along similar lines. Pan named as his source Ren Yanli, from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, and reputedly the foremost mainland Chinese expert on the Holy See, when he wrote on 29 April this year that 'all but nine of the 70 bishops in the government's official church have secretly declared their loyalty to Rome and are now recognised by the Vatican'. Pan's words might be unclear (when he talks of the 'government's church') but his use of numbers is not. Rome considers itself to be in union with the overwhelming majority of bishops in China, whatever Catholics elsewhere might think or say.

This movement towards a reconciled and unified church community in China might well be a desire held by the new Pope, Benedict XVI. Hopefully, for the upwards of 12 million Catholics in China, it proves to be so. Many have commented on the fact that the previous bearer of that papal name was known as a 'Pope of peace', as one who strove to bring about harmony in a war-torn world. Less commented upon is the fact that although his successor, Pius XI,

of missionary methods that had kept local clergy and church communities subservient to foreign, European, missionaries.

In this letter, Benedict XV wrote:

It is a deplorable fact that, even after the Popes have insisted upon it, there still remain sections of the world that have heard the faith preached for several centuries, and still have a local clergy that is of inferior quality. It is also true that there are countries that have been deeply penetrated by the light of Faith, and have, besides, reached such a level of civilisation that they produce eminent men in all the fields of secular life—and yet, though they have lived under the strengthening influence of the Church and the gospel for hundreds of years, they still cannot produce bishops for their spiritual government or priests for their spiritual guidance.

—*Maximum Illud*, paragraph 17

His main target was the colonial-minded church hierarchy in China. Specifically he was critical of the way the majority of European missionaries had limited the growth of the Chinese church, and harassed those, like Belgian Vincentian Vincent Lebbe, who had sought to do otherwise.

Pius XI brought Benedict XV's dream to fruition on 28 October 1926 when he personally consecrated six Chinese as bishops. They were their country's first bishops since Dominican Bishop Luo Wenzao in the 17th century. The statement was all the more emphatic given that the consecration took place at the Vatican. Benedict XVI might well desire to hold the Chinese Catholics in his heart too.

He will find communities that are experiencing much growth. There are websites (www.chinacatholic.org), lay formation classes and a multitude of Catholic publications. Liturgies are often vibrant and catechumenate classes are frequently full.

AT THIS YEAR'S Easter Vigil in Beijing more than 1000 people gathered in the South Church. This church traces its roots back to a community established by Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci in 1605. During Lent, there were usually about 150 people gathered each Saturday evening.

Crammed into the church this Easter night for almost two-and-a-half hours were people from all walks of life. There were students studying religion at university, business people facing ethical dilemmas in a burgeoning economy and workers seeking respite from their labours. There were Catholics who trace their heritage back for over ten generations and newcomers. Fifty people presented for baptism—predominantly adults, many of whom were young. All present were united in prayer and in beautiful song. The face of one young man was lit by the glow of his candle and, as the Easter Candle was carried by, he smiled at me as he sang 'thanks be to God'.

If Benedict XVI can continue the work of both his immediate predecessor and his namesake in encouraging reconciliation, let alone bringing this about, then there will be cause for thanks indeed. ■

Jeremy Clarke sj is completing a doctorate in history at the Australian National University, researching the contemporary Catholic communities in China. Photos by Jeremy Clarke sj.



Above and at left: The regional seminary in Shijiazhuang, Hebei. And some of the 120 seminarians at the afternoon exercises.

has been referred to as the 'Pope of the missions', because of the ways in which he sought to institute local church hierarchies and for his great missionary encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* (*On Catholic Missions*), in many ways he was bringing to fulfilment one of Benedict XV's great dreams.

Benedict XV, on 30 November 1919, issued an apostolic letter, *Maximum Illud* (*On spreading the Catholic Faith throughout the World*) that revolutionised the way the Church was structured in the non-Western world. He was highly critical



Braving our inner weather

The journey towards understanding our depression can be the most worthwhile, and the most taxing, that we ever make

DEPRESSION IS THE DISEASE of loss. Our lives seem pointless because we have lost what is most valuable to us. But communicating what we have lost, in the exact terms specific to ourselves, is almost impossible.

A broken arm is a clearly defined condition, although the subjective experience may vary greatly from one person to another. Broken arms can be treated, people feel safe asking how you did it; the plaster cast becomes a site for get-well messages and schoolyard graffiti.

By contrast, there are as many depressions as there are people to suffer them. The symptoms differ, not just in intensity but in kind, and also in emphasis. One person cries, another is numb. One gives an appearance of normality, another cowers under the bed, unable to move. Some calmly plan their own death; others cannot work out how to take a shower.

Treatments have unexpected, sometimes contradictory, consequences. You take a pill and get better. I take the same pill and nothing happens, or I get worse. Is what you have the same as what I have? How much is in our minds and how much in our brains?

If we think of our minds as experiencing weather, then depression is grey. The actual sensation is difficult to describe—a kind of isolation, but intermixed with the most terrible fear. It is not the same as being sad, because sadness links us to the world; depression, however we try to describe it to ourselves, takes us away from the world.

The sense of a life force drying up, or vanishing, is very strong. The branching dendrites of our brains lack flow, and we feel much as a tree in drought must feel when the ground cracks around it. As the English poet-priest Gerard Manley Hopkins cried to his God, at the end of a sonnet in which he lamented that he could not 'breed one work that wakes': 'Send my roots rain.'

Or we might recall Hamlet, finding that 'this goodly frame, the earth, seems

to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why it appears no other thing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours'.

Because depression is so common, the experience says something important about being human. In fact, working out how to overcome depression means understanding what it does for you as well as to you, acknowledging the part it plays in the economy of your emotions, and the way you string your thoughts together—the everyday traffic of being 'you'.

Susan Sontag wrote that any important disease whose physical etiology is not understood, and for which treatment is ineffectual, tends to be awash in significance. Illnesses such as cancer enter everyday language as metaphor, or are themselves conceived in terms of battles, victories and wars. But while the labels of mental illness can be joshingly passed around (as in 'schizoid' to denote a contradictory person or situation), they do not lend themselves to metaphor. It is as though mental illness is itself a kind of metaphor, a way of representing the unspoken to ourselves.

Like any illness, depression has multiple layers of meaning. There is the meaning to the individual, there is the socially constructed meaning, and then the professional, or scientifically constructed, meaning. But compared to conditions where we can see a clear pathology, there is something undefinable about depression. We are not talking about a 'thing' when we talk about depression, we are talking about ourselves, refracted through many types of perception.

The three layers of meaning are interconnected, at least for the patient. As soon as you go for help, your personal suffering becomes part of, or the object of, current professional understandings of the condition. And these professional understandings

shape (and are shaped by) a general, social view about what is, and is not, a mental illness. But the solution to the problem, if you find one, or even if you don't, is a personal statement, because the mind that suffers the illness must also be the mind that deals with it. Whatever help you seek, whatever treatment you choose, even if you choose to keep what is going on to yourself—all reflect self-understandings that, in turn, have implications for the future.

OURS IS A GARRULOUS, even a confessional age, and pain that was previously hidden away is, up to a point, now an acceptable subject for public discussion, at least in the rich countries of the West. There is a real democracy of feeling in all this, as no matter how strange our history, or appalling our woes, there is always someone 'out there' who feels just as we do. Even the cult of celebrity is not so much a yearning for a more glamorous life, but a confirmation that the famous are really just like us.

We may be witnessing, too, a reversal of at least some of the stigmatisation of mental illness that accompanied the massive intervention of the state in the 19th and 20th centuries, when large numbers of psychiatric hospitals were built in which the mentally ill could be both treated and sequestered. We now look to government, not so much for control, but supportive treatment and even early intervention to identify kids at risk. And if we are inclined almost to believe everyone has a right to a disability of their own, at least we have a better sense than ever before of the extent of our common human frailty.

Because depression is such a widespread condition, there are dozens of books intended for the general reader, taking every conceivable perspective on the problem. And this 'talk' both describes, and contributes to, the way we as a society build up a sense of what it is that is bothering us. (Don't get me wrong, more

communication is almost certainly a good thing—when I first encountered depression as a teenager in the late 1960s, there was virtually nothing available that shed any light on the catastrophe that had hit me.)

There are books by therapists, explaining the latest theories, and including accounts of people they have treated. If they are very practically oriented, they fall into the self-help category. And very useful these books are, too. In fact, some studies suggest that 'bibliotherapy' (using a self-help manual to teach yourself techniques to combat depression) produces significant improvement in those who try them.

Then there are books by men and women who have suffered from depression, and want to help others by describing what they have been through. Writing such confessional accounts takes tremendous courage, although each individual journey is so different. I wonder whether there is much comfort there for the sufferer caught in the grip of his or her own illness.

There is the sensation, and then the (self) perception of the sensation. The self-talk does not just shape depression, it *is* depression. It took me years to realise that the elaborate theories I had constructed about what had happened to me, and why, were the problem, not the solution. But that was only the beginning. I then had to find ways of not listening to my habitual mental lyrics, and the drumbeat of resentment and anxiety that accompanied them. It's a difficult job, because depression is such a subtle siren song that you can be lured onto the rocks before you have realised what is happening to you.

At the intellectual level, I continue to wonder about causes. The fact that women are twice as likely to experience depression in their lifetimes as men (although much less likely to commit suicide) raises, in sharpened form, the relative importance of biological, social and psychological factors.

Explanations also empower certain kinds of cures, and with certain kinds of cures, certain kinds of knowledge and the practitioners of that knowledge. If the problem is physiological, it would seem logical to look for drug-based interventions, which in turn privilege the medical scientist, and inevitably involve the commercial aspirations of drug companies. Psychology takes us into the arms of counsellors and psychotherapists.

But if we look beyond the politics (the power play) of depression, the problem is

more apparent than real, in the sense that our modes of understanding create conflicts and dilemmas where none need exist. From the standpoint of 'what works' in treating depression, the physiological, the social and the psychological are not different explanations, but simply alternative windows into a complex, systemic reality.

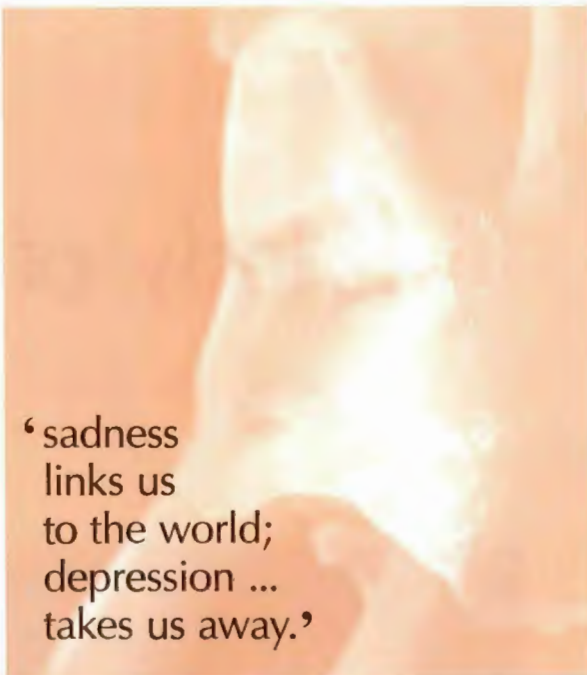
Which window one chooses is more a consequence of what can be done in any given situation. While modern anti-depressants are certainly more effective than those that were available in the past, they do not work for everyone. (In my own case, over the last 30 years, while my depression was clearly 'biological' in the sense that it struck most dramatically at puberty and after childbirth,

I was prescribed the latest anti-depressants to little effect.)

ALTHOUGH THE SEARCH will undoubtedly continue, I suspect that no 'magic bullet' will ever be found for depression. The interaction between genes and biochemistry is simply too complicated, the variations between individuals probably too great, and the side effects too intransigent, for drug therapy to work for everyone.

Perhaps, too, the physiological explanation lets everyone off the hook a little too easily. Unhappy families can ascribe their situation to a dud sequence in the communal gene pool. Individual depressives can 'blame' their unfortunate inheritance. And those who are victimised by impossible circumstances can be given a pill to deal with their pain.

Speaking for myself, when I am in the grip of depression I feel even more hopeless (and helpless) if I ascribe my condition to a brace of black genes shared with too many relatives who have succumbed to depression, manic depression, alcoholism and suicide, than if I tell myself that such facts are neither conclusive nor decisive. I can accept that there is an inherited predisposition there, an elevated risk, but my own experience tells me that it can be countered—provided I can find ways of believing that I have the power to do so. Indeed, mental illness, provided we can construct and cling to a frail raft of insight on the turbulent waters of our minds, differs from physical illness in that we can 'talk' more directly to our problem than is possible for those, say, who suffer from cancer.



'sadness
links us
to the world;
depression ...
takes us away.'

For those who are forced to understand their inner weather, to invent their own form of climate science as a way of surviving, the journey can be the most worthwhile, and the most taxing, they will ever make. It was Carl Jung who said that every personality was the result of a constant interaction between what we know about ourselves and what we don't. 'The ego is only a bit of consciousness that floats upon the ocean of dark things.' We are therefore constantly changing, as a result of the way we intercalate our subjective and objective worlds.

Over a lifetime, we must all come to terms with our inner weather, because very few people are of so even a temperament that they notice no variation at all in their mood, energy and capacity. What we believe about ourselves has a large bearing on what and how we suffer, and our chances of breaking out of it. Sometimes the explanations we choose give us hope; sometimes they intensify our despair.

Depression is at one end of this spectrum, not entirely self-chosen, because there is clearly a biological component to it, but not ineluctable, either. As Aaron Beck, the psychologist most associated with cognitive theories of depression, put it, 'An individual's affect and behaviour are largely determined by the way in which he structures the world.' In other words, we may not be what we think we are, but we are, most certainly, what we think. ■

Jenny Stewart is a Canberra writer and academic.

First lady of the airwaves

Known as the Queen of Radio and the Baroness of Broadcasting, Australia's audacious first woman talkback presenter preferred to be known simply as Andrea



WHAT TO CALL HER, the Australian actress, journalist, broadcaster and prisoner of war who had much of Sydney, and men around the world, transfixed by her charms and her audacity for more than half a century? Dorothy Hetty Fosbury Gordon? Mrs Murray Eugene McEwen? Mrs George Onesiphorous Jenner? By the time she made her way onto Sydney radio in the 1950s, and became probably Australia's first woman talkback presenter in 1967, she preferred to be known simply as Andrea. But still the epithets came, among them the Queen of Radio and the Baroness of Broadcasting. Journalists were (understandably) uncertain about her age, and the billowing files of press clippings she inspired featured more and more inaccuracies; Dorothy was variously said to have been the daughter of a police commissioner, to have grown up in India and to have pioneered talkback radio in 1951.

Born in 1891, the daughter of William A. Gordon, a station manager from western New South Wales, Dorothy attended the exclusive Ascham School in Edgecliff before setting up a dressmaking business in Sydney and then trying her luck in Hollywood. She worked as a stuntwoman, an extra and then as a stock actress with Paramount Studios, where she obtained a role in *The Sheik* opposite Rudolph Valentino—the only man, she claimed, who ever turned her down. By 1925 Dorothy had added two failed marriages to American ne'er-do-wells to her résumé. Although there would be no more husbands, the suitors were plentiful. One, rhapsodising about her luminous dark eyes, her grace on the dance floor, and her vitality, detected an elusiveness: 'You should be pictured on a



cliff edge, wind tossed, [w]ith eager eyes questioning the world.'

