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PO Box 553
Richmond
VIC 3121
Australia

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

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Indonesia's lax logo laws

MEDIA

Dewi Anggraeni



Reki Mayangsari, manager and co-owner of Ladybamboo Villa in Ubud, went to Toraja, Sulawesi, in 1999 and stayed in Novotel Hotel there. When she went rafting she saw the logo she had designed herself, used on the hotel's lunch box. Upon returning to the hotel, she was even more disturbed to see her logo in its Bamboo Bar.

She promptly asked to see the general manager and confronted him regarding his appropriation of her design. Being an honest person and also probably taken aback by Mayangsari's assertiveness, the manager, a French national, showed his good faith by withdrawing the logo from the hotel's property.

A subsequent investigation by Mayangsari revealed that the logo design had come from a local printer. Two years previously, in 1997, Mayangsari was conducting research in Toraja, and went to have some business cards made. Unknown to her, the printer kept the design, and when Novotel contacted them to have a design made, they presented it as their own creation.

Mayangsari's experience is not an isolated occurrence. Appropriating someone else's designs has been common practice in Indonesia. Intellectual property rights have not been high on the authorities' priority list.

On the rare occasion where the original owner contacts the guilty party and threatens action, the copied design is withdrawn and the matter settled out of court. Most of the time, people do not bother. They either do not regard it as important enough, or want to avoid confrontation or expensive legal avenues.

This complacent attitude costs them dearly, as they discover too late that products have been copyrighted by overseas companies. Those who want to manufacture and sell these products then need to pay royalties to those companies.

The growers of Kopi Gayo, a special coffee from Aceh highland, named after the local tribe who process the beans, can no longer sell their product under the name they used for generations, because a Dutch firm officially claimed Gayo coffee as its trademark.

What jolted many people in Bali and East Java is a recent case where an international jewellery company took its former employee to court, charging him with appropriating designs of which the company holds the copyrights.

While the court case is going on, a social cultural phenomenon is taking place. Local jewellery manufacturers are fearful that they will be next, because they discovered that 800 of

Indonesia's traditional motifs, 12 of which are Balinese, had been copyrighted by the company, in Indonesia and the United States.

Some examples were the motifs of Palu, which have usually been found on brass bowls; Jawan Keplak on silver items; Tulang Naga from Lumajang, East Java; Batik Kawung from Yogyakarta and Solo; and Dayak from Kalimantan.

While the designs are not traditional motifs in their whole forms, they are based on traditional motifs which have been used for generations in their original cultures by artisans and artist-designers. No artisans in Indonesia have objected to the company using them, what dismays the artisans is that they seem excluded from the use.

The artisans' fear may be baseless. Ideally speaking, each artist-designer has a unique interpretation of a particular traditional motif. It is the combination of motif and interpretation which can be copyrighted.

However, with 80 designers working full time, producing perhaps one design a week, or two a month, is there any guarantee that one or two will not be similar enough to those copyrighted by the company, to be actionable? Once they are taken to court, will they be able to afford the costs?

Meanwhile there is hardly any indication that authorities feel the need to set up an accessible, affordable intellectual property rights regime by which local artist-designers can copyright their own work. The few like Mayangsari have had to plough through dense bureaucracy and pay high fees, and over a year later, are still waiting.

Ghost of design rattles Darwinian orthodoxy

BOOK FORUM

Andrew Hamilton

Steve Fuller, *Dissent over Descent: Intelligent Design's Challenge to Darwinism*, Cambridge: Icon Books, 2008, ISBN 978 1840468 04 5

Dissent over Descent is that rare book which will aggravate any reader with strong ideas about its subject. Intelligent Design inhabits the shell-pocked no-man's land between science and religion. Steve Fuller argues that it should be taught as an option because science depends on religion. But his version of religion will set pious teeth on edge.

Fuller does to science what scientific critics often do to religion. He studies it as a cultural construct. He looks down on it from the heights of the history, philosophy and sociology of science. He does not confine himself to what scientists think they are doing, but asks how scientific theories arose and what are the strands of contemporary understanding of science.

He also shows that the conflict between science and religion has largely been manufactured as propaganda in the struggle, first to control the educational curriculum, and more recently for funding.

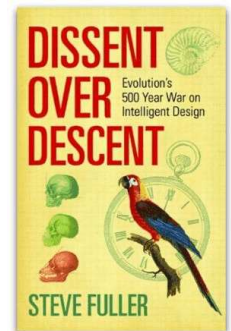
Fuller is knowledgeable both about scientific and religious debates. He moves allusively but persuasively through a complex intellectual and cultural history.

The heart of his argument is that Darwinian evolution, although accepted as orthodoxy, is a shaky theory, and that power, not reason, lies behind the exclusion of intelligent design from the science curriculum.

He claims that scientific enterprises grew out of religious belief. Many fathers of modern science, like Linnaeus and Mendel and Newton, wanted in their science to define the relationship between God and the natural world. In particular, they wanted to explore the design of the universe. They assumed that reality is intelligible and coherent, and that in understanding it through science we also know something of God's design.

Because Darwin's principle of natural selection seemed to undermine the claims of scientific reason, it was criticised as strongly by philosophers like John Stuart Mill and by Darwin's fellow scientists as it was by bishops. If the human world was explained by chance phenomena, the mind and its capacity to reason, and presumably its belief in the intelligibility of nature, were also simply chance developments.

In fact, Fuller argues, proponents of evolution follow Darwin by importing into their



theories the ghost of design. They assume that the world today is the culmination of evolutionary development, and so measure natural history by reference to this future stage.

The logical difficulties of evolutionary theory, too, are concealed by neo-Darwinian thought, which brings together the two strands of microbiology and population studies. The study of genetics and of fossils each have distinctive canons of evidence which are inconsistent, and make theories of evolutionary development highly speculative.

In one of his more provocative chapters, Fuller compares Darwinian theory to astrology. Astrology assumed that the universe is a rational and complete entity which can be understood mathematically. Its notion of celestial harmonies sparked discoveries in many fields of science, such as algebra and astronomy. It interested many scientists, including Isaac Newton.

Eventually the theory toppled over, leaving alive the areas of study it provoked. Fuller sees this as a warning for evolutionary theory.

Fuller's conclusions follow reasonably from his arguments. He claims that teleology in the natural world is worth exploring and should not be excluded on scientific grounds. He argues too that human beings, like God, have a part in designing the world. He wants the theory of evolution to be proposed in a way that shows awareness of its limitations and of its complex history.

Fuller's book will leave any open-minded reader with an invitation to revisit apparently settled questions. He calls into question the neat distinction between science that deals with how the world came to be the way it is, and religion or philosophy that deal with ultimate questions. In this view God is an answer only to ultimate questions. Fuller, however, argues persuasively that God as designer may be needed to underpin scientific evidence.

I am not finally persuaded by his argument. The intelligibility of science cannot be established by scientific reasoning, but must come from outside it. But whether a scientific theory of beginnings itself demands a concept of design remains open for discussion.

I was intrigued by the kind of God which Fuller associates with intelligent design. It is a generic designer-God consistent with the monotheistic religions. This God also underpins the intelligibility of the world and human intelligence that are necessary for science.

I'm not sure how large a gain it will be for religion or for churches to import that kind of God. It raises all the difficulties of any theistic understanding, particularly those posed by the existence of evil. But it offers few of the more persuasive and attractive features of the God of the Scriptures — a God of love whose relationship to the world is expressed in gift more than in predictability.

Fuller develops in an interesting way the understanding of humanity as made in the image of God. He develops creatively a hint in St Augustine's writing to argue that the image

consists in creative power. Like God, human beings are creators who give shape to the way the world will develop.

The idea is attractive in general, but horrifying in its implications. It is bad enough to contemplate the mess that financiers, eugenicists and emperors make of the world, without having to give them divine warrant for their Promethean antics.

The tale of the wealthy bludger

SPIRITUALITY

Anne Schmid



We do not blame the poor for being poor, or suggest that it is because they are lazy or incapable of earning a living. Likewise, is it altogether hard work and enterprise that has made the wealthy rich? Could there be bludgers among the wealthy?

Not many of us have the stamina to look privilege squarely in the face. We have created an economy where we all feel vulnerable. We are familiar with the injustices we personally have to deal with and we feel threatened to even acknowledge the wider picture of disadvantage, let alone do anything about it.

There is a biblical story in which a rich young man chooses to maintain his material wealth rather than give it up to follow Jesus. The tough message is not so much that he loved his wealth and refused to share it. Rather it refers to the problems surrounding his inherited wealth.

In Jesus' time the rich were the people who had the power to manipulate the political and religious structures. They would take over your lands when circumstances forced you into debt.

So it was not just his wealth that was out of kilter but the way he obtained it. Gospel teaching often avoids that lesson, and instead goes for the soft option, citing the story as an injunction to make tax exempt donations to the charity of our choice.

We are all familiar with the concept of affluenza, the 'consumerist mentality' as posited by Clive Hamilton. The economic situation that has unfolded in recent weeks shows how vulnerable even the wealthy are to the nature of the economy.

To say people are driven by greed is not the whole picture. When there is such an ever-widening discrepancy between rich and poor, no one feels secure. Everyone feels as though they are holding on to their way of life by a mere thread.

So it is fear as much as greed that propels people into consumerism. Greed is a product of the vast differences in wealth, and not necessarily a major cause.

Think what would happen if we lavished attention on disadvantaged areas. If we demanded better schools and facilities from the government. If we put church resources into these areas. We all know the consequences. With better livability more people would be enticed to live in these areas, thus pushing up real estate prices and simply forcing the poor onto another forgotten post code. Such are some of the challenges before us.

The Federal Government is conducting an inquiry into our taxation system. All submissions are to be sent in by 17 October. We all have a responsibility to see what is happening to our taxes. It should be obvious that present taxation favours the wealthy. Taxation has failed to relieve poverty or to lessen the gap between rich and poor. Taxation is now failing to adequately fund community services such as education and health.

Whatever taxes the wealthy pay, they receive back, by and large. Taxation spent on schools, roads, security, communication and facilities all increase land values. Rising land values benefit property owners, and in turn hurt people who have to pay higher rents or who are looking to buy a home.

We all pay our taxes, yet those who have large investments in growth areas where our taxes are spent reap untold benefits. Winners are grinners and this tax grab is made to look so ethical that few of us realise there is a strong body of evidence which disputes the ethics of wealth accumulation via private land acquisition at the expense of the community.

Whatever we want to say about the present debt situation it has been brought about because people were working on the assumption that debt would be paid by ever rising land prices. Building a just society requires more than wealth distribution at the final stage.

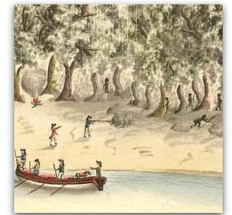
Reflections of one who came to stay

TELEVISION

Brian McCoy

Who are the First Australians? We can identify them under various titles: the Indigenous People, the Original People, the First Nation of this land.

In Australia we have preferred to use the word 'Aboriginal', those who are 'from the beginning'. They offer a continuity of culture and memory longer than any other human group on our planet.



There is, of course, another group we might also describe as 'first' Australians. These are the early convicts, settlers and colonisers of this country. They were the ones who engaged the Aboriginal peoples of this land. Their efforts significantly shaped the legacy of a relationship that has needed much reconciliation and an apology. They were instrumental in forging what we can take for granted, often without much reflection, about being Australian.

The SBS program *First Australians* takes us back to some of those early contact places and relationships. It offers striking photographic images of those people, now seen through further historical evidence and a prism of current Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives.

We hear the names of significant leaders such as Bennelong and Pemulwuy and the description of key events as both Aboriginal people and colonisers struggled to understand and relate with one another at that time.

The State of Victoria is a good example. As William Barak and Simon Wonga sought to find some land where the Wurundjeri people could settle, Government and Protection Board forces denied, avoided and procrastinated. Despite the support of Christian missionaries such as John and Mary Green, and despite Victoria being incredibly wealthy at that time, the Aboriginal voice and the critical needs of a diminishing and suffering people struggled to be heard.

As Professor Marcia Langton reminds the viewer, this is a particularly shameful period of Victoria's history. The neglect and rejection of the Wurundjeri people, particularly around their desire to hold a small piece of land at Corranderk (near present day Healesville), remains an important founding story for all Victorians.

Sadly, the experience of the Wurundjeri was repeated in many other places across Australia, sometimes the result of some very nasty people, sometimes simply the accumulation of ignorance, frustration and greed. There were also the singularly inspiring and prophetic.

I do not consider myself as an Aboriginal person, nor will I ever be able to claim the honour

of such an origin. However, this TV program reminded me that my history is intimately bound up with the history of the first people of this land.

It is their ancient life that my ancestors once engaged, and I am a descendant of that history of engagement. I cannot avoid, nor do I wish to, a history and relationship that reminds me of where I was born and where I belong, but also the story of an ancient land that travels way back, far beyond those early contacts.

This is my history. To accept it as my own I need to acknowledge its messy, sometimes bloody, largely fragile moments. The program *First Australians* offers me this opportunity.

As with much of our later post-settler history, relationships and communication between the First Australians and others were often poorly and carelessly valued. The impact of dislocation, disease and destruction lay heavily upon those who lived on the Aboriginal front-line. Some remarkable people arose to speak, protest and offer a hand of friendship. More often, the onslaught and priorities of colonial interests took precedence.

Those of us who are the descendents 'of those who came to stay' can be tempted to see our ancestral origins in other places and foreign lands. However, after seeing this program, I am confirmed in my preference for another way. While the majority of our population does not share the identity of First Australians we owe the benefits of our present lives to the land that was, and continues to be, theirs.

Our history and relationship has been and will remain closely intertwined and interconnected. The sadder and messier elements of that relationship will always remain part of who we are, as the moments of communication and friendship will always offer hope as to who we wish to be, as Australians.

While the program *First Australians* challenges, confronts and even causes me to feel shame, it also invites me into further insight and desire to be more fully and honestly Australian.

Episode one of the seven-part documentary series [First Australians](#) airs this Sunday night, 12 October, at 8.30 p.m. on SBS.

Noor's ambiguous curry

MARGARET DOOLEY AWARD

Cara Munro



Noor

This morning, with thanks to the Australian Cricket Team, morale seems particularly high in Michael's Care Home, New Delhi. The staff and clients of the AIDS hospice and mini hospital, squash up on the old cast iron beds of the main ward and watch Australia (32 for 3) squirm live on TV.

Between overs, one of the care workers disentangles himself from the jubilant add break highlights recap, and bounds up to me with a piece of paper in his hand. The paper, though of creamy, freshly minted quality, is already softening along the fold, a sign of being read and re-read many times over.

We stand next to the bed of Noor, the patient who I came today to visit, and share the contents of the page. On this day of victory, its contents make me cry.

Before that though, let me tell you about Noor.

Noor is about 45. Tall. Muscled.

My earliest memory of Noor is in the kitchen of 'Sahara', the heroin rehabilitation centre to which Michael's Care Home is attached. Long hair in a ponytail, white singlet with sweat crescents under the arms. Hoisting kilo upon kilo of rice or hovering above the perpetual dhal pot, bini (local cigarette) smoke trailing from his lips as he tossed in onions. A tomato.

He ran a slick kitchen. Vital, sunny-windowed place. The sort of kitchen you feel drawn to. I remember leaning against the bench top, sipping water and listening to *Phantom of The Opera* on his radio in one ear and instalments from his 15 year saga with the Afghani Embassy in the other. Noor was an Albanian refugee, somehow made it through Afghanistan to India where he wound up in heroin rehab.

Despite the smallness of the Sahara kitchen, Noor never shooed me away. He churned out three meals a day for all present at mealtime, the aroma of his cooking as reliable as the sun.

Brown and ambiguous, we made jokes about 'The Noor Curry' then.

The details of how Noor went from staff member at the men's rehab centre to patient at Michael's Care Home are foggy. It happened around Christmas time. Alcohol was involved. A fall. Brain haemorrhage. Emergency surgery.

Now a piece of his skull is missing and a thick line of cable stitching closes the place where his brain was exposed. His long black hair is shorn and the jagged greying crop makes him

look vulnerable as a lamb. Occasionally his eyes respond to words.