In the years before World War II Jenner moved between the United States, England and Australia, working on Victor Longford's *Hills of Hate* and the landmark production of *For the Term of His Natural Life*, and writing a weekly column for the Sydney *Sun*. She adopted the *nom de plume* Andrea, chosen from a numerology list which 'had everything on it from cirrhosis to vagina'. A brilliant concoction of pungent gossip, character sketches, royal news, fashion reportage and theatre criticism, her column simultaneously delighted in and satirised the snobbery of society in London and elsewhere.

YOU ARE A RATHER RARE draught, heady, potent, and exceptionally permeating, and believe me it would take a man's man to appreciate and handle you without feeling that he was at times outclassed ... I doubt that you will find all that you want in any one place, atmosphere or person,' wrote an unusually perceptive psychic in November 1940. Within a year Jenner was off again, intending to dispatch reports on the Far East and beyond for the *Sun* and *Woman*. One letter of introduction declared: 'Mrs Jenner's venue appears to be the whole habitable globe. I never knew anyone so ubiquitous!' Sir Frederic Eggleston, Australia's first minister to China, thought her a 'boisterous, florid woman'. In Asia, Jenner experienced the best and the worst of times: she had a brief liaison with a British wing commander, her one true love, but was then interned in the Stanley prisoner of war camp. For three-and-a-half years she kept a diary on toilet paper, recording the rigours of her confinement, including debilitating illnesses and the ever-present fear of rape, and drily profiling her fellow internees. Haunting her, too, was the memory of the last time she had had a 'vanilla soufflé', a reference perhaps to her airman, whom she later discovered had returned to his wife.

After her release in 1945, when she hit the headlines for describing the camp as a

'hotbed of immorality', Jenner joined the speaking circuit in Australia, returned to journalism and was the subject of an Archibald Prize entry by Judy Cassab. Jenner served on the Phillip Street Theatre board and good-naturedly went along with Gordon Chater's performance as Andrea to the tune of *Little Lady Make Believe*, even though she maintained, with considerable justification, that she really knew most of the people whose names she dropped.

Always immaculately groomed, Jenner put on a beauty spot each morning and had a facelift. In the late 1950s, just as the *Daily Mirror* proposed that she retire, she moved to 2UE to host a morning show with Tom Jacobs. Along with her stablemates, Gordon Chater and Ormsby Wilkins, Jenner was, in the *Bulletin's* vernacular, an early 'talk jockey'. They occupied a middle ground between the disc jockeys who emerged in the 1950s and the 'dial-in' talkback hosts who emerged in the 1960s. Nor was Jenner a radio 'aunt' in the tradition of the homely and comforting figures who had dominated the airwaves for decades. Her abrasive, sometimes ribald conversational manner unnerved 2UE's management and in 1963 she was lured to the Macquarie Network's 2GB. Here she secured a secretary, a hefty salary and a promise of £10 a week in retirement, bringing her the financial security she had long craved.

Needing a foil, Jenner broadcast alongside John Pearce between 9 and 10am, increasing the session's ratings. 'Hello, Mums and Dads,' delivered in a throaty contralto, was her trademark. Jenner would rise at 6.30am and study newspapers and magazines before recording the next day's show, featuring sophisticated patter—'Bobby Kennedy obviously hasn't heard of the Pill'—and interviews with celebrities. 'Entertaining, highly provocative, shrewd and penetrating and terribly self-centred,' declared the market research in 1964. But although Jenner's experiences allowed her to transport her session into 'a world remote from the ordinary housewife', it was already apparent that she was of little appeal to audiences under 35.

Later that year, Macquarie's managing director, Stan Clark, visited the US and studied the success of 'conversation' programs hosted by strong personalities. In 1967 the Australian Broadcasting Control Board finally acquiesced to

industry demands to overturn a ruling prohibiting recording telephone conversations for broadcasting. *This Day Tonight* was there on 30 October to capture the Queen of Radio's first live encounter with her subjects. Jenner growled at her listeners, described some of the women who rang in as 'stupid' and criticised producers for vetting her calls. She was also unhappy with the television crew's lighting: 'They made me look a fright.'

WASPISHNESS MAY HAVE been a core component of her persona, but it was deemed too dangerous when live to air. By early 1968 Macquarie had decided to revert to pre-recording Jenner's program. No friend of Labor or of trade unions, she had already been lambasted in Parliament and had attracted libel writs from the Whitlams and Jim Cairns. In 1969 Jenner's crown lost its lustre when she was dumped by Macquarie; her program was deemed to have too little appeal to younger listeners and to audiences beyond Sydney. As talkback entrenched itself as an integral part of the Australian radio landscape, her program was also said to lack sufficient topicality. For the first time in her life, Jenner had fallen behind the pack. She had brief spells at the ABC and 2CH before leaving the industry in 1972.

By now Jenner had been working on her memoirs for a decade: 'It'll take two volumes, of course.' Various co-authors fell by the wayside before *Darlings, I've Had a Ball!*—written with Trish Sheppard and widely serialised—appeared in 1975. Armed with a whisky, Jenner continued to hold court in her Potts Point flat as journalists came to pay homage and speculate, often incorrectly, about her exploits. She died on 24 March 1985, aged 94.

Twenty years after Andrea's death, two figures dominate Australian talk radio, broadcasting from the two stations that made and unmade her broadcasting career. Alan Jones has never been regarded as too Sydney in his appeal, and Andrea's old friend, John Laws, seems to be encouraged to court rather than shirk controversy. ■

Bridget Griffen-Foley is a historian at Macquarie University and is writing a history of commercial radio in Australia.

The boy who would not grow up

The life and writings of J.M. Barrie gave rise to great creations, controversies and connections

WHEN JAMES BARRIE was six, his brother David, eight years older and his mother's favourite, died in a skating accident. In a desperate attempt to gain her attention, James put on his brother's clothes and became David for her. Like the character in the Eric Bogle song who 'in some faithful heart [is] forever 19', he remained frozen at the age David died. He even stopped growing, never reaching more than five feet (152cm) in height; he did not shave until his 20s; it is believed that his marriage to the actress Mary Ansell was never consummated.

At this point, no doubt, the dismal fossickers in the human psyche would have little trouble finding explanations for his future writings, and even less difficulty in suggesting reasons for his delight in playing with children. One of his child friends was the four-year-old daughter of the writer W.E. Henley, the man whose beautiful poem *Invictus* ('I am the master of my fate / I am the captain of my soul') was appropriated as the dying words of the Oklahoma bomber Timothy McVeigh. Margaret Henley called Barrie 'Friendly', but with the endearing problem that some children have in pronouncing the letter 'r', the word came out as 'Fwendy'. She died at the age of six, but her articulation was immortalised in the name of the heroine in the *Peter Pan* story.

Barrie was a wealthy and established writer by the time he met the Llewelyn Davies children and used them as the basis for the character of Peter Pan. The whimsical story of a boy who would not grow up is a bit passé for today's taste, although it continues to form the basis for Christmas pantomimes and children's stories. A more likely cause of its lack of popularity is our modern suspicion that there was something unhealthy about a

man in his 40s playing so happily and on an apparently equal level with young boys. No doubt, the fact that a modern American entertainer accused of sexual deviancy would use Barrie's *Neverland* as the name of his mansion has helped reinforce that uncase.

This aspect of the relationship between Barrie and the Llewelyn Davies boys is raised and dismissed, probably rightly, in the recent film *Finding Neverland*, in which Johnny Depp plays Barrie. In an interview some years ago, the youngest of the boys, Nico—he doesn't appear in the film—categorically denied that there was ever any hint of impropriety involving the older man. It is true that the boys' father, Arthur Llewelyn Davies, was not enthusiastic about the cuckoo who had insinuated himself into the family, but that may have been no more than a wish for family privacy, and his early death from cancer meant that the matter did not come to a head.

Sylvia Llewelyn Davies, the boys' mother, played in the film by Kate Winslet, was the daughter of the writer and illustrator George du Maurier. Her brother Gerald was the first actor to play the part of Doctor Hook in *Peter Pan*, which he did with a realistic nastiness that frightened the children in the audience. Gerald's daughter Daphne, author of *Rebecca* and *My Cousin Rachel*, would become the most famous member of the du Maurier clan.

When Sylvia died, also of cancer, three years after her husband, Barrie took on the guardianship of the five boys; there is a suggestion that this was not Sylvia's wish and that the diminutive Scotsman altered her will in some way.

Barrie said that the character of Peter Pan was not based on the third of the

Llewelyn Davies children but was an amalgam of all five. In dedicating the play to them, he wrote, 'I always knew that I made Peter by rubbing the five of you violently together, as savages with two sticks produce a flame. That is all he is, the spark I got from you.'

The Llewelyn Davies boys attended Eton, but the family was marked by tragedy. The oldest, George, who was the first one Barrie met and was his favourite, was one of those who 'died as cattle' in the trenches in 1915, the same year that theatrical entrepreneur Charles Frohman (Dustin Hoffman in the film) lost his life when the *Lusitania* was sunk. Michael, the fourth boy and the youngest in the film, was drowned with a friend in Oxford in what was thought to have been a gay suicide pact.

But the most tragic was Peter, who was thought to be the one on whom the eponymous character was based. An easy target for bullying at Eton, he felt he had been exploited by Barrie, and just as Christopher Milne grew to hate any reference to the child who went to watch the 'changing guard at Buckingham Palace', so Peter Llewelyn Davies grew to detest Peter Pan and hated any suggestion that the character was based on him.

He became a publisher, but suffered from depression caused mainly by the horrors he had witnessed during his time at the Front, and also by the millstone of being the original for Peter Pan. 'If that perennially juvenile lead, if that boy so fatally committed to an arrestation of his development, had only been dubbed George or Jack or Michael or Nicholas, what miseries would have been spared me,' he wrote. He was disappointed when Barrie did not include him or any of his brothers in his will, leaving everything to the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children.



Peter was drunk and destitute when, in the presence of bystanders, he walked under a train at Sloane Square station in 1960. The saddest aspect of the story, is that neither he nor any of the Llewelyn Davies children were really the originals for Peter Pan. The boy who would not—perhaps could not—grow up was J.M. Barrie himself.

THERE IS A CONNECTION with the Irish rebel leader Michael Collins, who met J.M. Barrie on a number of occasions. His biographer, Margery Forster, writes that 'Collins had always been a lover of Peter Pan; the eternal boy in himself was fascinated, perhaps even a little envious of him'. It is an intriguing suggestion, because it is known that when he worked in the Post Office Savings Bank and later in a stockbrokerage firm in London, Collins was a regular theatregoer.

But there is an even closer connection, and for that we need to go to another branch of the Llewelyn Davies family. Crompton Llewelyn Davies, uncle of the Peter Pan boys, was a lawyer and close confidant of fellow Welshman David Lloyd George, for whom he acted as election agent and early sponsor. He drafted a number of land-law bills for the British government and in 1908 prepared the bill that was to introduce the old-age pension in Britain. For this, he was made a baron and took a seat in the House of Lords, he was also appointed legal adviser to the British Post Office with access to many of the intelligence-gathering activities of the state.

Crompton Llewelyn Davies married Moya O'Connor, daughter of a former Irish MP in the House of Commons. Her family achieved a tragic notoriety when her mother, four siblings and nanny died of shellfish poisoning while on a picnic at the seaside. The event was sufficiently well known in Dublin to merit mention by Joyce in *Ulysses*.

It is not agreed when Moya first met Collins. She was not initially impressed by the big Irishman, criticising his smoking and describing him—quite accurately—as bombastic.

In time, she became more involved in Irish affairs and was briefly imprisoned for her role, causing her husband to lose his highly paid job with the British Post Office. That was in 1921, but before that,

the Llewelyn Davies were centres of a literary and society set in Hans Place in London, as well as in a house they owned on the northside of Dublin that was regularly used by Collins as a hiding hole.

In the years after his death, with the memory of the treatment of Parnell still relatively fresh in people's minds, any suggestion that Collins might have had a sex life was carefully suppressed. Instead, his routine of daily Mass and Communion was stressed, notwithstanding that if such a habit existed, it would have marked him out easily to police and secret agents who were searching for him.

We now know that he had many lady friends: Kitty Kiernan (Julia Roberts in the Collins biopic), to whom he was engaged; the infelicitously named but highly respectable Dilly Dicker; his second cousin Nancy O'Brien, who later married his brother; his first girlfriend, Susan Killeen; and his faithful secretary, Sinead Mason. There was unlikely to have been anything improper in these relationships.

What has always given cause for whispering was his attractiveness to society women who would have regarded him as a conquest. Hazel Lavery, American-born wife of the portrait painter Sir John Lavery, claimed that Collins was one of her lovers—she was sent home by one of her blue-stocking friends when she turned up at his funeral in widow's weeds. Lady Londonderry, whose husband was a descendant of Castlereagh, was another with whom his name was associated.

But the most persistent and most likely story concerns Moya Llewelyn Davies. She was quoted as saying that on the night it became clear that Eamon de Valera was going to reject the Treaty brought back from London by Collins, bringing an end to 900 years of occupation of Ireland, '[Collins] was so distressed that I gave myself to him.' But the rumour was that the relationship had begun long

before that and there is even a suggestion that he may have been the father of one or both of Moya's children.

Among diehard Irish republicans, there was a theory that Collins was blackmailed into signing the Treaty by the threat that the British would reveal his paternity of Moya Llewelyn Davies's son. Any suggestion that he had an affair with a wealthy socialite would have brought embarrassment to deeply Catholic Ireland in the early years of the century, particularly as many of the fighters were priggishly devout in their observance.

If one of his conquests was Moya Llewelyn Davies, the sister-in-law of Kate Winslet's Sylvia, then he picked a highly intelligent woman. Her translation of the Maurice O'Sullivan book *Twenty Years A-Growing*, the story of life on the Blasket Islands, is still regarded as a classic. She would have been as worthy a partner for Michael Collins as a heroine for J.M. Barrie. ■

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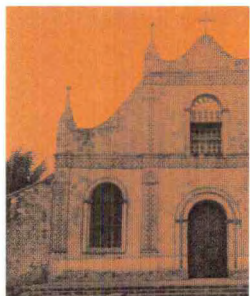
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A ship and a harbour

Travelling in order to see how different people live is essential to the formation of a genuine tolerance of other cultures



Wenja: 'to be loose or easily moved as a broken bone or the blade of a knife'—'to wander about, or roam, as a homeless or lost child'—'to be attached yet loose, as an eye or bone in its socket'—'to swing, move or travel'—'to exist or be'

—*Yaghan-English Dictionary* compiled by Rev Thomas Bridges (1898)

THIS DEFINITION FROM the Yaghan language is read by Bruce Chatwin, sitting in the Bridges' family farmhouse in Tierra del Fuego, and recorded in the famous tale of his journey through Patagonia. Something in the word *wenja* speaks to why I was making my own way through South America, 30 years after Chatwin, and more than 100 after Bridges arrived. To be loose, to wander about, to roam, to move—these ideas have always seemed to me fundamental to what it is to exist, to be.

Stationariness, by contrast, rings of death. One house, one job, one country—how on earth do people manage it? How can they possibly choose one place in which to sate all their curiosity of the world, one home in which to house all their myriad selves? So I have long thought to myself with incredulity and, not uncommonly (broke, sick, longing for absent family and friends), a stain of envy. Yet there is comfort to be taken in the nobility of like-minded precursors. Pascal wrote that all man's unhappiness stems from his inability to remain quietly in a room. Rimbaud ran off to Africa, Robert Louis Stevenson to the South Seas, and Chatwin to Patagonia. In my own smaller way, in the decade since I finished university, 24 months is the limit I have stayed in any one place at a time. The interest always has been to travel as far and as wide as funds would allow—Turkey, Morocco, Russia, Japan, Europe, and then last year through South America, the longest period yet of just wandering about, roaming, moving, being.