The care workers have been trying to help him walk. At night he sits up and mutters a little in his first language. The rest of the time his hands are bandaged to the bed sides and he sleeps. They tell me he needs further surgery, but for now, rest and healing.

Michael's Care Home first came into being in 1998 to care for those marginalised by addiction and ostracised from society by HIV. Public hospitals in Delhi, were too scared to touch them. So were their families. So, rather than let people die on the path outside the emergency departments (as was happening) Michael's Care Home was born.

There still aren't many family visitors to Michael's Care Home. Blood relatives don't cook special convalescent cuisine or send cards.

But a care force has been formed to look after Noor.

Sporting tattoos and track marks and the signature Sahara combed hair and worn but washed clothes, they take turns at occupying the uncomfortable plastic chair at Noor's bedside, by day and night, anticipating his every need.

His meals are prepared by an ex-client of the rehab centre (now the hospice cook) and spoon fed to him by a team of young men (all ex-injecting drug users) who, having completed some or all of their own rehabilitation, have volunteered to be with Noor in his.

Noor, with no family to speak of in India, has someone with him 24 hours a day.

One of the volunteers, a handsome and talented soccer player (also, along with his brother, a refugee from Iran and witness to his own father's execution) sits with his patient by night. He speaks in Persian to Noor and translates what little anyone can offer in encouragement.

Another, one-time street child, shaves Noor with gentleness that cuts directly to the heart.

And still another, stands beside me this morning, bashfully holding a clean piece of paper on which his recently written letter of reference is printed.

We read together slowly.

'Mr. Satish, 27 years old has been working with us as a care worker from 2003—present. He is diligent, committed and his performance is satisfactory in every way ... We wish him every success in future undertakings ...'

It is signed by Sahara 's Director of Medicine.

His hard yards in heroin rehab and then as a volunteer care worker are coming to an end and he has applied for a job in a hospital outside Michael's Care Home. He plans to continue to live at Sahara and help out where he can around the hospice, caring for people such as Noor, but build a life and a career in the world outside also.

In mixed Hindi and English. 'I just like to care for people.'

I feel the heat of tears rising. Satish has never had a letter of reference before.

His job interview is at 10am tomorrow morning. No doubt he'll be sighted in a borrowed shirt and freshly pressed pants, reference in hand.

The Cricket score is Australia 155 for 5. A roar erupts throughout Michael's Care Home. Noor is sleeping.

'The world is full of suffering, it is also full of overcoming it.' —Hellen Keller

Debates a sham, no argument

POLITICS

David Rosen

More than 50 million Americans watched the first debates between John McCain and Barack Obama. This was more than the number of Americans who watched the opening night of the Beijing Olympics and speaks to the intense interest Americans have in the upcoming election.



However, the debates are a political sham. The presidential debates not only exclude legitimate third-party candidates, but are structured in a way to inhibit meaningful engagement between the candidates over the major issues of the presidential race.

Public debates among presidential contenders are a revered American institution. The great 1858 debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, which went on for hours, focused the nation's attention on the issue of slavery and the future of the union. Similarly, the debates between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon in 1960 initiated the era of TV presidential debates and focused on the future of Cold War America.

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan civic group, served as the sponsor of the debates between 1976 and 1987. It employed a five per cent rule of electoral support for a candidate to participate in the TV debate. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter faced John Anderson as a legitimate third-party candidate, and he refused to participate in the debates, contributing to Ronald Reagan's victory.

However, in 1987, the Democratic and Republican parties decided to seize control over the presidential debates. In the midst of the George Bush and Michael Dukakis campaigns, the leaders of America's two major political parties agreed on a new approach. They established the Commission of Presidential Debates (CPD), a private corporation, to organise and run the debates.

During the wake of the 1992 election, third-party candidate Ross Perot was polling 10 per cent popularity and forced his way into the debates, which led to Bill Clinton's victory over incumbent president Bush.

The two executives who currently run the CPD are both established Washington insiders and former chairs of the Republican and Democratic parties. Frank Fahrenkopf is the nation's leading gambling-industry lobbyist and Paul Kirk is a major pharmaceutical-industry lobbyist.

Surprising to many, the debates are not publicly-funded events. Like the Olympics, they are sponsored by major corporations, many with legislation pending before the US Congress.

According to the conservative *Washington Times*, 'the sponsors have already spent \$3.6 million on federal lobbying over the first six months of the year'. Among the leading sponsors this year are Anheuser-Busch Cos. (Budweiser beer), the International Bottled Water Association and Hewlett-Packard's Electronic Data Systems.

Since the '92 debate, the CPD has worked to limit both the third party option and the element of surprise from the debate format. They have operated through a series of secret agreements between the two parties which set the rules of debate. Continuing pressure by good-government groups and leading newspapers over the last 20 years, including this year, have not been successful in forcing the CPD to publicly disclose the rules.

The CPD determines who can participate and who will moderate the debate. It established a 15 percent third-party threshold for participation to avoid a situation like that in 1980 and 1992. Ralph Nader, a perennial third-party candidate, calls this 'a Catch-22 level of support that is almost impossible for any third-party candidate to reach without first getting in the debates'.

This year, questions are being raised about the different formats used in the presidential and the vice-presidential debates, with the VP debate structured with shorter exchanges to benefit the apparently inarticulate Republican candidate, Sarah Palin, and the shoot-from-the-hip loose-lipped Democrat, Joe Biden.

A growing number of Americans are dissatisfied with the way the current debates are run. Public opinion polls reveal that, for example, 55 per cent want Bob Barr, the libertarian candidate, and 45 per cent want Nader on the debate. Independent voters in particular want the third and fourth candidates to participate.

Equally important, a host of civic groups have come out against the secret agreements that structure the debates, including Open Debates, Common Cause, Judicial Watch, Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting and Rock the Debates.

One of the major proponents for change in the debate structure, George Farah, of Open Debates, argues that by 'denying voters access to critical information about our most important political forums, the Commission on Presidential Debates is more concerned with the partisan interests of the two major party candidates than the democratic interests of the voting public'.

While the '08 debates roll on as stylised television entertainments that drain the heat out of political conflict, Americans can only hope that in 2012 the presidential debates will be revived as truly spirited and democratic as they were with Lincoln and Douglas.

Gay 'justice' suits pragmatic pollies

POLITICS

Deborah Singerman



Gay and lesbian equality is one of those touchstone issues against which to measure a politician's moderate credentials. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, in last year's election campaign, promised to remove all discrimination concerning same-sex couples in 58 pieces of legislation since grown to 100.

Dr Brendan Nelson, in declaring the leadership of the Liberal party open to challenge, combined a tougher stance on climate change with a commitment to equality for same-sex couples in his bid to elicit votes.

Although he failed to retain his leadership of the Liberal Party, Nelson's commitment gave new leader Malcolm Turnbull the chance to renew his pledge to remove discrimination against same-sex couples. On a recent ABC1 *Q&A*, Turnbull reasserted that he is opposed to discrimination on the basis of sexuality.

His consistent opposition to such discrimination is not totally altruistic. He represents the cosmopolitan inner-Sydney seat of Wentworth, which has one of Australia's largest gay and lesbian populations. In September 2007, he wrote to his constituents: 'I have sought to address and overcome this (same-sex) discrimination. I pledge to continue to fight until justice is done.' His vote in the 2007 election increased by 1.34 per cent.

The bills introduced so far by the Rudd Government to remove this discrimination are dry. The human rights boundaries here are legal and economic, covering the payments and benefits you often take for granted until you realise you are not eligible for them. They do not attempt any redefinitions of marriage, which, from Turnbull as much as anyone else, has been given 'a special status' as an irrefutable union between a man and a woman.

July's Same-Sex Relationship (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws – Superannuation) [Bill](#) 2008 was [followed](#) in September by the Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws – General Law Reform) Bill 2008. This is based on the [recommendations](#) of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's 2007 report, Same-Sex: Same Entitlements.

The bill reforms 68 pieces of legislation to give same-sex couples and their children new entitlements and benefits in federal laws relating, for example, to taxation, Medicare, social security, veterans and defence benefits, and migration.

There has also been a bill that will give same-sex couples the right to object to giving evidence against each other and another to equalise access to the Family Court for property-related matters (previously same-sex couples had to use their state's Supreme Court)

as well as children-related matters during a relationship breakdown.