There, after seven months, I read a reference to the Jesuit missions in south eastern Bolivia. A sentence about operas performed 'in the Bolivian wilderness' took hold and I decided to go and see for myself. The image called up by the guidebook had reminded me of Fitzcarraldo—the maniacal 19th-century Irishman, obsessed by the vision of building an opera house in the Amazon. My partner and I had seen Fitzcarraldo's own house, now a glaring electronics store, on the plaza at Iquitos, a city whose heat and utter isolation (no roads have yet penetrated its encircling jungles and rivers) still produce a kind of insanity in foreigners. I knew of Fitzcarraldo's story because it had become the provocation for another epic—the film *Fitzcarraldo* by German director Werner Herzog. This film, in turn, was the subject of a documentary, *The Burden*

of Dreams, in which Herzog is shown driven to the point of madness by the physical difficulties of shooting in such a location (heat, disease, helicopter crashes, a sudden border war), the Indian cast's blithe obliviousness to his will, and the antics of his star Klaus Kinski (whom one Indian eventually offers to kill on Herzog's behalf). Staring frenziedly into the camera, Herzog pronounces the jungle evil, its rapacity and fecundity overwhelming another Kurtz. But, in truth, he more closely resembles Fitzcarraldo: the imaginations of both ultimately victorious in their battle with reality. Again and again it seems that the South American continent has incited such leaps from sense and logic (who would try and haul a steamboat over a mountain to fund an opera house, and who would try to re-create that for a film?) into a mad grandness of vision, an extremity of purpose. When I went to visit the Bolivian missions, their exquisite carved angels hemmed in by buzzing green jungle, and then later the mammoth stone ruins of the missions scattered around Paraguay and Argentina, it was clear that the Jesuits shared Fitzcarraldo's dramatic idealism, only on a much grander scale.

Today, the ambition of the mission project has the air of myth: in our time we are familiar with exile, a *fleeing from* political and economic exigencies, but not that kind of visionary *going to*. We live in a quieter age, where such strivings seem the stuff of fiction rather than real life, and it's almost impossible for us to imagine the experience of those individual men, boarding boats in Italy and Germany and disembarking months later to head for the jungle, with their crucifixes and grammars, aiming to revolutionise a culture.

For isn't that, and nothing less, what missionaries want? In one sense, evangelisation in South America was as simple as this: one group of people had certain religious beliefs and practices and another group wanted to destroy these and replace them with their own. The judgment we make of this goal is guided primarily by our own status as believers or not—or, as in my case, reformed believers. I was raised in a big, strong Catholic family and though I haven't considered myself a 'member of the church' since a teenager, like many in the same position I doubt I'll ever fully separate myself from it, ever manage to be immune to its teaching or its history. The Catholic Church *concerns* me; and if I'm the first to critique it to its followers, I'm also the first to defend it to detractors from 'outside'. As someone with one foot in the church, as it were, and one outside, visiting the missions challenged me to assess their history; it was, after all, a part of the legacy passed on to me in suburban Brisbane. I felt compelled to consider what may have been the realities of conversion, even while beguiled by the poetry of the missions' 'operas in the wilderness', the beautiful extravagance of their conception.

There was a 92-year-old matron I lunched with in Buenos Aires who assured me that evangelisation was for 'the good of the Indians', bringing as it did 'true religion' and a 'superior culture', but I met others with a more reflective understanding. Margaret Hebblethwaite, whose regular columns in *The Tablet* chronicle her life in the former Paraguayan mission town of Santa Maria de Fe, argues passionately that the Jesuits preserved indigenous culture and protected it from the brutalities of colonisation. As an example, she credits the Jesuits with the continuance of the Guaraní language. In fact, the Jesuits constructed a 'Guaraní' based on the variety of related languages spoken by indigenous groups coming into the missions in the 17th century, but it is certainly due to them that this indigenous-based tongue is, along with Spanish, an official language in Paraguay today. With the intention of keeping the Indians safe both from the moral vices of the colonisers and their slave-raiding parties, the mission system was built around a philosophy of cultural apartheid—non-Jesuit visitors could only spend a few days at the missions and were confined to dwellings at their boundaries. Hebblethwaite contends that as a result the Jesuits kept the indigenous culture 'pure' while at the same time 'offering' their religious beliefs.

It is clear that she speaks from a place of deep faith, and there is no denying the benefits that her own work in Santa Maria has brought to its community, but this interpretation of mission history fails to convince me, a non-believer. Culture and religion cannot be so easily divorced, most especially among indigenous people such as the Guaraní and Chiquitos, for whom religion was not the separate sphere it is today in the industrialised world, but fully integrated into kinship structures, political organisation, and economics. To assault a religion, therefore, was to assault a culture. The mission system may have helped protect Indians from the worst excesses of colonisation but it also served the colonial project: converted Indians ceased to be a military threat and their lands and labour could be put to the service of the empire. Travelling through South America it also became clear that indigenous peoples were given little choice by the Spanish and Portuguese colonisers when it came to conversion. The anthropologist Guillermo Wilde, whom I met in Buenos Aires, says there was a stark distinction between Indians who converted and those who kept their own beliefs: the former survived.

FOR THOSE, LIKE HEBBLETHWAITE, who believe that Christianity is a gift, it is perhaps impossible to give the weight I do to these other considerations. It is true that by the standards of their time the Jesuits behaved commendably—they worked for the best interests (as they saw them) of the Guaraní and Chiquitos, rather than for personal gain—but that cannot mitigate the fact that, like all missionaries, they went not to discover but to conquer. I find it impossible to celebrate this history as a story of salvation, but nor can I condemn the missions from a modern anthropological perspective. Given what the Jesuits believed, could they have acted otherwise? Rather than suggesting a superiority to those 16th-century travellers, my exploration of mission history expanded my understanding of the complexity and confusion always present in the encounter between different cultures.

When visiting the former missions and researching their history, a void appears; in the centre of all you are learning

a great absence simultaneously grows: how did the Indians experience mission life? If it is hard now to imagine the reality of the priests, then how much more difficult it is for us to sense what it may have been like for the Guaraní and Chiquitos, leaving a nomadic life of communal ownership in the jungle, and submitting to Jesuit discipline and ideology in towns of up to 6000 people. Unlike the missionaries, these new converts didn't leave written records. They did, however, produce extraordinary art that, although modelled on imported European forms, carries traces of a different mindset: Christs with brown skin, angels with Indian features, church ceilings painted with giant golden suns. Scholars are now working to discover the ways in which indigenous peoples contested and altered the Catholicism presented to them in the 16th century, but the continuing evidence of this religious dialogue is clear even to the non-specialist. South America is an intensely religious place, and while the majority of people identify as Christian, the vitality and popularity of non-Christian traditions (the worship of other gods, fertility festivals, shamans, the spiritual use of hallucinogens) is striking. Conquest is



not such a simple story after all. The Spanish 'triumphed', but most South Americans today have Indian blood; the missionaries 'converted', but the Catholicism of South America is not the one brought by the Jesuits.

Although today we can see a religious exchange (or, in cases, more properly an argument) that, of course, was not the way the Jesuits experienced evangelisation. The missionaries referred to the Indians as *niños con barbas*—children with beards—and this paternalism pervades their letters and records. Their chronicles bear witness to the deep cultural gaps separating Jesuit and Indian, of which the missionaries were blind: they could see only the gulf, not the world existing on the other side. One Jesuit, Antonio Sepp, wrote of his exasperation at the Indians being 'so void of sense and judgment', and the priests were often at a loss as to how to explain their theology in a way it could be understood. They were confounded, for example, in their attempts to argue from created things the existence of a Creator.



Beset with similar difficulties, Thomas Bridges, the compiler of the *Yaghan-English Dictionary*, believed indigenous thinking, as expressed in its languages, simply lacked the concepts into which Christian faith could be translated. He despaired 'of finding in the labyrinth of the particular words to express the intangible concepts of the Gospel', as Bruce Chatwin puts it. Chatwin argues that the insufficiency lies, in truth, with Bridges, who lacked the subtlety to see the layers of metaphorical association in the Yaghan language, where the word for depression, for example, is that used to describe 'the vulnerable phase in a crab's seasonal cycle, when it has sloughed off its old shell and waits for another to grow', or where 'sleet' and 'fish scales' are synonyms. This different way of seeing the world is observable too in the few recorded words we have from the Guarani, one of whom responded to the Jesuits' teaching about heaven by saying 'Our grandfathers and great-grandfathers were wont to contemplate the earth alone, anxious only to see if the plain afforded grass and water for their horses'. This is not simple materialism, as the Jesuits assumed, but a spirituality, like that of the Yaghans of Tierra del Fuego, rooted in the relationships of *this* world. Chatwin's examination of the Yaghan language in *In Patagonia* points to the ways in which another mode of thinking was operating, rather than the ignorance assumed by Bridges and the Jesuits. Centuries of encountering non-European peoples, and the accumulated work of anthropologists and linguists, allow us to appreciate that difference now, but it's not surprising that the missionaries couldn't. Yet, Chatwin fails to extend the sympathetic imagination he has for the indigenous mentality to that of the first Europeans travelling to South America.

CHARLES DARWIN'S RECORD of his journey around South America, *The Voyage of the Beagle*, describes the Indians of Patagonia as 'the most abject and miserable creatures' he has anywhere beheld. He confesses that he could hardly believe they were 'fellow creatures and inhabitants of the same world'. Seeing these humans so utterly lacking in what he understood to be defining of humanity—clothing, houses, churches, roast dinners—sowed the seed for Darwin's theory that modern man evolved from some ape-like species. *In Patagonia* condemns Darwin for 'sneering' at an indigenous culture, but what I find in *The Voyage of the Beagle* is genuine incomprehension—how *can* they sleep out in the cold without any covering? Why *do* the men allow their women to do such demanding physical labour? Aren't they all *exhausted* by the constant up-and-moving from one place to another? The Fuegians are more foreign to Darwin than all the strange animals and plants he catalogues from *The Beagle*, defying as they do all existing social categories. The life Darwin imagines as one of relentless hardship, exemplified by the sight of a rain-wet baby, held by its naked mother as she curiously watches his boat pass, pains him—his culture shock is the product of human empathy rather than of superiority. Darwin's journal depicts a man profoundly confronted by the mysteries of another kind of life; yet, at the same time, *The Voyage of the Beagle* is full of the sympathy that emerges from detailed observation, and is passionately opposed to slavery, the barbarity of which he witnesses in Brazil. Chatwin's castigations of Darwin result as much from Chatwin's own *a priori* privileging of 'nomadism'

(as exemplified by the Yaghan culture) over the domestic hearth, as from a response to the Victorian naturalist. What I find in Darwin's discussion of the Patagonian Indians is a paean to all that which the author himself holds dear, and what he is desperately missing in his two years spent sailing the world. Like the Jesuits, Darwin is part of the story of first meetings: two radically different ways of being making contact for the first time. *The Voyage of the Beagle* also records the Fuegians' fascinated incomprehension of the Englishmen—their displays of waltzing, their absence of women, and their pernickety care in matters of bathing.

Chatwin writes that while the Yaghans' language for the seasons and directions was exceedingly detailed, they did not count to five. The Guarani Indians were similarly innumerate, which shocked the Jesuits; believing that numeracy was essential for civilisation and the exact confession of sins, they ordered entire townships to publicly count from one to 1000 in Spanish. Yet, as with Darwin's descriptions of the Yaghan, I see in it not grounds for retrospective critique, but as evidence of one culture struggling in its own way to come to terms with another.

Which is of course what I was doing in South America too. I was overwhelmed by the richness and colour of its cultural traditions, the endurance of the Andean *campesinos*, the botanical knowledge of the Amazon, and the willingness of everyone to throw off the hardships of working life with drink and music. But there was frustration and alienation on our part as well. Comfortable ideas of social justice were challenged in a context of endemic poverty, where foreign visitors represent unimaginable riches. In *The Voyage of the Beagle*, Darwin describes feeling constantly harassed by the local people, and—sometimes saying 'no' to requests, sometimes saying 'yes'—I shared his exhaustion. But, at the same time, my sense of travelling as a kind of ethical project was strengthened. Seeing how different people live is essential to the formation of a genuine tolerance, an openness to the stubborn 'thereness' of other realities. We also met travellers involved in a different kind of journey from the one we were on—thousands of Ecuadorians, Peruvians and Bolivians moving north of the Mexican border so that the money they send home from illegal cleaning and restaurant jobs will support their mothers and children, husbands and wives.

Yet, after ten months of moving, the places and the lives we were travelling through began to blur. It was the sense of daily life we glimpsed in Ecuador that led to that old traveller's paradox—you can only really see a place by staying. Now, back in Australia, my husband and I are imagining children. What will the next decade bring? Does 'staying quietly in a room' bring with it a different kind of horizon to explore? The words of the great Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai have been running through my mind:

To live is to build a ship and a harbour
at the same time. And to finish the harbour
long after the ship has gone down. ■

Sarah Kanowski is a freelance writer and broadcaster. Her documentary on visiting the Jesuit missions in South America was aired on ABC Radio National in May, and can be heard online.

Six moments by the sea

1. First

the sky built itself
out of nothing,
pressed gold
over the world

until up on the hill, all the houses were on fire.

2. Morning

A bird
holds itself in suspension
over the cliff, caught in a pocket
of air.

The leaf, an autumn leaf
clatters
across the road on its wheels.

Will it fall in? It will swim.

3. Tides

I seep out from inside like blood.
Dripping down the mountain
over damp beds of sand to the tideline.
It is low and sweet with debris.
The waves leave what they can on the beach.

4. You

stand on the headland
hand pressed to your face.

It was so early

when I wanted you
when I wanted
to tell you everything
I can remember.