The Coalition, using its Senate majority, has referred the bills to Senate inquires. Dr Nelson and members of the Coalition right were unhappy with the category 'couple relationships', which covers married couples as well as opposite-sex and same-sex de facto couples. Instead, they want the bill to include interdependent couples as well. The Rudd Government, however, does not. It has become a major sticking point.

Interdependent was a politically acceptable name for a new visa category in the late 1980s when immigration regulations tightened and same-sex couples had to be incorporated into the formal immigration process. The interdependent visa nowadays is grouped within the partner visa, which includes spouses, prospective and de facto applications.

It is a term that can also be used to describe close friends or siblings who 'live together; and one or each of them provides the other with financial support; and ... with domestic support and personal care'. The gay and lesbian community argues that the term characterises same-sex couples wrongly as companions.

Most states either register same-sex couples or recognise cohabiting same-sex couples as de facto partners. This helps name, recognise and prove relationships. Even Graeme Innes, the Australian Human Rights Commissioner has said that criteria for proving an interdependent relationship are 'harder to satisfy' than those for a de facto relationship.

It also opens up financial quandaries such as the one quoted by the Coalition, of two elderly sisters each on a single pension earning less if classified as an interdependent couple. This, of course, will apply to same-sex couples as well when classified as a couple of any sort, but equality overrides any financial loss, and economic justice will mean becoming familiar with different approaches to tax payments and so on. There will be losses as well as gains.

The number crunching, in all honesty, cannot be done. With no official statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, data on same-sex couples and the cost of economic justice is unknown.

A Galaxy opinion poll last year [indicated](#) that 71 per cent of Australians supported economic justice for same-sex couples. Turnbull's ascension to leadership encouraged the Australian Coalition for Equality not only to congratulate, but also to [call upon](#) him 'to get on with the job of dragging his party into the 21st century'.

The *Sydney Star Observer* has [reported](#) that Shadow Attorney-General George Brandis, a moderate, is sensing a softening among Liberals who, while still pushing for recognition of the full range of interdependent relationships, may not block the current reforms if the interdependency model does not gain support. Attorney-General Robert McClelland has said he accepts Turnbull's claims of support for the removal of discrimination.

Economic justice for same-sex couples is a practical approach to ending legal and economic

discrimination and suits politicians such as Turnbull (and indeed Rudd) who prefer steady pragmatism to volatile ideology.

Inventing terror

POETRY

Brendan Ryan

Undertow

It's Anzac Day and the country is asleep.
Somebody has welded a magpie to a letter box.
It throws me, momentarily, as the small gatherings
in towns along the Western Plains.

A girl sitting in a computer class
asks what is the war on terror?
Wikipedia provides links to Bin Laden,
Al Qaeda, Bush, September 11,
yet there isn't a clear explanation.
The neutrality of the article is disputed.
Jean Duverney founded Cressy in 1837
This much can't be disputed. A display map
nailed to the outside of a toilet block wall
urges me to discover the Western Plains.
Bush's promise isn't as clear as 2001.
I remember the newspaper sub-headings —
'war on terror', each page apportioning blame,
every fridge around the country doing its bit.

Still, the Woody Yaloak inches between reeds.
Around a sweeping bend, stands of eucalypts
lean in.

After days of relentless newspaper saturation
it comes down to this — wreaths arrayed
around cenotaphs, a circle of men
nursing stubbies outside a fire-station,
flags half-mast front of weatherboard halls.
Modest ceremonies for the men who jumped
to enlist, to escape, their names chiselled into stone,
remnants of an attitude, a value.

The frame of an abandoned service station
a scattering of sheds, a converted school,
yet the paddocks were always a memory field —
Fighting Waterholes, Murdering Gully,
car wrecks piled up behind farmhouses,
Metricon homes plonked in treeless bogs.
The girl will invent something about terrorism.
It will become an attitude.

Real

Nothing is as real
as scraping squashed sultanas
from the kitchen's polished floorboards,
as picking up children's toys
with the radio on,
as returning lost bears to the collection
of soft toys and remembering the smell of babies,
as making plans to write
but realising nappy pants need to be soaked,
as diverting children's fights

while discovering more toys under the couch,
as being unable to shower, venture outside
hours slipping by like astronauts
floating off into space,
as giving your time to the dishes
your children's questions,
as listening to their imaginary friends
for intellectual stimulation,
as the unopened mail, smeared avocado on the floor,
as the sense there are other people living
beyond the finger marks on the glass sliding door,
your life advancing in the inches
you hadn't bargained for,
your glistening trail that sticks.

Grand Final Man

Arms outstretched, wavering
a misguided messiah who missed the finals
with a drop in form. It's his roar that gets me
as I try to outrun him across the bare patches of the oval,
be the first to clap the backs of my heroes
who smile, then walk away from me.

His voice comes from within the ground
no words, just an unstructured bellow
that unsettles you, unnerving as elation should be.

And yet, the same guttural cry I imagine
after the loss of a child,

a farm accident that is replayed each time
I see him — greying hair, more length in his eyes
a heaviness the town remembers.
It's the voice disbelief gives you —
human, discordant, life-changing
as the crowd after the siren
flooding the ground, car horns blaring.
This loping hulk of a man
clumsier than myself, defined
by the moments I return to
daring to let go, the man roaring to be boy.

Virtue regained amid market bloodshed

EDITORIAL

Andrew Hamilton

Sin and punishment always sell better than virtue and reward. More people read *Inferno* and *Paradise Lost* than *Paradiso* and *Paradise Regained*. Terror and pity, too, attend the doom that follows the fatal flaw, not the lucky escape.



Perhaps that is why the financial crisis and the attempts to resolve it have been received so sullenly. The sinners who have infested banks, finance companies and regulatory boards are evident. But because they have wired us to the explosives they placed in their systems, they and their kind stand to be rewarded by a scheme dreamed up by their fellow sinners. Less Shakespeare Act V than Schwarzenegger Act I.

The crowd, cheated of blood, understandably boos players and referees alike. Who wants to hear of virtue now?

But if the reason why the financial markets collapsed was a culture of greed, it may be helpful to ask what a culture of virtue might look like.

Systematic greed and evasion of responsibility destroy the trust that is the condition for the market to operate. The corrosion of trust was masked because bankers, financiers, economists, regulators and ordinary people assumed greed was good and asked only technical questions about how the markets could continue to reward it.

Now that the naked Emperor of the Market has frozen up, we can ask the deeper cultural and ethical questions about how he might be clothed warmly in trust.

Trust is built and maintained in a culture and not made by technical adjustment to financial instruments. That is to say trust depends on relationships. When we are confident people are committed to a worthwhile enterprise, that they are faithful in their relationships to each other and to those for whom they work, and have a proper sense of priorities, we trust them. When we believe these values are generally shared by the participants, we shall trust the markets.

It may seem old-fashioned and purely homiletic to speak of worthwhile enterprises. But there is a simple test. If, after we describe in simple English what we do, our audience laughs or looks at us as if we had contracted moral leprosy, our enterprise is probably not worthwhile. Worthwhile enterprises benefit people by providing them with goods or services that enhance their lives. To be committed to an enterprise means focusing on the quality of what we do and make. We are in it for the long haul, not for short-term profit.

By these criteria banks that lend to people engaged in worthwhile enterprises may be

trusted. If they lend imprudently or exploitatively because they are focused on short-term profit, they corrode trust. Merchant banks which load companies with debt and themselves with massive profit, poison the culture.

A culture of trust also grows when we recognise that in an enterprise there is symmetry between its internal and external relationships. We easily recognise the opposite. When a bank, for example, boasts of the quality of its attention to its clients but forces its managers to grade their employees in public and to list all their defects, it reveals a basic lack of respect for people. This disrespect will inevitably poison both its relationship with its clients and the enduring prudence with which it is called to steward its resources.

Confidence also grows when we see that those responsible for an enterprise have a balanced view of the relationships that contribute to its welfare. If they develop the enterprise in a way that respects the welfare of employees, shareholders, clients and suppliers, we see them as trustworthy. If they see only the short-term profits of executives or shareholders as important, confidence will collapse.