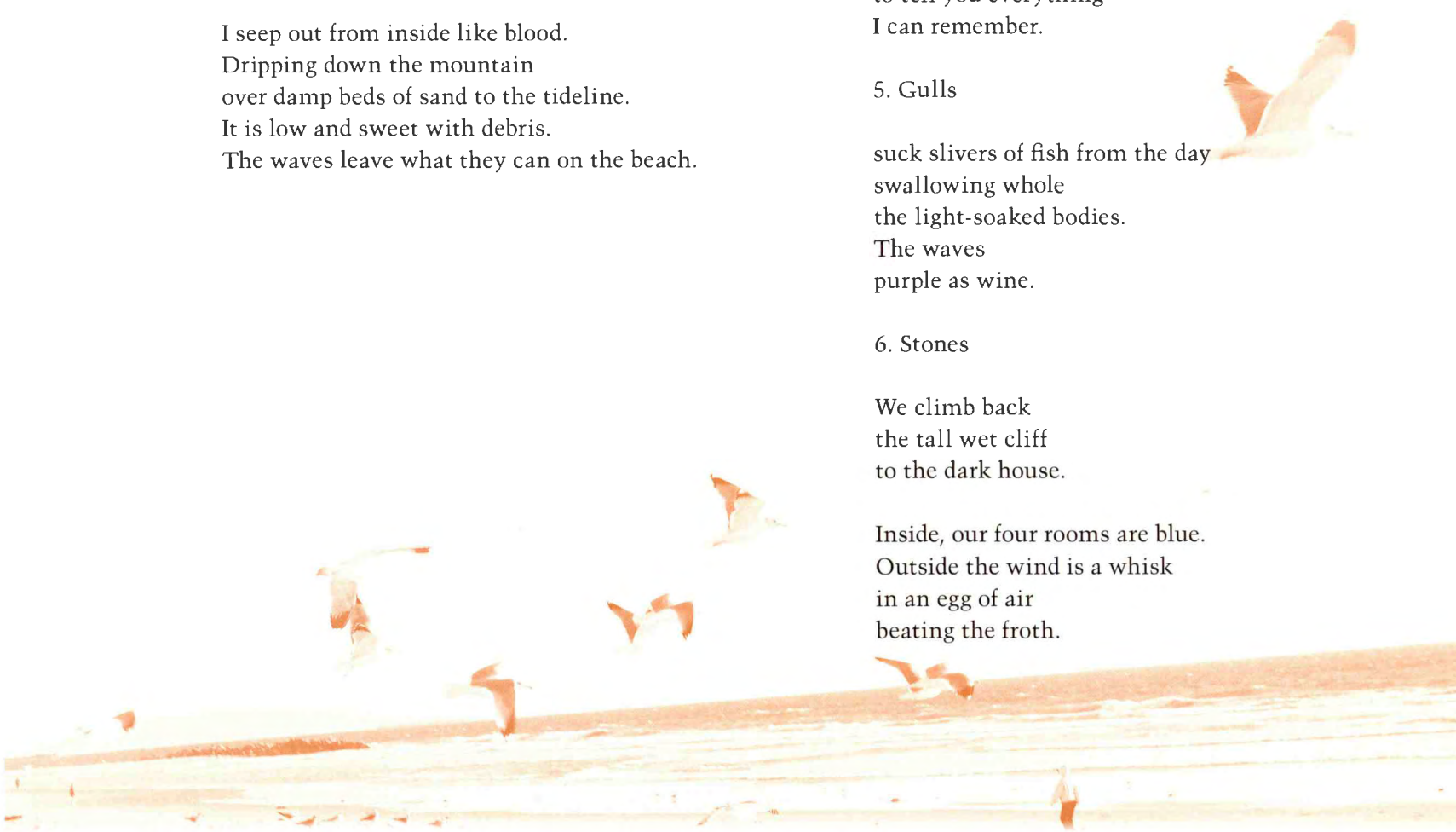
5. Gulls

suck slivers of fish from the day
swallowing whole
the light-soaked bodies.
The waves
purple as wine.

6. Stones

We climb back
the tall wet cliff
to the dark house.

Inside, our four rooms are blue.
Outside the wind is a whisk
in an egg of air
beating the froth.



An activist for the faithful

Tom Butler (1915–2005): lawyer, editor of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper

ONE OF THE LEADING Catholic opponents of B.A. Santamaria's political project, Thomas Michael Butler, died suddenly aged 89 in Melbourne on 8 January. As editor of the *Catholic Worker* monthly newspaper in the 1950s, Butler defied Archbishop Mannix and the weight of Catholic opinion to contest the Church's entanglement with Santamaria's anti-communist organisation, the Catholic Social Studies Movement.

The interventions of the *Catholic Worker*, particularly in 1955 and 1959, were the most informed current critiques of the Movement, and rejected it explicitly on the grounds of Catholic social principles, particularly as articulated by the political philosopher Jacques Maritain. These principles were confirmed by the Vatican intervention against the Movement in 1957, and again by the Second Vatican Council in 1965.

Butler and his colleagues received little thanks from the Church in Melbourne for helping to extricate it from a major political and pastoral disaster, in curious contrast to Santamaria, who continued to receive lavish accolades from church and state. There was no state funeral for Butler; no political figures crowded into the front pews; no bishops from near or far assembled.

Needless to say, Butler did not seek recognition. He was a reserved and modest man who placed little store in such ephemeral trappings, though his funeral in Deepdene parish attracted a full church of family and friends. By coincidence, this had also been the earlier parish of Bob Santamaria. Their families went to the same schools. And Butler and Santamaria remained on courteous terms personally.



Tom Butler, above, and at right under the portrait of Thomas More.

It would do Butler an injustice not to acknowledge his enormous contribution to Catholic intellectual life and social activism in this country. By profession a lawyer, he formed a law partnership from 1951–1968 with Gerard Heffey, and with their *Catholic Worker* colleagues they developed their views on the proper role of the Church in politics.

Over four decades, the *Catholic Worker* sustained a commentary on social life in Australia, particularly on issues surrounding the labour movement, social justice, the family wage, and international issues, particularly of war and peace. The paper fashioned a Catholic critique of the great ideological debates of the day, about fascism, communism, socialism and capitalism.

Butler also had a great love for the law, but he realised the difficulties of ensuring that the law achieved its true aims. He took inspiration from Thomas More, a large portrait of whom graced the Butlers' lounge room. A smaller painting of More was placed on Butler's coffin.

MORE WAS EXECUTED BY Henry VIII in 1535 for refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy that Henry was the head of the Church in England. More was one of the most famous European intellectuals of his day, and for some years was Chancellor of England. It took precisely 400 years for him to be canonised and made the patron saint of lawyers.

Butler drew from More the need for commitment to intellectual rigour in the search for truth, despite the inconvenience and personal cost; and for courage to be faithful to that truth. In his own way, Butler lived out of those convictions. He had been on the *Catholic Worker* committee in 1937–38, but during the war joined the army and was based in North Queensland. When he returned to Melbourne, he was perplexed by the intimate involvement of official church bodies in the new Catholic anti-communist movement. He edited the *Catholic Worker* from 1951–1955, and became chairman of the editorial committee from 1955–1957.

Central to his beliefs was the conviction about the critical role of lay people, inspired by the Gospel vision, vigorously to pursue social equity and justice, especially for the working classes and disadvantaged people, as well as to promote human rights and world peace.

This social activism sprang from the heart of his faith. For him, religion was not a private matter but a summons to contribute constructively to public affairs. Crucially, however, this activity was not to be under the direction of the Church or clergy, but undertaken on the free initiative and independent judgment of lay people themselves. In this, he was encouraged by the writings of Jacques Maritain and John Courtney Murray in the United States.



For the *Worker* people, this was a matter of high principle and supreme importance for the future of the Church. But it was not an easy decision in 1955 to challenge the political alliance between the Church and the Movement, especially at a time of acrimonious political controversy.

In March 1955 Butler and Gerard Heffey drafted an article rejecting accusations that Catholics who dissented from the Movement were 'traitors to the Faith'. The *Worker* argued that Catholics must be free to make their own political decisions.

When Mannix heard of this, he summoned Butler and Heffey and demanded they stop publication. During a warm conversation, they respectfully but resolutely declined to accept this directive from their revered

Archbishop, on the grounds that they had breached no matter of faith or morals. Mannix was greatly displeased and had the *Catholic Worker* banned from the cathedral, with most parishes following suit. Its circulation plunged from 35,000 to 15,000.

BUTLER AND HIS COLLEAGUES were vindicated by the Vatican intervention in 1957, but the details of this were kept secret, so it did not settle the matter in the public forum. The *Worker* people were astonished that even after the Vatican intervention, formal and direct Church support for the Movement, in Victoria especially, continued much as before.

In July 1959 Butler wrote, with Vincent Buckley, another major expose of the Movement. But the dispute dragged on, leaving many Catholics confused about what was happening, with only the *Worker* speaking frankly and honestly.

Intellectually acute and immensely well read, Butler had a strong sense of the human reality of the Church and its failings. Even in his last months he was studying earlier disputes over liberation theology and reading Hans Kung's autobiography. A few weeks before he died, Butler circulated to some friends a quote from Hilaire Belloc, writing to William Temple:

The Catholic Church is an institution I am bound to hold divine, but for unbelievers a proof of its divinity might be found in the fact that no merely human institution conducted with such knavish imbecility would have lasted a fortnight.

The *Worker* people did a great service to the Church and wider community in Australia, helping to clarify the limits to the Catholic Church's direct political involvement.

Tom Butler is survived by his wife of 55 years, Mollie (née Mary Stewart), their six children and 15 grandchildren. ■

Bruce Duncan is a Redemptorist priest and author of *Crusade or Conspiracy? Catholics and the anti-Communist Struggle in Australia* (UNSW Press, 2001).



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Georgina Costello

Human traffic

Many Thai women come to Australia on the promise of a work visa and a well-paid job, but end up in brothels

AT 8PM ON A WEDNESDAY, I walk around the Sukhumvit neighbourhood in Bangkok. It is warm enough to wear a singlet and thin cotton pants. The air is thick with spices, fire and exhaust fumes. People with filthy clothes and grubby legs sleep on footpaths. Neon signs in every colour hang above the streets. Most of the buildings are dirty. As I blow my nose, out come black bits I have inhaled.

I walk among crowded foot traffic of tourists and Thais. Foot jams. I must wait for people ahead of me to move forward. No tooting but lots of touting. Vendors try to sell me fake Fendi bags and cheap watches. I buy some 'adidas' socks for the asking price of 20 baht (less than one Australian dollar). Next morning, in the breakfast room at my hotel, other tourists tell me, 'It's much cheaper in Chang Mai,' and, 'Only pay two-thirds of the price they ask for or you're being ripped off.'

In Sukhumvit, I cannot avoid the sight of white sex tourists passing arm in arm with slim, pretty Thai women. Did the

men bargain for the service or pay the asking price? At a place called the Down Under Bar, men watch live sport in a bar decorated with kangaroos and beer barrels. Stools and tables are set up on the front verandah. Thai women stand around the bar on their high heels talking to the men, their long black hair brushing the men's skin. Near the front door, two Thai girls and an old white man sit on stools and lean intimately into their conversation. Farther along the street, small children beg with pleading looks and plastic cups.

Taking advantage of the fact that Western currencies buy so much in Thailand, female tourists treat themselves to massages, manicures and pedicures. In Australia, it is not cheap to have someone rub the dry skin off your feet, scrape the dirt out from under your nails, and smooth their hands over your aches and pains, but in Bangkok, such services are very cheap.

Meals are sold by street vendors who pack up their shops at night on a flat kind of wheelbarrow. Takeaway shops.

Some vendors whip up omelettes; others pour hot soup into bowls filled with fresh ingredients. The soups have strong flavours of chilli, ginger, tamarind and coriander. Food is cheap. Freshly squeezed mandarin juice is only 20 cents. The Lonely Planet guidebook advises that you can eat from the street vendors because fierce competition quickly drives out those who do not provide clean, fresh food.

THE COMPETITION FOR jobs and customers is strong. At restaurants, three or four staff wait on each table. People eke out a living in all sorts of ways. Three people often share a job that could be done by one. One man has a wooden cage of white homing pigeons. It costs 25 baht to 'set them free', and tourists pay to lift the wooden cage door and watch the birds fly away from the crowded Bangkok street.

Some female Western tourists take advantage of the low cost of labour by shopping at markets. Some Western male tourists enjoy a place where, no matter how ugly they are, a woman will have sex with them for a few dollars.

Of course, there are rich and beautiful parts of Bangkok. There is a tranquil sculpture garden at the Art University. Women pass in silk suits. At the Bed Supper Club, young Thais drink colourful cocktails, reclining on white cushioned daybeds. High up the steps of the Golden Mount Temple, there are views of trees, canals, modern skyscrapers and old green-and-white triangular roofs. There are bejewelled elephant statues, giant golden Buddhas, calligraphic frescoes, mosaics, tropical gardens, white palace walls and cute school kids in neat uniforms. Restaurants display large dishes of colourful curries and canals carry painted long-boats. Bangkok has been called the Venice of the East.

But a lot of the city is dirt poor. In Bangkok, you can see how hard it must be for many Thais to find a job and earn a decent living. So many people. Almost no social welfare. It is easy to see the lure of the West for Thai migrant workers.

Though the desire to emigrate may be strong, in reality it is very hard for Thai migrants to obtain a work visa for Australia. As the gap between the world's richest and poorest countries continues to grow, the desire to migrate increases. At the same time, Western governments are reducing legal migration channels and tightening borders. Australia turns away boatloads of people trying to enter its borders. Italy has plans to deport illegal immigrants to a detention centre in Libya. German border police control their borders with dogs, and many Mexicans die each year trying to cross into the United States.

As borders close to would-be immigrants, irregular migration channels are left as the only option to those who need to change countries. Travelling clandestinely, the seekers of safety and fortunes are vulnerable to exploitation by those arranging their passage. Nowhere is this exploitation more degrading than in the sex industry.

Many Thai women come to Australia on the trafficker's promise of a work visa and a well-paid job, either in the sex industry or outside it. The women usually intend to send money home to their families. Unfortunately, many of these women are tricked into believing they will have

visa rights that never eventuate and jobs that are, in reality, debt bondage arrangements, or that are in prostitution. Many Thai women end up in brothels in Australian cities. Not only must they contend with the humiliation and danger of forced or coerced prostitution, but there is also the threat of repatriation by Australian immigration officials if they are discovered, before they have had a chance to earn any money. Bought and sold from one pimp to the next, stuck in debt bondage contracts that require them to have sex with hundreds of men unpaid, these women wake up from their Western dream to a nightmare reality.

PROJECT RESPECT IS AN Australian NGO that aims to counter the exploitation and violence against women in the sex industry. Its documentation of cases of trafficking (available at www.projectrespect.org.au) records some of the stories of Thai women trafficked to Australia. One woman became pregnant to a client and was made to pay for her own abortion. Some were beaten. Others were rescued by brothel customers. Some of the women knew before they came to Australia that they would be made to pay back the cost of arranging their trip by working in brothels, but the number of sexual acts they were required to perform increased once they arrived in Australia. Other women did not know they would have to work in the sex industry; they came to Australia on the promise of a job in a restaurant, bar or massage parlour, only to be forced into prostitution.

The people traffickers who profit from those forced into prostitution are now the target of a 23-member task force of the Australian Federal Police. To date, however, there are no programs in Australia aimed at increasing the awareness of brothel customers that some of the women they are having sex with need help. In some countries, where prostitution is largely illegal, arresting customers, called 'Johns' in the US and 'curb-crawlers' in England, helps deter men from using prostitutes. Both the US and England have piloted diversion programs in which men attend education days to learn about the risks of prostitution to themselves and to the women they pay for. These are isolated examples. Worldwide, there is little focus on the role of brothel customers as consumers of human commodities in environments which are often extremely exploitative and dangerous.

There are trafficked women in Australian brothels. They have sex with brothel customers, sometimes against their will and sometimes in conditions of slavery. What responsibility should we place on the customers, who receive sexual services from women who may be paid even less than Bangkok wages? There are no social programs in Australia aimed at raising these men's awareness that the women in the brothel might be trafficked and might need help. In 2003, the Australian Federal Government announced a \$20 million government package to combat trafficking. Some of this money could be well spent on programs focused on sex-industry customers. ■

Georgina Costello is travelling in the United States and Italy researching people trafficking on a Winston Churchill Scholarship.



In a minor key

Frontier Justice: A History of the Gulf Country to 1900, Tony Roberts. University of Queensland Press, 2005. ISBN 0 702 23361 7, RRP \$32.95

IN HIS CONCLUSION to *Triumph of the Nomads*, Geoffrey Blainey mused that some Aborigines may well have celebrated the arrival of ‘the matting sails’ of Macassar boats, the ‘summer birds of passage’ that had come to the Gulf country and elsewhere for hundreds of years, to trade peacefully. This he contrasted with the white sails of English ships on the East Coast in the late 18th century; Blainey described the latter as ‘harbingers of a gale’ that would eventually ‘silence the sounds of hundreds of languages’.

In a considered account of the early Anglo-Saxon presence in the Gulf country, Tony Roberts’s *Frontier Justice* reveals—in frequently disturbing detail—the confrontation between an ancient tribal society and a civilisation from another world that was dependent upon livestock, trade and expansion; both needed the same land. The clash in the Gulf country began a little over 130 years ago. As Roberts reveals, it was a meeting of the unknowable and unknowing; it was punctuated at rare moments by humanity and the beginnings of understanding, but mostly it was just a tense era of mistrust, fear and bloodshed on both sides. With such sentiments holding court, minor initial confrontations grew quickly to larger-scale conflicts, and by the early 20th century a bloody fight had been settled in favour of the men of livestock. The cost to indigenous cultures was high—many languages were indeed silenced.

The era was also a complex one. As *Frontier Justice* makes altogether clear, some of the whites involved had much blood on their hands. Yet these same men and the lives they led in ‘opening up’ the Gulf country to pastoral franchise are also at the heart of Australia’s frontier mythology. That Roberts can present all of these concurrent realities in one scholarly and thoughtful book is a significant achievement.

Frontier Justice begins with a description of the Gulf country and what would become—for the whites at least—its major artery: the Coast Track, a rough trail

stretching a thousand kilometres from far north-west Queensland to Katherine in the Northern Territory. The early passages of the book provide an important summary of how life was lived up until the first confrontations, including the way that land was divided up between many distinct Aboriginal tribes in the Gulf country and the breakdown of tribal lands into ‘estates’ that had their own ‘owners’ (*ngimarringki*) and ‘managers’ (*jungkayi*). The former had ‘primary spiritual responsibility for the estate’, and were also liable for infringements on sacred sites and damage to the estate—even any damage that they were powerless to prevent. Managers organised ceremonies and decided ‘who may enter the estate’.

BY THE 1870s, both types of custodian would have their hands full. *Frontier Justice* describes very clearly the white pioneers’ ignorance of the Aboriginal connection with the land. As men walked along the Coast Track with their cattle, bound for an arbitrage opportunity in distant Palmerston (modern-day Darwin), they passed unknowingly over ‘sickness sites’ and many other types of sacred ground. Given the Aborigines’ duties to their lands and to each other as ‘managers’ and ‘owners’, and the lack of communication between black and white, it is not surprising that spearings of cattle and their wranglers and the retaliatory shooting and hanging of Aborigines began. Roberts’s well-paced narrative suggests that there were very few voices of reason amidst the conflict. One government resident, John Parsons, warning in 1884 of a worsening situation and proposing the establishment of reserves, wrote:

I fear unquiet times may be expected in connection with the native tribes. The blacks are beginning to realise that the white man, with his herds and his fences, and his preservation of water, is interfering with what they properly enough, from their point of view, regard as their natural rights.

Their hunting grounds and game preserves are being disturbed and their food supply both diminished and rendered uncertain.

Such insight may have been worth something, if afforded more importance by the Gulf country’s ruler *in absentia*, the South Australian government. But Roberts portrays that government as slow to think and act on this distant matter, preferring to subcontract the ‘keeping of the peace’ to a newly established Top End Native Police. This force seemingly had no time for dialogue, but rather, a quotidian imperative to keep the cattle flowing and the stations safe from native attack. Founded thus in profound ignorance on both sides, a tussle unfolds between whites who work cattle through strange and harsh country, under threat of deadly attack from blacks who are ‘very savage, cruel and treacherous’, and Aborigines who perhaps do not really understand these white men, but are bound by their own conventions of stewardship (and probably a healthy dose of fear and indignation) to repel them. And if they did not understand the white man himself, they seemed to have understood his exotic animals even less: in one instance—one of many in a book replete with excellent oral history insights—Roberts records a group of Yanyuwa people being confronted by men on horseback for the first time. ‘What kind of dog is that?’ they asked each other. They decided to flee, on the basis that ‘those big dogs might bite us all!’ ‘Of strange lands and people’ indeed.

Amidst all of this confusion and violence, work went on to open the Gulf country to pastoralists. The photos in the book document the lonely and drab iron-frame homesteads of the period and the sparse buildings of nascent Borroloola, midway between the Roper River and the Queensland border—population in 1891: 29 men, five women, 11 children. The life Roberts documents was hard for these people, interspersed as it was with Aboriginal attacks, a harsh climate and,

for a time, hundreds of impatient, often lawless itinerants in transit to the Kimberley gold rush of 1886.

And wherever there were cattle, there were duffers too; Roberts recounts one of the most famous legends—the theft of 1000 cattle from *Bowen Downs* near Longreach, allegedly by Henry Readford, an ‘outstanding bushman’, ‘known to police in New South Wales as an intelligent, imaginative and resourceful horse thief and cattle duffer’. Without naming Readford, one participant was later to document this astounding drive, which took the cattle down the back country of the Thompson and Cooper rivers for sale in South Australia. Readford was arrested and stood trial, but, as Roberts relates, was acquitted; ‘it was rumoured that the jury were impressed with his audacity [and] bushmanship’, among other things. Amidst a conflict that was silencing languages, there was room enough for some dashing bush myth to take hold, too.

While relating the thefts, adventures, hardships, violence and loss, *Frontier Justice* also documents the improbable beginnings of a more genteel life: the description of the Borroloola Municipal Library—housing over 3000 volumes of classics, science and literature and on loan to members from all parts of the Top End—is a charming and unexpected vignette. Those of us who sweat to travel across this country in four-wheel drives today might pause to consider forebears who might have ventured forth with a copy of *Great Expectations* in the saddlebag.

Frontier Justice does not shy away from painting these human complexities, and is the better for it. But for all of its catholicism, it is the wars between Aborigines and Europeans—and the tale of a losing battle that eventually becomes a thoroughgoing killing spree—that are the focus for the book.

ROBERTS DEVOTES SEPARATE chapters to each of the different regions of the Gulf country and, through a large selection of police reports and other documented and oral histories, relates the stories of how justice was dispensed on each of these frontiers. He suggests that a good portion of the Aboriginal violence may have been in retaliation for the theft of women—‘lubras’—by white men. Time and again the book recounts the work of whites organised into groups—‘vigilance parties’—for the purposes of ‘dispensing’ Aborigines. There are chilling accounts of dawn raids on sleeping Aboriginal camps.

The oral histories relate grim tales of men and women shot where they lay, or as they ran away; babies were dispatched sickeningly. There is much hard reading to be done in *Frontier Justice* and the passages relating these raids are among the hardest. Roberts’s discussion of the relative insignificance of cattle spearings compared with the much more prevalent problem of cattle duffing gives the lie to suggestions that the response to Aboriginal violence and misconduct was in any way measured. In 1883, one of the vigilantes was to admit as much, in a written request for greater police presence on his property, arguing that:

the harm [the Aborigines] do is to kill a few head of cattle, which they have a right to do, as all their country has been taken away from them, whereas hundreds of cattle are taken away by whites and not a word about them.

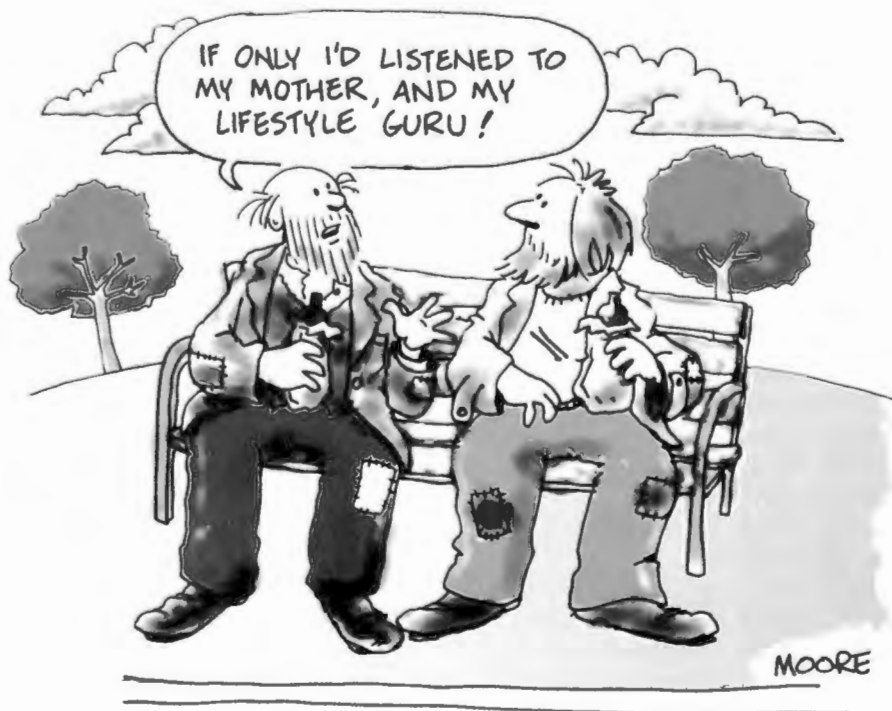
At many points in this fine, scholarly and harrowing book, the darker events of Australia’s past intersect with happier, more familiar myths. Some of the cattle duffers and bushmen were perhaps worthy of an Errol Flynn movie. One of the men well known for violence towards blacks was, it transpires, a fine bushman and veteran of the Boer War. Was he a bronzed soldier-hero or just a vicious bastard?

Whether he was one or the other, or a mixture of both, our judgments will not bring the silenced languages back. What is important is that *Frontier Justice* introduces a minor key into the ballad of our bush history—a little discord to the jingoism of the lotus-eaters.

Evidently, the author has travelled extensively through the Gulf country over many years and he himself recorded many of the oral histories contained in *Frontier Justice*. His book is clearly a labour of love; it is also quite lucidly written and structured. His commitment to thorough footnoting is perhaps some guarantee against the worst of revisionist mischief-making. At times, the tenor of Roberts’s narrative can be less than objective, as he confronts the worst of the white abuses; there is, at times, a pinch in the narrative voice that perhaps does not need to be there. But given the subject matter, this is understandable. *Frontier Justice* tells us that the bloody clash of two alien peoples began in ignorance; it also shows us that understanding and the rule of law took far too long to impose themselves on the scene.

Frontier Justice documents the Gulf country history to 1900. A companion work will continue the story to 1950. ■

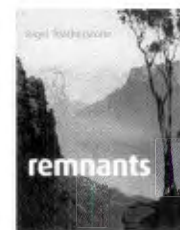
Luke Fraser lives and works in Canberra.



Sensitivity and skill

Unbroken Blue, Jan Borrie. Pandanus Books, 2005. ISBN 1 740 76129 4, RRP \$29.95

Remnants, Nigel Featherstone. Pandanus Books, 2005, ISBN 1 740 76130 8, RRP \$29.95



PANDANUS BOOKS, operating under the aegis of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University, has a new imprint—Sullivan's Creek. The man behind this is Ian Templeman, one of the real movers and shakers in this country's publishing. As founding director of the Fremantle Arts Centre in 1972, Templeman established a press that brought to the fore some of Australia's most interesting writers, including Elizabeth Jolley, Nicholas Hasluck, A.B. Facey and Sally Morgan.

Then, in 1990, Templeman took up a key position at the National Library of Australia. His brief was to develop its publishing capacity, which he did with aplomb for seven years. Soon after that came Molonglo Press, concentrating on poetry and fine art publication, and, in 1999, Pandanus. Since then Pandanus has produced material ranging over a multitude of cultures and academic disciplines, embracing biography, memoirs and fiction. Now, with the Sullivan's Creek imprint, it's pushing further in that direction, spotlighting new writers mainly from the Canberra region.

Of the two whose work is reviewed here, Jan Borrie has published with Templeman before. Her first novel, *Verge*, appeared in 1998 as one of Molonglo Press's exquisite pocket editions. *Unbroken Blue*, a more ambitious undertaking, gives greater scope for her talents. The narrative, held within a string of brief, tantalising, yet lyrical chapters encompassing multiple perspectives, is essentially her version of the Pleiades myth, brushed off, polished up and shaped with her poet's touch anew.

In Borrie's retelling, the focus is less on the lost seventh sister, and more on her daughter, who is abandoned when her mother disappears. Annabella's plight is to be bounced from one aunt to another,

and in each of their homes she's subjected to a form of neglect or abuse. Still, at the core of Annabella's misery is the initial desertion. She cannot, will not, accept that the mother who loved her would simply walk away and leave her to her fate.

Borrie is an intriguing writer, with an almost instinctual feel for the harmonious disposition of the elements comprising her art. All the pieces fit. And though abandonment is often held to be the childhood experience with the greatest potential for damage, and there are some hideously raw moments for Annabella, *Unbroken Blue* is not a sob story—Borrie is too clear-eyed for that. That said, and despite the sharp concision of her language, the novel has a lovely, dreamlike quality, in keeping with its mythological resonances.

Nigel Featherstone's *Remnants* is a more conventional offering. It is, like Borrie's novel, a journey narrative. But while *Unbroken Blue* could be classed a *Bildungsroman*, examining poetically one girl's passage from childhood to adulthood, Featherstone's novel is a solid exploration of age. Moreover, in *Remnants* we find a finely honed perception of the social environment which, owing to its character, is approached only tangentially in the Borrie book.

Remnants opens with septuagenarian Mitchell Granville, a former Sydney barrister, knee-deep in loneliness. When his wife of many years died, he left the bustle of the seaside suburb of Manly, where they spent his retirement together, and repaired to the house he grew up in. A huge, cold, forbidding Blue Mountain edifice, Bellstay Green is as unlikely a place to overcome depression as you could find. And so it is that, in retreating to the womb of his childhood, Mitchell leaves himself open to some gremlins from his past.

For reasons that become clearer as the tale unwinds, Mitchell, outwardly the picture of unassailable rectitude, suddenly and secretly buys an airline ticket to Perth. There he locates the black sheep of a brother who has been kept at a continent's distance throughout their respective adulthoods.

As you'd expect, Lindsay Granville is the antithesis of Mitchell. His physical state and circumstance proclaim his disdain for whatever his brother holds dear. He has no money of his own and no compunction in spending Mitchell's when at last they meet. His clothes are outrageous. He flouts with hilarity society's injunction to age inconspicuously, and delights in taking the mickey out of those who don't, Mitchell being top of his list.

Here's where I settled into enjoying a comedy of manners, as this oddest of couples begin their trek back across the continent towards their childhood home, stopping at several points on the way. But Featherstone's novel plumbs deeper than comedy, and by the end a more complex relationship between the two brothers has been revealed. Mitchell's past transgressions are much harsher than either he or I supposed. Yet his complicity in Lindsay's fall from grace is what he must swallow before he takes off on his final journey into the unknown.

I liked both these books a great deal. Each in its distinct way is written with sensitivity and skill. So thanks, Pandanus. May you and your authors thrive. ■

Sara Dowse is a novelist, storywriter and essayist. Under her leadership the first women's affairs section of the Prime Minister's Department, established in 1974, became the Office of Women's Affairs, now the Office of the Status of Women. She lives in Sydney.

Dealing with old discontents

The Best Australian Stories 2004, edited by Frank Moorhouse. Black Inc, 2004. ISBN 1 863 95245 4, RRP \$24.95
The Best Australian Essays 2004, edited by Robert Dessaix. Black Inc, 2004. ISBN 1 863 95237 3, RRP \$24.95

AS THE NEW EDITOR of *The Best Australian Short Stories 2004*, Frank Moorhouse had the task of reading through 600 stories to select 27 for publication. He says that never before has he been 'exposed in such a short time to such fine writing and such intriguing and venturesome stories'. Of those selected, six are from previously unpublished writers. In an environment where Moorhouse fears the short story has been rendered 'sub-economic', this suggests that the genre is still capable of surprises.