These conditions for building trust suggest why enormous salaries paid to executives are destructive. They are a powerful symbol. They indicate that the welfare of the enterprise has been subordinated to greed, that there is no symmetry, no respect, in the relationships that form the enterprise.

Financial markets need a culture of trust to thrive. The values that build confidence must be shared by those who compose it. Given the strength of the culture of greed in the market, cultural change would need a miracle. The narrow technical training of most executives and financial journalists means that they never look at the large human questions that lie beneath the figures.

Given that virtue is defenceless against its enemies, we should insist that the market be regulated so that greed is at least restrained. We should also cultivate a larger view of the human comedy by balancing our study of the financial pages with a leisurely reading of Dante's *Inferno* and *Paradiso*.

Blue mood

NON-FICTION

Gillian Bouras



Humans cling to the illusion of control, to the notion that we are masters of our fates and captains of our souls, but when that veil of illusion tears, as it so often does, the results are often disastrous to our emotional and mental wellbeing.

I consider myself a suitable case for treatment: apart from anything else, my original family has a demonstrated genetic tendency towards marked mood disorder. I am not alone, of course: one in three of the general population has suffered, or will suffer, an episode of what used to be called nervous breakdown.

My sister and our first cousin suicided after years of undiagnosed suffering, undiagnosed largely because of family fear of stigma, which exists because 'normal' members of society are terrified of mental illness, and of its threat to order.

Yet mental illness has always been with us, as the ancient Greek tragedies prove. Hippocrates' theory of the four humours, particularly the part of it that attaches melancholia to an excess of black bile, has remained significant throughout the centuries, as has his view that what is needed in the human psyche is isonomia, a balance: none of the four humours should dominate.

Later a supernatural explanation was advanced: Christ cast out the demons from the afflicted. The demonic explanation of mental illness persisted for centuries, during which time the clergy were the equivalent of psychotherapists.

In Greek villages they still are. In the Peloponnesian village where I live difference of any sort is immediately suspect, and the false self is rigorously cultivated. Mental illness is regarded with fear and loathing, and most villagers, when not denying its existence, blame its incidence on the Evil Eye.

A relevant anecdote. A handsome young shepherd named Yianni was going about his business when he sustained a severe shock: another villager, an older man, had hanged himself from the branch of an olive tree. Yianni cut the body down, but never recovered from the experience.

I envisaged assistance from doctors, counsellors and anti-depressants, but Yianni's family thought otherwise. Church and priests were the answer. Unfortunately, this solution has not worked: Yianni's health, both physical and mental, is very precarious, and his marriage broke down long ago. The damage that stigma can do.

One weapon against stigma is knowledge. In 1963 nobody knew much. Mental health was a given, so people rarely asked what recipe/circumstance/magic wand was a guarantee of what is now viewed as a fragile state of wellbeing.

There is, after all, a disturbingly fine line separating those who cope with their pain and those who cannot. It was in 1963 that my sister, at 17 a star in every way, had her breakdown. She never recovered. Doctors too numerous to mention advanced their own theories. My own bitter reflection is What does it matter now?

What matters is the trying: the heartfelt attempt to treat such desperate unhappiness, to recognise symptoms and to nip them in the bud, if possible. It is also essential to acknowledge the dignity in difference, to accept the fact that some people will never conform to society's expectations, will never be content to have a so-called conventional life.

There are multiple ways of living, and no precise moment at which mental illness starts. What is needed is the greatest possible awareness of contributing factors. Mental health and illness are very complex issues, and parents have a weighty responsibility to build resilience in their children.

This is best encouraged via honest communication and the fostering of creativity. Creativity can be a weapon for life, enabling us to live doubly, in providing us both with escape into alternative worlds and solutions to problems in the mundane everyday one.

A ruling passion is at least some protection against the dreadful sense of futility that is a feature of mental illness. An active social life also protects, which is one reason an extended family is important in traditional societies.

Parents and friends also need to recognise warning signs without becoming overprotective. Any change in behaviour, any prolonged withdrawal from usual company, any impulsive acts such as binge drinking and eating, extravagant and irrational spending, and/or sexual promiscuity, should be monitored very carefully, and professional help sought.

Intending suicides often seem almost recklessly happy, for the decision has been made. They also often start giving people presents.

Before this stage has been reached, however, the voice can be another signal: it is often very flat and monotonous, reflecting the terrible hollowness that the sufferer lives with. Such severe stress affects the vocal cords, experts have found.

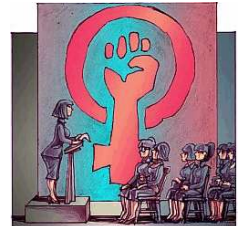
Honesty, courage and open communication are absolutely essential for mental health to be achieved and maintained. There must be an end to the fear that leads to so much distress being swept under a metaphorical carpet.

On toffee and feminism

Non-fiction

Ruby Murray

It's a bitterly cold Sunday evening. The foyer of the Capitol Theatre swarms with women. We all clutch at our tickets, printed with 'From Freidan to Feministas', with gloved hands. In the toilets, we jiggle up and down, waiting patiently for all the other feminists to finish peeing.



Once in the theatre, awe-struck under Walter Burley Griffin's honeycomb ceiling, my friend, my mother and I sit and suck toffees, waiting for the panel to start.

I look at all the other women filing in, taking their seats. Everyone seems to be wearing dark colours, the aisles awash with charcoal grey and navy blue, various shades of black, with here and there a dash of red lipstick.

The panel goes for an hour and a half. Monica Dux speaks first, about how feminism is in trouble, about her view of what she calls the great feminist denial.

Then Catharine Lumby gets up and disagrees, sort of, with everyone and everything, only tries to make it look like she's not. Intimates that we, the audience, are all white middle-class women, and that the media is obsessed with the death of feminism, and that we should all get over ourselves. Can I have another toffee? I ask my friend. Not yet, she says. You just had one, if you have another one now it'll give you a stomach-ache.

Emily Maguire's next: pretty and bouncy and supposedly representing the face of young feminists everywhere. I think of the Sylvia Plath poem about mushrooms, and I can't quite make the two feelings fit together, this upbeatness on stage and the quiet march of the fungi.

Emily Maguire says that young feminists are everywhere. My g-string's giving me a wedgie, and I shift uncomfortably. Can I have another toffee, now? I ask my friend.

In the applause at the end of Emily Maguire's talk I scramble to get the toffee's wrapper off so no one will hear the noise.

Susan Maushart leans against the podium and says that when she was in Sunday school in the States one of the nuns told her that all men were brothers, and that she'd put up her hand and asked if that meant that all women were sisters.

The nun had thought about it and had said that yes, she guessed that was what it meant, and Susan Maushart says that she was very excited by this and that she went home and called her best friend and told her that they were sisters. That we all were.

The toffees have given me a stomach-ache. In the question time, the panellists try very hard not to disagree with each other. You can see the strain of it on their faces.

At one point, they all seem to say that it doesn't matter what you call it, this feminism thing, as long as you live it. If the feminism tag alienates men, then don't use it, they say. Who cares if you pole dance, another one says. This isn't the point, they keep saying. We're missing the point.

Afterwards, when we walk out of the theatre, there is a huge line of people waiting to get into the HiFi Bar just a few doors down. Some of the girls in the line are going blue with the cold, their bare legs puckered like chicken skin, their toes white in their blue haviana thongs. Others totter on spiky heels they've never learnt to walk in.

We walk back to the car, my mother, my friend and I.

What did you think? My mother asks me.

I thought they all tried to agree with each other, I say. It was unnatural.

It's a panel, not a debate. They don't want to disagree, says my mother. That's not the point of it. If they disagreed then the press would be all over it, and it would be portrayed as just another feminist catfight.

The panel is part of a series of panels all called 'Big Ideas', I say. They shouldn't call it 'Big Ideas' if the point is just to talk about how we all agree when we don't. If that's what the panel's meant to do, then they should call it 'Narrow Interpretation of Big Ideas'.

My friend says that I'm being obnoxious.

And maybe I am. I don't know exactly what makes me uncomfortable.

Later, thinking back to that evening, all I see is a shifting mass of navy blue and charcoal under a huge honeycombed ceiling, and the puckered skin and tottering heels of the girls outside on Swanston Street.