The anthology works partly because of Moorhouse's decision to arrange the stories in a way that 'loosely follows the organic order—from stories of youth through to stories of ageing'. The book offers a range of human experiences, from the awkwardness of adolescence to the despair and resignation of old age.

Among the collection, two first-timers stand out: Nathan Besser's *Letter to the Drowned* and Alli Banard's *Finding the Way Home*. With a sense of foreboding, Besser parallels the waters rising around a house with the breakdown of a relationship. In contrast, Banard's work is a terse tale of a country girl returning home, capturing the atmospheres of the neglected bush and its forgotten people. The story ends with the Australian motif of the clattering screen door.

Erin Gough's *Jump* and i.j. oog's *the american dream* will appeal to those who relish rich prose. Gough writes of 'salt and chips air' that is 'thicker than pub smoke', while oog places his seething protagonist in a derelict house in the middle of nowhere. Disenfranchised masculinity is a theme that reappears in Paul Mitchell's *In the Shell*, a story about two blokes working in a service station on the Hume Highway, and what happens to one when the other decides to shoot himself in the head. These are bleak tales, snapshots of people on the edge.

Conscious that many published essays in Australia began as public lectures, Robert Dessaix, the new editor of *The Best Australian Essays 2004*, expresses a desire to revive the voice of 'the amateur'. Dessaix contrasts 'panic and seriously inflamed passions' with the attitude of the personal essay and its preference for 'imaginative reflection' and 'tentative speculation'. Essays, Dessaix suggests, reveal the subtle working of the mind.

Organised into three categories—Memories, Arts and Artists, and The Wider World—*Best Essays* has a curious structure. Slightly bitter pieces such as *Herself*—Bille Brown's memory of accompanying a dying screen star on one of her final outings—and M.J. Hyland's sardonic biographical reflections on genetic mental illness in *On Becoming a Mormon for a While and Other Madnesses*, sit awkwardly next to Chris Wallace-Crabbe's genially cantankerous *Bed-riding*, and *Mind, Body and Age*, in which Donald Horne explores the paradox of the body simultaneously carrying and holding captive the self it loves and loathes.

J.M. Coetzee makes another impressive appearance with his 2003 Nobel lecture, *He and His Man*, which recasts the relationship between Robinson Crusoe and His Man Friday from the perspective of Crusoe's ambivalence to Friday's anthropological observations of his 'civilisation'. Nicholas Shakespeare's *Somerset Maugham* offers tight, bright prose very much in keeping with its inscrutable subject.

Ann-Marie Priest explores the communion between writer and reader in *Towards an Erotics of Reading*, the essay that best captures what is best and worst about these two collections. If, as Priest suggests, the act of reading is one where we 'listen in utter silence ... to the deepest, most serious, most cherished thoughts of another', then the *Best*

collections provide the opportunity to listen to a range of contemporary voices and seek connections and contradictions.

In the final section, historical pieces are grouped together with more immediate, 'hard-hitting' journalistic pieces concerned with detention centres, the environment, education and Australian-Indonesian relations. In between these pieces, Dessaix has spliced further contradictions: essays which don't quite fit anywhere, but which, it seems, the editor simply liked. With a preference for loose structures and even looser definitions, *Best Essays 2004* is at its best expansive and open-ended, and at its worst, as one reviewer suggested, 'perversely ephemeral'.

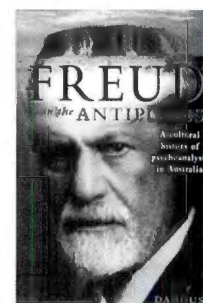
Determined to give the short-story collection a good 'shaking down', Moorhouse was willing to publish first-timers on merit alone, suggesting that the walls of Australia's publishing industry are no longer unscalable or impenetrable. Similarly, Dessaix's rejection of 'table thumping', coupled with his attempt to look for writing that persuades through reason and good humour, also indicates a new way of dealing with old discontents.

If Moorhouse's style suggests that the walls can be scaled, then Dessaix has worked on the assumption that the walls themselves are redundant. Pretend they don't exist, Dessaix seems to dare, and you can walk right through them. It is an attitude that may well seem provocative to those who complain of bruised craniums. ■

Kiera Lindsey read theology and graduated with first-class arts honours from the Australian Centre, University of Melbourne, where she is completing a post-graduate thesis on the Hume Highway. She is also project officer of the Development of Australian Studies Networks in Indonesia project.

Deep down under

Freud in the Antipodes: A cultural history of psychoanalysis in Australia, Joy Damousi.
University of New South Wales Press, 2005. ISBN 0 868 40888 3, RRP \$65



IN HIS NOVEL *Double-Wolf* (1991), Brian Castro brought the story of one of Sigmund Freud's most famous patients, the Wolf Man, to the Blue Mountains. Throughout his career, the poet Alec Hope was alert to aspects of Freudian psychology. In one poem he conceived of individuals as 'wandering islands', while in his criticism he borrowed Freud's notion of 'dream work' to explain some of the generative processes of his poetry. Neither author appears in Joy Damousi's fine and welcome study, *Freud in the Antipodes*, although she does trace the influence of Freud's theories on visual artists, especially in the 1940s.

Damousi (whose book's range is more inclusive than its title suggests) begins by distinguishing between psychology, concerned with the conscious world and socialisation, and psychoanalysis, which 'privileges the life of the unconscious as the way to understanding psychic life'. Her intention is to relate the story of psychoanalysis in Australia, particularly in intellectual circles and within less sceptical sections of the medical profession. What she does not include, presumably because it might be thought of as hearsay, is the penetration of ersatz Freudianism as far down as school playgrounds in the 1950s and 1960s, when introvert/extrovert, inferiority/superiority complex were ways in which kids sought to understand and perhaps to brand one another.

Damousi's introduction announces three grand themes: the 'gradual move through the 20th century in both medical and general terms to concentrated listening'; the appropriation of Freudian thought for 'different temporal and cultural reasons'; and the way in which Freudian theories have been used 'to shape the idea of the "self" in modern society'. The movement of the book is chronological. The narrative is punctuated by pen portraits of leading figures—practitioners and controversialists in the

history of psychoanalysis in Australia. There are illuminating details of wider social history. Despite the unprepossessing introduction—'The auditory self in the age of modernity'—Damousi analyses how, 'as with the practice of psychoanalysis, radio established a relationship between the speaker and the listener, in ways which could be both intimate and therapeutic'. She also discusses the rise of the 'talkies' and of the telephone, which became so vital to business communications from the 1930s.

The historical sweep of *Freud in the Antipodes* begins with Victorian notions of the causes and right treatment of insanity. Physical methods were applied, but some doctors—such as the Australian John Springthorpe—began to wonder how they could 'better access the mind'. Damousi aptly notes that before the advent of Freud's 'talking cure', it was the autobiography (and she might have added lyric poetry and fiction in the first person) 'that expressed the inner life of the Victorians both in Australia and in Britain'.

In the slow but sure development of sympathy towards mental illness, the diagnoses of shell shock among soldiers of the Great War was crucial. The notions of Freud's that were co-opted included those of defence mechanisms, the repression of traumatic memories and the conversion of emotions into symptoms. So the ground was prepared for the development of psychoanalysis in Britain and Australia, and for its gradual institutionalisation. But not without resistance: one Broughton Barry triumphantly noted that the use of the drug Cardiazol to treat schizophrenic patients with epilepsy doomed psychoanalysis. Its adherents, he gloated, 'are left swirling in their own mephitic vapours'. Rhetoric apart, the issue was a vital one, and Damousi returns to it in her conclusion: 'The threat to psychoanalysis by the pharmaceutical solution where an instant

"cure" or immediate alleviation is promised, looms large in the new millennium.'

Many pathways are constructively followed in this book. Damousi examines attempts to reconcile psychoanalysis with socialism, with anthropology (for instance in Geza Roheim's work with Australian Aborigines) and with feminism. In a less rigorous or academic fashion, Freudian ideas permeated the discussion, from the 1930s, of the importance of the 'emotional life'. Summarising this spectrum, Damousi writes that in the inter-war years 'the confessional as a form of listening began to appear in the popular media, and in some disciplines like anthropology a focus on the auditory began to emerge'.

World War II highlighted psychoanalytical methods once more. William McRae, Damousi contends, stereotyped gender roles and pathological deviations and was notably affronted by 'the perversity of women in uniform'. In the 1950s, during the Cold War, she writes, "'normalcy" was perceived in a prescriptive way'. There was an emphasis on 'homogeneity and assimilation', in sex and politics. Perhaps it is the case that Damousi's grand narrative of the history of psychoanalysis in Australia is too much in lockstep with the broader account of political and social developments (and their pathologising).

Damousi sometimes rehearses seemingly familiar material—on 'consciousness raising', women's liberation and Freud—but does so responsibly, with an eye on general and maybe younger readers for whom these tales may be a novelty. For all concerned she writes plainly, evenhandedly, without stylistic flair but with unflagging attention to the complexities of the business. Damousi is to be saluted for *Freud in the Antipodes*, as is UNSW Press (even at \$65 for the paperback). ■

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

Heart cuisine

Food for Thought at Manning Clark House, edited by Sandy Forbes and Janet Reeves.
Manning Clark House, 2005. ISBN 0 958 16341 3, RRP \$20

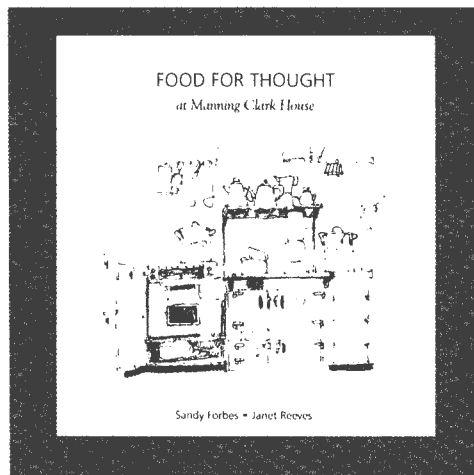
MANNING CLARK HOUSE is a national scholarly and cultural organisation based in the former home of historian Manning Clark and his wife Dymphna, in Canberra.

In the eyrie of the Robin Boyd-designed house in Tasmania Circle, Forrest, Manning Clark wrote his monumental six-volume *A History of Australia*, while Dymphna managed the day-to-day care of their house, garden and children. After her husband's death in 1991, Dymphna resumed her career as a linguist and translator that she had set aside when she married Clark in England in 1939, when he was studying at Oxford.

In one of the great Australian stories of late-life intellectual flowering, Dymphna published, in 1994, an exhaustively researched translation into English of *The New Holland Journal 1833–34*, by the Austrian diplomat and botanist Baron Charles von Hugel.

Dymphna was a woman with an uncommon gift for the common touch. In retrospect she reminds me of no-one more than of my own grandmother, to whom she bore an uncanny physical resemblance; yet they were from vastly different worlds. My grandmother was a poorly educated, semi-literate farmer's wife whose world was restricted mostly to the few hundred acres that she and my grandfather farmed; Dymphna completed honours at Melbourne University, where her father, Augustin Lodewyckx, was head of Germanic languages. She was fluent in eight languages and could 'get by' in another four.

One thing they shared, however—in addition to their physical resemblance—was a love of good, simple, healthy, tasty food; and, even more than that, the sharing of it with others—in my grandmother's case mostly family, but in Dymphna's case a wide circle of friends and



colleagues extending well beyond the family to include such influential Australians as Patrick White, Sidney Nolan, David Campbell and Barry Humphries.

The spirit in which Dymphna delivered food to the Clark table was perpetuated last year through a series of 11 dinners at Manning Clark House, *Continuing the Great Conversations*, whose featured speakers included Justice Michael Kirby, Bishop Pat Power, Janet Holmes a Court, Peter Sculthorpe and Helen Garner. Among the many wholesome and hearty recipes in *Food for Thought* are some from those dinners, which will continue this year in Canberra, as well as in Melbourne, Perth, Sydney and Adelaide.

For those who, like me, were lucky enough to share a meal at Dymphna's table, *Food for Thought at Manning Clark House* will evoke special memories of a special woman and a special time. For those who were never there physically, the book will be the next best thing.

Editors Sandy Forbes and Janet Reeves were inspired to put the book together after they read a column in *The Canberra Times* by Susan Parsons

which included an interview with Sebastian Clark, eldest of the Clark children, about some of the meal preparations that had taken place in the family kitchen. The column mentioned Dymphna's cookbooks and the recipes tucked inside them.

'This piqued our interest and inspired in us a deep admiration for a woman neither of us had met,' Forbes and Reeves write in the preface. 'At first we recognised our own mothers—frugal, adept, always there with the answers ...'

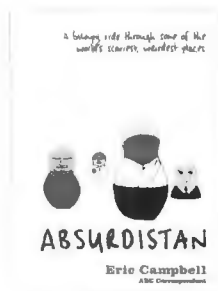
The editors have produced a marvelous book that is filled with recipes by Dymphna and many of her friends, as well as fascinating asides and snippets of information which evoke the ambience of Manning Clark House.

Through it all runs a palpable sense of Dymphna's graciousness and hospitality. A grand example of just how comfortable guests were made to feel, even in situations that would appear to be destined for disaster, is conveyed in the anecdote by Rosamund Dalziell about her meal at Dymphna's table, accompanied by her daughter, who at the time had a pet rabbit. On the menu, of course, was baked rabbit!

The tact with which that situation was salvaged offers a rare insight into Dymphna's practical genius, just as the book as a whole offers the rare treat of a glimpse into Dymphna's kitchen, which is so beautifully rendered in Peter Freeman's drawing that graces the book's cover.

This book provides plenty of food for thought, and more: Dymphna's cuisine was deeper than *haute*, it was *heart*. ■

Robert Hefner is the assistant editor of *Eureka Street*. To order this book, write to Manning Clark House, 11 Tasmania Circle Forrest, ACT, PO Box 3096, Manuka, ACT 2603, phone (02) 6295 9433, or email manningclark@ozemail.com.au



books:6
Kate Stowell

On the front line

Absurdistan, Eric Campbell. HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 0 732 27980 1, RRP \$29.95

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT Eric Campbell is the first to admit that 'most journalists have a book inside them and some believe that's the best place to keep it'. Keen to avoid clichés, Campbell has produced, in his first book, *Absurdistan*, an adventurous and personal tale of life at the journalistic front line.

From 1996–2003 Campbell was the only ABC reporter assigned to cover Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia—effectively one-third of the world's total land mass. Working in tandem with a cameraman, Campbell covered some of the biggest international stories of the last decade: the rise and fall of Boris Yeltsin, the Chechnya crisis, and wars

in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. 'It is a 24/7 existence and you can't relax on your days off,' Campbell said from his comparatively peaceful home in Sydney.

In *Absurdistan*, the reader travels with Campbell as he arrives in the former Soviet Union with only a stack of news clippings and a Russian-English dictionary. It may take a few months, or in this case, chapters, but the reader slowly sees Campbell's passion for reporting develop during his first international posting in Moscow. He admits that the job is an all-consuming, obsessive affair that cost him a marriage and meaningful friendships.

'If you weren't covering the major event, like wars, you felt left behind ... I'd reached a stage where I no longer thought it strange to leave a wife and baby to go to war,' he writes.

Despite working as an international correspondent for more than five years, Campbell was thrust into the broader media spotlight in 2003 when his cameraman and friend Paul Moran became the first Australian casualty in the Iraq war. The devastating bomb blast provides Campbell with sombre bookends to his story, but also lends gravity and a sense of humanity to what is a compelling read.