This is the feminist paradox. We must fight for the right to choice, the right of women to have access to, and to make, choices that we don't think they should necessarily make. But at the same time, we have to maintain our own ethical integrity.

Feminism isn't about agreeing. This paradox presents us with a terrible bind. You have a right to go and pole dance, we must say. Shimmy away. And in the next breath, we have to ask why we're doing it. We have to critique the meanings and power relations behind our choices and the choices of others. We have to cut out our own legs, in their Birkenstocks or their stiletto spikes, again and again.

Just as free speech requires that we defend the rights of people to say things with which we disagree, so feminism requires that we defend the rights of women to make choices with

which we disagree.

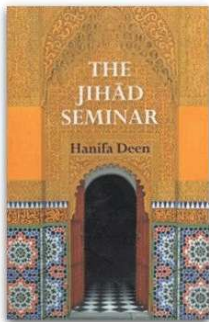
And so it is that feminism's a project that will never be finished. It will always argue, it will always fight, and so it should. If the word 'feminism' gives some people a stomach-ache, I don't particularly mind. Toffee, for example, gives me a stomach-ache sometimes, and I still like it. Paradoxes, after all, can be hard to digest. But it doesn't mean they're not good for you, and it doesn't mean they're not right.

'Jihad' evangelicals on trial

BOOK FORUM

Saeed Saeed

Deen, Hanifa: *The Jihad Seminar*. Crawley, University of Western Australia Press, 2008. RRP \$29.95. ISBN 9781921401121



In January 2002, the Victorian Labor Government passed its Racial and Religious Tolerance Act prohibiting the vilification of persons on the grounds of race and religious beliefs.

Mainstream religious groups and human rights activists applauded the move, viewing the legislation as providing an extra layer of legal protection from an increasingly intolerant society.

Free speech warriors and evangelical groups organised rallies and dedicated many inches of column space to opposing the laws, citing them as an attack on freedom of speech and censorship of deeply held religious beliefs.

It took a year for the first case to arrive at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) — the state's peak Muslim body — accused the Christian evangelical group Catch the Fire Ministries of religious vilification after a series of lectures about Islam by Pastors Daniel Scott and Daniel Nalliah offended Muslim converts in the audience.

Sensing a good yarn, self-proclaimed 'literary sleuth' Hanifa Deen attended the tribunal sessions to observe what she expected would be a cut and dried three-day hearing. Like most legal and media observers, Deen didn't expect the case to drag on for five years and reach as high as the Supreme Court.

Full points then must be given for Deen's patience and tenacity. The result is a book far removed from the lazy Islam versus Christianity narrative pushed by the mainstream press. Instead, *The Jihad Seminar* frames the story as being 'convert driven' with new Muslims on one side and born again Christians on the other.

Deen was granted full access to the Muslim complainants while she managed to land a few key interviews with Scott and supporters of Catch the Fire.

She states both sides believed they had no choice but to see this matter through to the courts. For Muslims the seminar was viewed as blatantly offensive and they finally had legal armoury to defend themselves. Catch the Fire, who view interfaith activities with disdain, viewed the case as an attempt to muzzle their preaching.

Deen made the right decision to eschew the case's turgid legalities in favour of its broader

implications. This gave her the licence to step out of the court room and discuss wider issues of racial and religious tolerance, from the global rise of Islamaphobia and John Howard's identity politics to the disturbing scenes of the Cronulla Riots.

Deen is a feisty presence throughout the book. Her persistent research uncovered some of the hidden motives behind the case. She reveals it was more than just a simple dispute. Instead it was used by both sides to pursue their political means.

The ICV was supported by a large cohort of religious groups who viewed this case as an important test of how this legislation could be practically applied. At the same time the little known Catch the Fire Ministries captured the imagination of cashed up American evangelical groups, whose donations helped finance the expensive case.

Deen is a gifted writer whose lucid prose helps makes sense of some of the convoluted legal manoeuvres of the case. A secular Muslim with a love for Monty Python, she never hides her irreverent side. When it works it reveals some cutting descriptions. She describes Pastor Nalliah's religious history as a 'job application for the after life', and the Muslim imams she met as 'usually nice men, but they are now what I would call witness box material'.

When it doesn't work she comes across as condescending to the deeply religious converts she interviews. This is unfortunate as their true stories are seldom told.

Nonetheless, *The Jihad Seminar* is a timely book on a misunderstood legislation, devout religions and the corrosive impact that racism and religious vilification continue to play in Australian society.

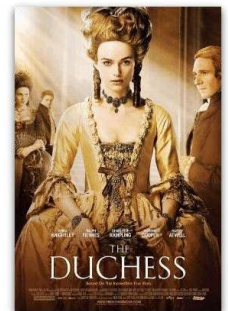
Dull Duchess

FILM FORUM

Tim Kroenert

***The Duchess*: 109 minutes. Rated: M. Director: Saul Dibb. Starring: Keira Knightley, Ralph Fiennes, Dominic Cooper, Hayley Atwell**

Director and co-writer Saul Dibb takes as his inspiration Georgiana, the real-life 18th century Duchess of Devonshire, and envisages her as a kind of super-celebrity of her day. Her extravagant lifestyle and gregarious public persona seem tailor-made to receive the adulation of a British society ostensibly in awe of its aristocracy.



Georgiana (known to her intimates as G) is an independent woman (in spirit at least) living in a man's world. Coupled with her 'famous for being famous' status, this makes her story ripe for thematic updating. A more substantial script, or a more substantial lead actress, might have evoked the subordinate role of women in contemporary Western politics, or slyly spoofed the ever-present cult of celebrity.

Instead we get a repeat of a familiar refrain from modern period dramas — of a woman having her spirit stifled by the patriarchal oppression of her society — and a lead actor (Knightley) who fails to make more than a surface impression as the put-upon Duchess.

Knightley's offbeat beauty and natural poise mean she looks right at home in elegant period costume and oversized wigs. But her performance lacks substance and charisma. Georgiana is a natural wit who takes a keen interest in politics. But Knightley is a movie star for whom it seems the film is a mere vehicle.

She does elicit sympathy for G's subjugation. G marries the Duke (Fiennes) as a teenager, infatuated with the prospect of fairytale romance. But to the Duke, the marriage is a means to an end. On their wedding night, he disrobes her coolly, methodically, as if he is unpacking a new appliance.

He yearns for a male heir, and it's towards this purpose alone that he took her as his bride.

Over the ensuing years, as G bears several daughters but no son, the Duke becomes increasingly cold and oppressive towards her. He stifles her few prospects of true happiness, including a friendship with outgoing divorcee Bess Foster (Atwell) and her affair with charismatic young politician (and future prime minister) Charles Grey (Cooper), the latter, despite the Duke's own conspicuous womanising.

It's pedestrian, Hallmark Channel fodder more than anything else.

Fiennes steals the show from Knightley. With his waistcoat buttoned tight across his dukely

paunch, he is by turns comically aloof, agonisingly withdrawn and outright explosive. The Duke is a particularly odious and pitiable villain, and Fiennes' relative stillness, compared with Knightley's extroversion, suggests that while still waters run deep, the reverse is also true.

Reality check for antisocial Church

RELIGION

Bruce Duncan



World Youth Day proved a powerful experience for many, and the happy informality of the tens of thousands of young people became infectious in Sydney, irrespective of people's religious beliefs.

Rock stars would have envied Pope Benedict's ability to draw such vast crowds, but many church personnel were perturbed that a great opportunity was lost to demonstrate how intrinsic to the Gospel was concern for peacemaking, social justice and ecological sustainability.

The irony is that many younger people are passionately concerned about such matters, as Bono and the rock group U2 can attest with their mobilising of younger generations to the cause of the Millennium Development Goals.

Yet the main World Youth Day events failed to highlight a key biblical message: that God will judge us on how we have responded to the needs of the poor, sick, hungry and imprisoned. Jesus meant to shock his hearers. Piety is worthless in God's eyes if it ignores one's social responsibility, since God identifies intensely with people in distress.

World Youth Day offered an unprecedented chance to demonstrate how directly religious beliefs bear on urgent social issues such as social equity, world hunger, the energy crisis, global warming, the MDGs and peacemaking.

True, Benedict congratulated the new Australian government for its apologies for injustices against our indigenous peoples and commended Australia's role in international peacekeeping.

Later he added that 'non-violence, sustainable development, justice and peace, and care for our environment are of vital importance for humanity'.

But these crucial themes then vanished from centre stage, though many smaller events on the margins dealt with such issues, especially those organised by religious orders or social agencies like Caritas or Vinnies.

The neglect of the Church's own social justice teaching was doubly puzzling, since Benedict has spoken often on world poverty, climate change, the food crisis in many countries, along with threats from nuclear weapons, cluster bombs and the flourishing arms trade.

Benedict frequently discusses these issues with world leaders. To French President Sarkozy on 12 September he highlighted the role of religion in helping address social justice, protecting the environment and human rights, and peace and reconciliation among peoples.

He wrote to British Prime Minister Gordon Brown in June, urging renewed determination to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. And at his meeting with President George W. Bush on 13 June, the Pope raised the topics of the food crisis, the Millennium Development Goals, globalisation and the recent economic setbacks, along with threats to peace.

Benedict in April renewed calls to cut military spending — currently at \$US1.3 trillion a year, nearly half of that from the United States — and direct the savings into economic development. Even five per cent of this amount could help lift hundreds of millions out of hunger and poverty.

Before the UN General Assembly meeting of 25 September, Benedict again appealed for urgent support for the Millennium Development Goals. The head of Caritas International, Cardinal Rodriguez, welcomed the additional \$US16 billion pledged, but contrasted this with efforts to put \$US700 billion to avert the US financial crisis. More substantial funding for the Millennium Development Goals would help save the lives of up to 10 million children a year.

The side-lining of the social dimension at World Youth Day reflects a growing tension in the churches, between those focused on internal church matters and piety, and those engaged with wider issues of social wellbeing.

There is widespread concern in Christian circles that some religious leaders are not doing enough to promote their churches' social teaching. One has only to consider the Australian Catholic bishops' lacklustre response to the long debate over the invasion of Iraq. Some bishops spoke strongly, but others remained silent or made token gestures. In some large dioceses, justice and peace commissions remain tiny or have been down-sized.

Nevertheless, concern for peace and justice remains normative for Christians. On Social Justice Sunday on 28 September the National Council of Churches distributed a statement, [Faces of poverty](#) , and the Catholic bishops, [A rich young nation: the challenge of affluence and poverty in Australia](#) .

Australians of many beliefs will be interested in Pope Benedict's forthcoming document on globalisation. He will presumably stress that concern for social justice is an essential part of the Church's mission, and must not be downplayed as if it were a secular rival to the Gospel.

Minorities stomped as India flirts with fascism

POLITICS

Irfan Yusuf

Conventional wisdom tells us democracies are inherently stable and that the realities of electoral politics are such that democratically elected leaders can never enforce extreme agendas. But how true is this? Can democracy ever be used in the service of extremism? Perhaps we might find some answers in the world's largest democracy.



India is famous for its economic miracle, its IT revolution and its colourful Bollywood culture. Australians are keen to do business with India, and many skilled migrants and overseas students from India are settling in Australia. The Rudd government even considered selling uranium to India, presuming its status as the world's biggest democracy makes its nuclear program less dangerous than that of Iran or Pakistan.

Yet the plight of India's religious minorities has generally been overlooked by Australian governments and commentators.

India's majority faith is Hinduism, an inherently pacifist and tolerant religion. Notwithstanding the caste system, Hindu societies have traditionally practised liturgical and doctrinal pluralism. Mohandis Gandhi's basic philosophy of *ahimsa* (or non-violence) was influenced by Hinduism, while his struggle against apartheid during his early years as a lawyer in South Africa was inspired by verses of the Koran dealing with jihad (or striving for justice).

Gandhi envisaged a truly civilised and democratic independent India which zealously protected its minorities. He fought both the British Raj and communal extremists who incited bloodshed between religious communities. His assassination occurred at the hands of extremists of his own Hindu faith. In recent decades, these forces have re-emerged in mainstream Indian politics.

The spirit of Gandhi's assassins was present in the various social, educational and political organisations linked to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which ruled India federally from 1998 until 2004 and which continues to be the ruling party in various Indian state legislatures.

In 2002, BJP activists in Gandhi's home state of Gujrat systematically murdered at least 2000 Muslim and Christian civilians and made 150,000 homeless. Police stood by and watched as these atrocities took place. State government workers carried lists of Muslim- and Christian-owned businesses and properties which were destroyed. The Gujrat Chief Minister, Narendra Modhi, praised the attackers. He remains Chief Minister.

In recent times, there has been much discussion of the precarious position faced by

Christians in Muslim-majority states such as Malaysia, Pakistan, Iraq and the Palestinian territories. Unfortunately, minority rights have become an issue of double standards. We rarely hear Australian Muslim religious bodies and lobbies talking about the plight of non-Muslim minorities in Muslim-majority states.

Meanwhile, many Australian Christian religious groups seem to only address persecution of Christians when used as a wedge to marginalise local Muslims. Allegedly conservative self-styled groups like the Christian Democratic Party and the Australian Christian Lobby often agitate on behalf of persecuted Christians in the Middle East (except when Israel is involved) while ignoring instances of Christian and Muslim minorities suffering together.

Hence the almost deafening silence over the events in Orissa and other Indian states, where activists of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a movement forming part of the BJP opposition, have terrorised Indian Catholic communities and institutions.

The VHP regards Catholicism as a foreign faith, despite its presence in India for at least a millenium. Catholic welfare groups are accused of pressuring lower caste Hindus to convert to Christianity. The majority of Catholics are either former Dalits (untouchables) or from indigenous tribal groups.

Recently, a senior VHP leader was murdered in the Eastern state of Orissa. Maoist rebels claimed responsibility. However, VHP leaders blamed Catholics. Over 40 churches and 11 other Christian institutions were destroyed by VHP supporters. One female missionary was burnt alive and dozens other Christians murdered. Tens of thousands of Christians continue to hide in jungles, hunted like animals by VHP thugs.

Yet the silence among Australian Christians about the suffering of India's Christian communities is as deafening as the silence of Australian Muslims towards Muslims in Darfur. Even politicians claiming to champion Australia's Judeo-Christian heritage are silent about the Orissa massacre.

There are 18 million Catholics in India, more than in Canada and England combined. Yet as Father Raymond de Souza lamented in a recent article for Canada's *National Post*, anti-Christian violence by VHP and BJP extremists 'cannot be checked if it is not even noticed'.

But in case we sit triumphantly on our laurels and imagine such a state of affairs never happening in the West, we should remember that the Holocaust ended only 60 years ago and mass-graves are still being dug up in parts of Bosnia.

Has the West learned its lesson on the dangers of democracies flirting with fascism? If recent election results in Austria and Switzerland are anything to go by, it seems not. Last October, a Swiss far-right party whose election posters featured white sheep kicking out black sheep gained a sizeable vote. Following recent elections, parties openly sympathising with Nazis could well form Austria's next government.

Selective indignation on human rights abuses compromises not only our faith but our very humanity. In democracies, electorates choose governments who reflect their own attitudes. Fascism doesn't cease to be fascism just because it gains control at the ballot box. Just ask the Catholics of Orissa.

Terror and the terrier

NON-FICTION

Colleen Schirmer



She was only small, but the fox terrier bared its teeth and growled menacingly at us. Its milk-swollen underbelly and protruding teats let us know it had a litter nearby. We kept a wary distance and spoke soothingly to the little mother. She lunged at our ankles, snapping and snarling. As we approached she backed away slowly, keeping up a barrage of barking and growling, her dark eyes blazing.

We were at the old farmhouse, revisiting the place where it had all happened.

I had been a teenager then and it had been spring. Now, as then, the wind gusted and howled, rattling the loose iron panels on the walls of the farm sheds. The iron flapped and creaked, metal scraping harshly against metal. Tall spring grasses whipped back and forth, the wind drying the moist stalks and leaves, the fragrance of the grass saturating the morning air.

I remembered hiding in the tall grass to escape my father. I remembered the same blasts of wind, the same smell of new growth. And my heart began to pound.