The standout feature of *Absurdistan* is that the story is about more than the craft of journalism—Campbell's vivid descriptions also serve as an empathetic survival guide for any person suffering a fish-out-of-water feeling. While not overly laboured, his astute descriptions of decadent Muscovites, or *Novi Russkis*, in

the months during Russia's economic devastation in the late 1990s are delightfully picturesque. 'Hundreds were dancing in a miasma of heat and sweat that extinguished the –10 C draughts blowing through the cracked windows ... young women in bizarre retro space-age clothing promenaded through it all in what was apparently an organised fashion show ... there was an end-of-the world feeling.'

But *Absurdistan* is not without its critics. A week before the book was launched, ABC TV's *Media Watch* panned the book, exposing one of Campbell's sources as a fraud. While reporting from Afghanistan, Campbell sought expert advice from a disgraced former US Green Beret, Jack Idema—a man infamous among media circles for selling bogus footage of terrorist training camps to Western journalists.

While Campbell admits that trusting a con man for factual evidence was not ideal, he told *Media Watch* that the use of Jack's commentary in his stories was not intended to be misleading.

'In war zones, the people you glean information from are very often mass murderers, rapists and thieves ... on that scale dealing with someone convicted of business fraud in the US eight years earlier was not something to be unduly shocked by,' he said.

In *Absurdistan*, Campbell writes of his doubts about Jack and the dilemma he faced in constructing the story: 'It was tempting to simply dismiss Jack as a fantasist and a con man. After a couple of uncomfortable days, I decided that it was safe to go ahead with the story—the footage was just too good to ignore.'

With the benefit of hindsight, Campbell is more pensive: 'Journalists always get things wrong. Only dishonest ones say they don't.'

Such insight provides the reader with a sense of the perils of working as a journalist in a war zone. In one of the more extraordinary anecdotes, Campbell tells

We can't show you their faces...

these hands belong to women who have fled from persecution in Burma. Young women often arrive alone at the Thai-Burma border. With few legal rights, these women are at real risk of abuse.

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See www.iwda.org.au to find out how you can make sure these women have someone to turn to. Or call 03 9650 5574 today to make a donation to this mid-year appeal.

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PHOTO: GEMMA PILLARS

how his colleague hid forbidden camera tapes inside the metal casing of a flak jacket to dodge inspection from merciless Taliban customs officials.

Another amusing aspect of the story is how Campbell compares life in Australia to the former Soviet Union on his holiday breaks. He recalls being amazed at how Australians complained about radical social change in Sydney over the past ten years. Additionally, he is surprised that despite the constant stream of international news stories, the Australian appetite for current-affairs television, and indeed, ratings for news programs, is waning.

'There is a theory that there is a "war on terror" fatigue,' he said. 'Straight after September 11, people wanted to know what was going on in the world but now they are tending to retreat to their plasma TV screens to watch rubbish.

'I've never seen *Desperate Housewives*, but people say it's very good.'

Campbell is sensitive to this and also to the personal strains of living far from home. There is a personal undertone to *Absurdistan* as Campbell recounts feelings of bitter homesickness, loneliness, personal injury and love.

Curiously, for enthusiasts of Silk Road history, despite the title *Absurdistan*, there is little mention of the -stan countries themselves—Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Campbell said that as a first-time writer, it was a tough editing decision to trim the book to 334 pages.

'My publisher felt that I'd probably described enough shoddy Soviet architecture, Lenin statues and dingy nightclubs,' he said. 'The thing about the Soviet Union is that while it is an infinitely fascinating place, because of Communism many things, even though miles apart, can look very similar.'

Absurdistan is a thrilling, emotional page-turner. While there is no doubt that Campbell's account is an absorbing and important text about the craft of journalism, it also will evoke an empathy with any reader who has been lost or confused in an unfamiliar land. ■

Eric Campbell is now the host of ABC TV's *Foreign Correspondent*. **Kate Stowell** is a final-year journalism student at RMIT University.

Rock Pool Ramble

The children are the scholars—periwinkles
and limpets lifted, named, set back on basalt,
warreners closed like trap doors on upturned
sea-snails: we score sand mazed with their journeys
and moon snails' finer tracks. The watery click
of soldier crabs echoes beneath our feet—
an army of knitters in tide-swept catacombs.

On all sides, a surrealistic feast
for the eyes, if not the gut: cat shark eggs,
and eggs of the sea-snail in aspic sausage;
ghost-shrimps on a bed of sea lettuce.
Sea-apples might tempt, but for their nickname:
'dead man's hand'. On a lacquered table,
holdfast plates drip with bubbleweed garnish.

Easter Monday

I set forth into a day that offers more
than could be hoped or bargained for: a seamless
compact between waves and mist and sunlight;
children freed by dancing water to be
utterly what they are—or charmed sprites
with starfish hands. Strollers pause at rock pools
showcasing ghost-shrimps and turbo snails,
limpet pyramids on long-cooled lava.

A girl dressed in yellow throws bread to gulls
with sun-fringed wings, drab underbodies.
I rest, hearing sandals crunch on gravel,
voices from each threshold of life meeting
in air, the sea's unconstrained surge filling
the estuary, beating like blood, like blood.

Sumatran reflections

Semar's Cave: An Indonesian Journal, John Mateer. Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2004. ISBN 1 920 73114 8, RRP \$24.95

ENCOURAGED TO SHARE his literary secrets with a sharp-suited British diplomat, John Mateer admits that he finds it difficult to trust other people's work. 'I am forced into the present, to write in the present tense,' he says. 'This is why I am interested in reportage, writing that takes the details of daily life and



personal experience as the evidence of unfolding history.'

Readers would be misled if they approached this account of Indonesia after Suharto's fall as journalism, or reportage. While author Timothy Garton Ash has called his essays on European communism a history of the present, *Semar's Cave* is closer to a prose poem.

In late 1998, Mateer left for Sumatra to become the inaugural writer-in-residence at the Australian Centre in Medan. Stricken by bouts of sectarian violence and the impact of collapsing economies across south-east Asia, Indonesia provided the stuff of history in the making, but none of this is examined at great length in *Semar's Cave*. Rather, the South African-born writer says his reason for going to Indonesia was a curiosity about the origins of Afrikaans, the 'kitchen Dutch', or Creole, used in the Dutch East Indies.

'This fascinates me, because not only does it undermine the official history of Afrikaans,' he says. 'The idea that Afrikaans was a language with its origins in Europe, belonging to 'white Africans'—the Afrikaners—but it also reflects the secret history of the language.'

Such reflections sprinkled throughout the book are its greatest strength. Few are fully developed (little is heard of this theory following a bracing exchange with a historian who recommends Mateer learn Dutch before embarking on this research), but in a world full of instant experts, this reticence may not be such a bad thing.

Semar's Cave is hard to characterise. On one level it follows a stranger-in-a-strange-land trajectory. (The poet arrives in exotic Medan with its 'tropical, volcanic scent of the earth, its monsoonal freshness and its spice of exhaust fumes', travels to tourist sights such as Lake Toba, on to Java, and then flies home.) Along the way Mateer encounters a range of English-speaking expats and a few barely sketched Indonesians. On another, it is a self-portrait of the artist as a young man.

It is written in a deceptively straightforward style. Very little happens to the author-narrator, or more generally, but this stasis appears intentional: 'I don't write to present an objective account or a truth, but to interrupt norms of storytelling, travel-writing or even history by giving more detail than opinion; real images instead of my thoughts.'

And yet *Semar's Cave* is highly opinionated (and frequently fierce—white Australians with their 'overstuffed, ungainly, monstrously pale' bodies have a particularly rough time in the book). Occasionally Mateer allows himself a more visceral response, and whenever these unruly emotions—disgust, shame, anger, alongside desire for 'mythical Javanese prostitutes'—spill onto the surface, the narrative is revitalised, but such self-exposure is fleeting.

Critic Michael Heald says that Mateer's suspicious world view manifests his South African background (he fled the country as a teenager, after experiencing a 'state of emergency', and settled in Perth) and this is why he resists conventional ways of meaning. 'Mateer is at pains

in his work to scrutinise processes of thought and feeling as they form into attitudes, motives and actions,' Heald says.

Whether reflecting the author's anxiety about being an Australian in Asia, his heightened sense of self due to his Zen Buddhist practice, or his prickly persona, Mateer's self-consciousness ensures that there is little engagement with Indonesia's socio-political situation, or the complex reality of Indonesian lives. This is reinforced by the decision to write in the present tense about events that happened seven years ago, which necessarily creates a sense of dreamy timelessness. Towards the end of the book, Mateer records his response to the Australian troops landing in East Timor, while the title refers to an earlier appeasement of the Suharto dictatorship by the Whitlam government, but these more political reflections are presented in a similar style.

DURING THE CONVERSATION with the British diplomat, Mateer admits that he lacks faith in his authority to write. This may be behind his decision to use pseudonyms for certain characters. Two years ago an extract from *Semar's Cave* appeared in a literary magazine that included a pointed characterisation of an Australian poet. It is reproduced in the book, but cloaked under a false name, which renders it meaningless.

Semar's Cave is best appreciated for its lyrical reflections and vivid detail. Other cultures have been greatly enriched by the willingness of their poets to engage with the world around them through extended pieces of prose. Even if *Semar's Cave* lacks the overarching ambition, or ego, of Octavio Paz, or Czeslaw Milosz, it is to be welcomed on that basis alone. ■

Madeleine Byrne is a former SBS journalist. She is a fellow at OzProspect, a non-partisan, public policy think tank.

Playing God, again

HISTORY WOULD HAVE IT that Verdi's early opera *Nabucco* is an allegory of Risorgimento politics and the struggle towards the reunification of Italy. Verdi's more immediate struggle was with censorship, an issue he encountered throughout his life. *Nabucco* was his first 'hit' and the opera that opened theatre doors for him outside Italy. Unfortunately for Verdi and his librettist Temistocle Solera, this meant dealing with restrictions where, in England particularly, biblical subjects were forbidden on the stage. The Lord Chamberlain's office was especially virulent over the 'Old Testament opera permitted in Catholic countries', according to the eminent music critic Henry Chorley, and an opera like *Nabucco*, he explains, 'must here be re-baptised for we English are not so hard, or soft, as to be willing to see the personages of Holy Writ acted and sung in theatres. Hagar in the wilderness, Ruth gleaning among the "alien corn", Herodias with the head of John the Baptist in the charger, are subjects of personal exhibition which all thoughtful lovers of art in music must reject, on every principle of reverence and of taste, and from which the thoughtless would recoil, because, perhaps, they are not so amusing as *La Traviata*.'

The character closest to biblical identity is the priest Zaccaria who resembles Jeremiah, so *Nabucco* was rechristened *Nino, Re d'Assyria* for London in 1846 with all the characters renamed, Zaccaria becoming the High Priest of Isis and the exiled Hebrews renationalised as Babylonians. This *Nino* guise was how the opera received its Australian première in 1860. As a further precaution against offending the sensibilities of the Church of England's colonial flock, it was decided that, 'a sacred subject for the purpose of an opera being justly obnoxious to most people, the incidents were ultimately ascribed to Ninus, asserted by Diodorus to have been the first king of Assyria'. Confusion

reigned as the audience grappled with the characters' names and real identities to the extent that one correspondent opined that the audience would call in vain upon its recollections of student history to sort out the plot, which was an 'incongruous amalgamation of incidents, and the jumbling together of epochs and empires, which even the license allowed to the lyric drama will scarcely justify'.

By the end of the century *Nabucco* had been overshadowed by Verdi's mature operas, and with its rehabilitation in the 20th century, its plot, concerning the exile and near massacre of Jews, invariably means Holocaust connotations as a production requisite.

In David Freeman's new production for Opera Australia, the terms of reference are widened to include recent Middle East politics. A little of the 'jumbling together of epochs and empires' that dogged *Nino* was at work again. Beginning with *Fiddler on the Roof*-ish costumed Israelites awaiting the approaching Babylonian army, it is with *Nabucco*'s entrance that Freeman reveals his interpretive key. *Nabucco* is the mustachioed, rifle-toting Saddam Hussein of modern-day Iraq, formerly Babylon, and not much has changed. The succeeding acts, however, resort to telling the opera proper with a kind of British Museum accuracy. Dan Potra's sets with aqua tiled walls, sculpture and costumes are reminiscent of ancient Babylon. *Nabucco*, now costumed in a Stalinesque white dress uniform, is the exception, only if to make way for the opera's most dramatic moment, when he declares himself God and is struck down by celestial lightning. Freeman has blood rain down on the pristine uniform in a way that would make even the most excessive Jacobean dramatist sick.

Musically, the opera was finely performed. Full credit to Freeman for not impeding his singers. Rosamund Illing, in particular, as the villainous Abigail,



Michael Lewis as Nabucco. Photo: Jeff Busby

coped with the extraordinary vocal demands of the role—even going for broke with the unwritten high C that crowns her famous cabaletta *Salgo gia deltrono aurato*. Michael Lewis's *Nabucco* was equally good, more incisive than opulent, but that only puts him up there with the great singing actors of the past.

A far cry from 1842—when there was no operatic acting to speak of, the only interpretation of the libretto required was the composer's 'musical' interpretation, and adding any further interpretation was considered redundant or even contradictory. It may be this conflict that makes for the furore over 'controversial' opera stagings that legitimate theatre with its text only rarely attracts.

Nabucco is also performed at the Sydney Opera House between June 29 and August 6. ■

Michael Magnusson is a freelance writer.

flash in the pan



Surviving in Afghanistan

Land Mines, A Love Story, dir. Dennis O'Rourke. The Afghan woman, mysterious behind her ice-blue burka, suspended somewhere between pathos and allure, is one of the sharpest images of the 21st century. That delphinium blue, still against a background of war and carnage, has drawn photographers in their thousands. Some of them may have read Edward Said's *Orientalism*, may even have absorbed its cautions against romanticising the exotic. But the blue is irresistible.

Dennis O'Rourke, by his own account, was caught by that blue as he drove through Kabul's central bazaar soon after the American bombing. But he saw something else as well: a plastic prosthetic leg sticking out from the enveloping material.

It's characteristic of O'Rourke's risky documentary style that he should seize the moment and find his film in that chance encounter. The veil is raised, and we meet Habiba, 19, Tajik, articulate, resilient and yet achingly innocent. She is the pivot on which the film turns.

Habiba lost her leg a decade or so earlier—land mines have a long history in Afghanistan. Her husband Shah, a cobbler, is similarly maimed. They have children, and another one coming. The film documents their efforts to survive. In between scenes of Habiba begging (Shah is shamed by his wife's enterprise) and Shah trying for a social service pittance, O'Rourke splices a short history of land mining, using sources that include grainy Russian archival footage of metal disks and shredded flesh with cutaways to the digital shimmer of George W. Bush explaining how heartfelt is American compassion, and an earnest US general explaining how unfortunate it is that air-dropped food parcels are the same colour as land mines.

But the film's strength is the Afghan material: real people being themselves, on the street, at home, in classrooms where exuberant children learn by rote about small machines that may kill or dismember them, in clinics where the women who

make the prostheses all limp. Habiba, with her hip-straining walk, is wonderful, whether primping shyly for a photograph or telling men in the bazaar that they should give her more in alms. The intercut land mine and political footage seems contrived by comparison—Errol Morris (*The Fog of War*) territory, and best left to him. O'Rourke's art and best energies lie in enticing—or simply allowing—people to act out their own complexity in front of his intimate camera.

—Morag Fraser

Hitching a ride with the original

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, dir. Garth Jennings. It is the era of the remake. They're made because they each have a guaranteed audience—anyone who loved the original TV series *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* will be there for its new incarnation, if only so they can bitch about it on their websites.

Arthur Dent (Martin Freeman) wakes one morning to discover a team of bulldozers preparing to demolish his home, making way for a new freeway bypass. His outrage quickly turns to confusion, however, when his friend Ford Prefect (Mos Def) arrives on the scene, buys everyone a round of drinks, and announces that a team of Vogon spaceships are preparing to demolish Earth. Why? To make way for a new interstellar bypass.



noid Android, voiced by eternal English malcontent Alan Rickman.

What follows is a frantic ride across the universe as the Heart of Gold seeks out clues to what is, in essence, the meaning of life. Their journey is narrated by Stephen Fry as the electronic guidebook *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which today remains one of the great narrative devices, in movies or anywhere else.

The problem is that what the old TV show could barely jam into six half-hour episodes, this silver-screen production has to abbreviate even further, making for an obscure and often roughshod ride over the original ideas of the late Douglas Adams's seminal 1979 novel. With Adams himself as a co-writer of the screenplay, it's not an impossible task. But whatever genius survived that truncation is suffocated by first-time director Garth Jennings, whose capacity for visual effects is extensive, but whose sensitivity to the humour and charm of the story is almost non-existent.

Some of the good stuff couldn't be ruined in the worst of hands, like the science-fiction hero who careers through the story dressed in a bathrobe and seeking out a hot cup of tea. There's an absurdity to the telling that harkens back to the blind men and squirrels of Monty Python, and the British obsession with tedious bureaucracy and bad poetry is nicely personified by the Vogon villains. But there's no love in it. Larger-than-life characters like the two-headed Zaphod are presented without passion or ceremony and come out considerably less than life-size. There is no expectation on the part of the filmmakers that



Scenes from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* with Zoëy Deschanel, Martin Freeman and Mos Def.

Ford and Arthur escape just in time, hitching a ride on board the Heart of Gold, a shiny new spaceship stolen and piloted by Zaphod Beeblebrox (Sam Rockwell), President of the Galaxy, and carrying an array of quirky characters including Trillian (Zoëy Deschanel) and Marvin the Para-

this is anything more than another product on the factory floor of modern movies.

The high point comes at the 15-minute mark, when the original soundtrack from the TV show kicks in, nostalgic for some, pointless for anyone else. The new animated *Guide*, which teaches Arthur

and the rest of us Earthlings a thing or two about the galaxy, is also refreshing humour, animated with European simplicity. But unless you're an enormous fan of the book, *and* you're writing a thesis on its various incarnations, this one is likely to leave you unsatisfied.

—Zane Lovitt

Brave new worldliness

9 Songs, dir. Michael Winterbottom. Matt (Kieran O'Brien) and Lisa (Margot Stille) are lovers. They share a common interest in live music, drugs and sex. Maybe Matt loves Lisa; it's a little hard to tell. But really it doesn't matter.

Michael Winterbottom has made a film with very little by way of narrative particulars, and as the title suggests it seems more like music than your classic plot-appointed tale. Told in flashback, while Matt is visiting the Antarctic, *9 Songs* sets its ground from the outset. Matt's voice-over frankly states that he doesn't remember Lisa for what she wore or the jobs she had, but rather for the way she smelt and the feel of her skin.

And so we embark with the two characters on an explicit exploration of just that. We watch Lisa and Matt make love, really. And while there is no escaping the reality of the physical acts we are witnessing, it is neither titillating nor gratuitous. Something in the frankness of Winterbottom's camera strips it of any hint of the pornographic and instead allows us to experience the physical manifestation of an uncertain love.

Winterbottom, initially inspired by Michel Houellebecq's sexually explicit novel *Platform*, wondered why books could deal with the subject of sex without shying from the graphic, but that film, 'which is far greater disposed to it, can't'. Well now, thanks to Winterbottom, it can and has.

Needless to say, *9 Songs* is not the first film to tackle real sex on screen. Patrice Chéreau's film *Intimacy* caused quite a ripple when released in 2001. While less graphic, it was a good deal bleaker and the sexual encounters were inextricably embedded in a narrative that meandered from sex to life to love to marriage to loneliness.

But *9 Songs* is more than just real sex. It is also a breathtakingly simple piece of cinema. Without the weight of plot twists and character expositions we are left with

the very lightest traces of people's lives—the floating bits between people that are in turn as clear as crystal and mud. We are not asked to understand the intricate machinations of each character's mind, but rather to realise that much of what we are is driven by physical impressions—and fleeting notions.

Winterbottom punctuates his 'songs' with actual songs. Broken into its nine 'suites' by the inclusion of live concert footage, *9 Songs* does real justice to some great concert performances—among them Franz Ferdinand, The Dandy Warhols, Primal Scream and The Von Blondies. Winterbottom also continues his love affair with Michael Nyman (and a good thing too) by including Nyman's 60th birthday concert in the line-up.

9 Songs will bore many, offend hordes and just not do it for others. But for my money it was lyrical and unpretentious—not brilliant, but brave in both form and content. When Matt compares being in the vast white of the Antarctic to 'two people in bed—claustrophobia and agoraphobia in the same place', I was moved to watch bodies, in bed and out of it, grapple with that very notion.

—Siobhan Jackson

Choosing to see the evil

Downfall, dir. Oliver Hirschbiegel. *Downfall* recounts Hitler's last days, holed up in his bunker as the Russians and Americans besiege Berlin. Although the film is of course a fictionalised or dramatised account, it is based upon Joachim Fest's book *Der Untergang* (*The Downfall: Inside Hitler's Bunker, The Last Days of the Third Reich*), and the memoirs of Traudl Junge, Hitler's private secretary (*Until the Final Hour: Hitler's Last Secretary*, later made into the documentary *Blind Spot: Hitler's Secretary*).

The film has generated some controversy for its portrayal of Hitler as something approximating a human being, rather than an embodiment of pure evil, a monster and a madman. In *Downfall* we see a Hitler who is kind to dogs and small children and who treats his secretaries with paternal affection. Such criticism would suggest a preference for the depiction of Hitler as a figure of transcendental evil rather than as a human being. For if Hitler were human, then we too must share

something in common with him—a little piece of Hitler in all of us.

For all that the film allows Hitler his humanity, it can hardly be said to be sympathetic to him. It offers us a man who was kind to dogs and small children, but whose proudest achievement was the genocide of the Jews.

What is most frightening, and potent, in the film (and most disturbing to anyone who wishes to maintain pride in humanity by excluding Hitler from it) is its portrayal of the willingness of the people surrounding him to find, joyfully, in his corruption a saviour from their own responsibility for making any kind of moral choice. This applies not only to fanatics like Goebbels and his wife (who murdered their own children rather than let them live in a world without Hitler), but to those, like Traudl Junge, who chose only to see dog lover, not mass killer.

The film ends with a documentary epilogue from Junge herself. For a long time, she says, she held herself blameless because she was naive, apolitical, and not aware of the extent of the horrors perpetrated by her fatherly employer—until, one day, she passed a monument to a young German woman executed by the Nazis for her resistance to their crimes. The woman had been 22 when she was killed—the same age Junge was when she started to work for Hitler. At that moment, she says, she realised that she could have known if she had wanted to: the information was there, but she chose not to see it.

If there is a little Hitler in all of us, if Hitler is part of human potential, part of



Juliane Kohler, Bruno Ganz, Heino Ferch in *Downfall*.

the humanity of the human, then our only redemption is to take responsibility for it ourselves. One must choose to see, rather than to remain blind and complicit when we face the evidence of all too human evil in the world today.

—Allan James Thomas



Unhealthy diets

I'M LOOKING FOR A BUTTER DISH. It is a quest, lonely and romantic, pursued in op-shops and garage sales. And yes, nostalgic. Nostalgia Forte, to be taken with care.

It kept the butter perfectly spreadable in most weathers, and then like fools we changed to margarine. We put the butter dish away in the back of the cupboard and it went to Narnia, like most things you put in the back of a cupboard. Wherever it is now, it isn't here. All the telly ads spruiked marge for a long time, talking of health and spreadableness, but now of course we fatties are all concerned with trans-fatty acids and free radicals (which so tragically now have nothing, nada, zilch, rien to do with politics). So it's back to butter, except now it's all about timing, unless you want to gouge holes in toast or break your Vita-Weat in angry little pieces before it even sees the Vegemite.

Some would accuse me of being a tad OCD about the butter-dish quest, but the way I see it, it's symbolic.

It's like this: once we had a culture (take TV, for instance) that had a few brands to choose from (like Western Star butter or the other one). You had BBC and ITV. Or ABC and Channels Nine and Seven. We all watched the same thing and talked about it the next day. News was censored but not yet spun. Dr Who was an old guy who dodged Daleks. There was Popeye thumping Bluto and lots of Westerns like *Rawhide*, *Hopalong Cassidy* and *Wagon Train*. And movies, sometimes quite interesting ones: I know that the first time I saw *Ashes and Diamonds* was on the BBC in 1962.

There are five network channels now and countless cable ones. Meanwhile, in my supermarket, there are dozens of brands of chemical margarine, and phalanxes of artificially sweetened and gelatine-set yoghurts. There is 'spreadable' butter, but it's been mixed with GM canola. All in the name of choice and healthy options. And are we thinner and healthier than we were 40 years ago? Er, no.

When that London doctor talked with Jamie Oliver on *Jamie's Dinners* in April and May, a scary picture started to form, of kids being fed so little fibre that it's not unknown for some to be constipated for six weeks. Parents who don't ever cook or buy fruit and vegetables. Children who come to school never having sat at a dinner table and not knowing how to use a knife and fork because—you guessed it—they eat in front of the telly, eating foul chemical takeaways that that same telly is urging them to pressure their parents to buy. The telly that now leaches away their ability to choose good programs because it offers so many bad ones. When I was nine, I watched David Attenborough exploring Borneo and was enthralled. Given a choice between a David Attenborough doco and *Big Brother*,

today's kids are going to choose the latter, in exactly the same way that, when given a choice between Jamie's fresh food and the usual deep-fried caca, the school kids chose the caca.

Jamie Oliver and Jo Frost, the *Supernanny* (on Nine, Mondays at 7.30pm), are an antidote to some of this; they see children floundering in a swamp of negligent *laissez-faire*. They both encounter children who are fast becoming miserable little emperors, bouncing off walls because they are bribed with sugary, fatty, coloured snacks rather than fed and cared for.

FOOD IS ON SBS's agenda this month, with two series that concentrate on the sociology surrounding the food. The ninth *Fork* series screens on Fridays at 8pm, and takes us round the Mediterranean. If you are a Pria Viswalingam fan, you'll love it. Just before this, at 7.30pm on the same night, is a rather less predictable and more exotic eight-part program, *Feast India*. Barry Vera, an English-born chef, travels from Rajasthan to the Pakistani border, from a salt mine in the Thar Desert to a Sikh temple in Old Delhi that feeds 70,000 people a day, to the Malabar Coast where the spices are traded. Don't miss it. Of course you will probably be eating your own dinner at 7.30 on a Friday, so get the youngster to program the VCR for you.

It makes me sad to think that such riches are buried far away from the eyes of the children who should see them instead of the junk they'll be watching. SBS is a channel young folk rarely tune into (except for *South Park*). Similarly with the ABC, Mondays with *Four Corners*, *Media Watch* and *Enough Rope* just don't get the ratings they deserve. Liz Jackson is such a joy to watch. I love the way she personally addresses the various bullies and liars that they catch out. 'Now really, XXX,' she'll say. 'It wasn't really like that, was it?' Or words to that effect. The old program is doing well on her watch.

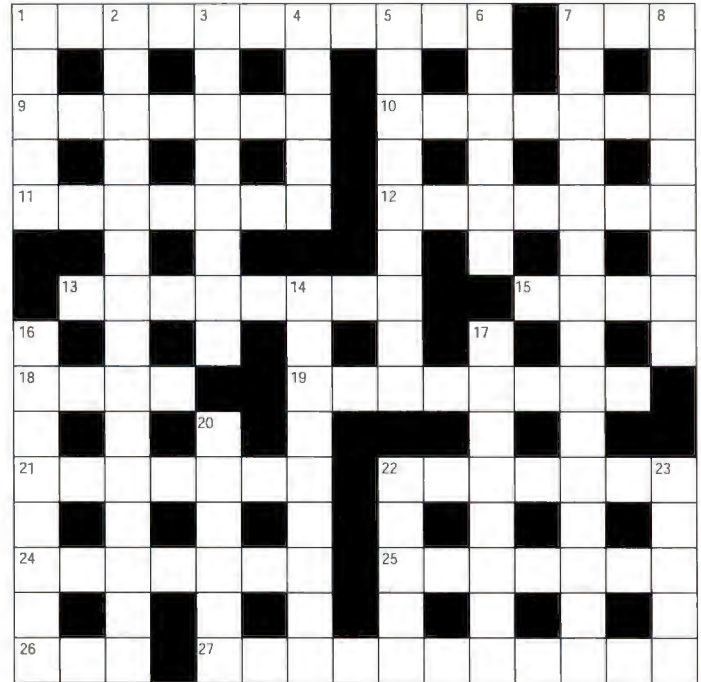
Unfortunately I can't say the same for the new *Doctor Who*. CGI baddies don't make up for sloppy scripting and a lead actor who is plainly uncomfortable in the part. Bring back the Daleks. Christopher Eccleston also played the Jesus character in *The Second Coming*. I hated that too, for diverse reasons, but it's all over now so I won't bother going over its wrongheadedness, shallow banalities and sheer ugliness.

It all goes to show that a bad diet, whether of food or culture, makes one ill-tempered and unhealthy. In the meantime, it's torn toast and eviscerated Vita-Weats until I find the Holy Butter Dish of Antioch. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer.

ACROSS

1. Strong feelings expressed about the peculiar pit the Asian detested. (11)
7. Genuinely authorised products should initially fill the space. (3)
9. Slumbering, recite part of password or mantra. (7)
10. Leader of team with money in Russia is in strife. (7)
11. Ate vine rashly? No, it was done in all simplicity. (7)
12. Decide to do this crossword again. (7)
13. In Dr Morgan I see the difficulties I need to make arrangements for. (8)
15. It sounds negative, but tie it anyway. (4)
18. Run out of it and you're in 10-across! (4)
19. As an actor, he's covered in paint, mixed randomly. (8)
21. Miner takes dog, we hear, with some hesitation. (7)
22. Family relation with an unhygienic griminess! (7)
24. Migrant, perhaps, hauling belongings on ox-wagon. Sounds like Tom, the first wrecker! (7)
25. Make mistake at International Committee, for a start. How capricious! (7)
26. Was this a feminist book? (3)
27. Two actors, one with small part, or spare man in the cricket team? (5,6)



DOWN

1. Passionate over loss of time in Shakespeare's forest. (5)
2. ACU or TAFE, for instance, but not primary school. (8,7)
3. Put rug down—under the plate, of course. (5,3)
4. Let it serve to designate book. (5)
5. Bury free components; they can be a hindrance. (9)
6. Does bookie love to employ his wife, perhaps? (6)
7. Made in former French factory, it depicts big Noel with stray pet, maybe. (7,8)
8. Exhibits offerings. (8)
14. A different way to enter trip? Give me an explanation. (9)
16. Conciliates the protestors by changing places at table. (8)
17. Without hesitation, add a line to the spectrum, and the result is spooky? (8)
20. Could one relish being in such a plight? (6)
22. Body of scholars, persistent as a mule, perhaps. (5)
23. More pleasant to rest first at the French resort. (5)



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