What had happened at this place, so long ago, had caused a lifetime of deep-seated fear and anger. They were years lived with an inability to understand or express turbulent emotions. Frozen years. And the last few years had been a journey through mental illness, ridicule and despair.

When I had sought help and understanding from my mother during these last years she did not want to hear me, did not want to know about it. But why should I have expected more from her?

During that spring so long ago my sister had heard my terrified screams coming from the woolshed, and she had pleaded with my mother to intervene. My sister knew what my father was doing to me. She could hear it was terrible and she knew it was wrong. She wanted my mother to help me.

My mother must have known what was taking place. She must have known it was wrong, but she pretended ignorance. She told my sister that I had to be punished for whatever it was that I had done wrong. That I deserved this punishment.

Recalling this fuelled my anger and made me determined not to let my mother and father defeat me. I was visiting this place to strip these old events of their power, to strip my father of his hold over me, and to come to terms with a mother who always put her own welfare first.

But observing the ferocity of the fox terrier's attack this morning was a bitter experience.

She fought bravely to protect her young — the maternal instinct strong. She had risked being hurt to keep her pups safe. Even a lowly creature like this farm dog instinctively and fearlessly protected her young.

What of the mother, my mother, who did not protect her young, the mother who protected herself? She had been found out and found wanting. She was no mother.

Despite this, I continued to call her my mother. However I remained angry with her — and always will. Anger can be destructive, but it has helped me. It has allowed others to know my pain and my hurt. The people I love have acknowledged my anger as righteous. They have shared my anger. They have shared my pain. This has changed my life profoundly. It has brought release — and with release has come peace.

As I watched my mother in her old age I realised she had lost more than I had. She had been exposed for who she truly was. And, as a result she had lost the love and affection of her children and grandchildren. She had lost their respect while I retained my integrity and my dignity. I had renewed health. And I had a loving family.

So when my mother lay dying I stroked her head. I reassured her and comforted her. I told her not to be afraid, that she would be safe on this last stage of her journey. She was beyond speech, but her eyes were those of a starving animal who had been fed a sustaining morsel.

I wept for the sadness of it all.

Opposition tips for 'green' Liberal leader

POLITICS

Tony Smith

When Malcolm Turnbull gained the Liberal Party leadership, the Australian media became rather excited. Given that surveys have revealed that half of all Australians think Turnbull to be arrogant and that the reaction among his own party was mixed, the media's heightened activity requires explanation. Perhaps a colleague's comment that Turnbull can be a bit of a volcano is a prediction of interesting times ahead.



Serious literature on Australian political leadership is somewhat limited. The focus has been pragmatic and biographical, concentrating on Heads of Government — Prime Ministers and Premiers — as successful examples. Works tend to be descriptive rather than analytical, and there is no essential handbook for aspiring leaders. While there is no template that Turnbull must fit, there are some broad expectations in the role.

Traditionally, there have been differences between the powers of Labor and Liberal leaders. The former, limited by an officially binding party policy platform and a ministry chosen by caucus, have been dubbed 'first among equals'. Liberals have exercised greater personal control over policy and in dispensing promotions.

Recently, successful Labor leaders have seized greater initiative while more scrutiny has been given the allegedly non-existent Liberal 'factions'. Turnbull's colleagues have their own ambitions, and their comments about Turnbull's personality, while more guarded, are not necessarily any friendlier than those of Labor opponents. Not all will wish him success.

The position of Opposition Leader is neither as complex nor demanding as that of Prime Minister but it is multi-faceted. For various reasons, the aspect of the role most emphasised is that of 'shadow prime minister'.

Most Australians know who the federal Opposition Leader is. They see him (no females so far) in the hot seat during parliamentary question time and fronting press conferences. When newly appointed Shadow Treasurer Julie Bishop [failed](#) to correctly name the level of interest rates, there was an implication that Turnbull had not chosen his shadow cabinet wisely.

The style of Australian politics owes much to Britain and America. From Westminster we inherit the 'in-out' winner-takes-all system so that Oppositions are starved of resources and influence over policy. From Washington we get a presidentialism that inflates the importance of party leaders.

Members of the press gallery devote great attention to Opposition Leaders in order to force the Prime Minister to take them seriously. This helps their own relevance but places us

permanently in election mode. So Turnbull's colleagues will expect him to show some gain over Prime Minister Rudd in the rough guide of opinion polls. While one [soaring poll](#) does not make a political spring, Turnbull seems to have produced the 'bounce' expected.

Governments are elected to govern and with the exception of one Prime Minister who often had his tongue in his cheek, they cannot blame their own policy failures on Opposition weakness. Most governments ask oppositions for cooperation, particularly in passing legislation, and few Opposition Leaders can seize initiative on policy.

Labor's Gough Whitlam was obviously a threat to a moribund Coalition and Liberal John Hewson showed some signs of making gains over economic policy. Interestingly Whitlam became Prime Minister while Hewson did not, possibly because during the 1993 election campaign, Hewson was over excited by media attention and seemed strident and threatening.

Turnbull must remember the adage that Oppositions do not win elections, Governments lose them. He will have noticed that the last two winners — Howard in 1996 and Rudd in 2007 — kept calm and allowed exhausted governments to thrash about and fail.

Turnbull's preference is to act boldly and set the agenda. He suggested a bipartisan approach to economic management. While an Opposition Leader has no authority to make such a demand and although parliament was not sitting, the media reported that Turnbull had placed pressure on the government. This invites Turnbull to the dangerous belief that operating by press release and seeking media approval is the path to success.

As Opposition Leader, Turnbull is constrained by few formal accountabilities but many informal ones. He can react to Government pronouncements and criticise them on almost any grounds he chooses, as long as they are consistent. Turnbull's predecessor Brendan Nelson, possibly failed to gain traction because he fell into the trap of seeming to oppose everything just for the sake of opposing.

Turnbull's problem is that if he lets himself become the issue, he will forfeit advantage of being able to react to policy and criticise.

When Prime Minister Hawke's grip on power seemed unassailable, a Liberal numbers man remarked that Opposition MPs should not be paid. Obviously, this would make them desperate to secure government. His colleagues were too comfortable and therefore too complacent.

The huge media attention being paid to Turnbull's personal wealth could cause his colleagues to wonder whether he is hungry enough for the top job. When another A-lister Andrew Peacock resigned as Liberal Leader, he rolled his eyes and said that he was not sure he ever really wanted the top job. It can be lonely at the top.

Influential Liberals from Melbourne probably had their doubts about Turnbull's Sydney-centric style reinforced by his failure to realise that the [Roosters](#) rugby league team do

not play AFL. A couple of New South Wales frontbenchers have their own ambitions.

The media have shown that they expect to control Turnbull's political agenda. Another kind of test will arrive when they become too personally intrusive. It is one thing to run stories about Turnbull's pets, but quite another to intrude on his family's privacy.

All political aspirants must decide whether the power is worth the personal cost. The next few months will tell whether Turnbull has really faced that decision. An Opposition Leader must be both able and willing to enter into a symbiotic relationship with the media. Malcolm Turnbull does not seem to suffer fools gladly, so whether he hungers for government enough to tolerate media intrusions remains to be seen.

The Rudd Government would be unwise to panic just yet. If there is a volcano in their vicinity, there is no guarantee that it threatens them.

Bits of poetry

POETRY

Shane McCauley

Spring Abstract

What if shadow
were to give birth
to shadow
and the rock
burst forth shoots
tendrils and the sky
become water
and the oceans dry
birds become fish
that fly and fire freeze
solidify and trees
descend into sand
salt taste sweet
coldness heat
without the magician's
electric hand
clay's heart might beat
but wouldn't birth
and death remain
but brothers
in defeat?

Bits of Poetry

(after Lafcadio Hearn)

1.

Children's delighted fingers
through a paper screen that's old —
but now look how the wind comes
to blow our hearts so cold.

2.

What point now the two
exquisite paper butterflies?
My wife now dead a year.

3.

I untie one small corner
of the mosquito-net
and the whole moon
enters.

4.

Rain heavy enough
on the hat I stole —
what of the scarecrow
left in the field?

5.

No longer unhappy
at my broken window —
oh scent of the plum-tree!

6.

Boundaries on maps
but here only flowers
and the oblivious sea.

7.

What tells me that my friend
lies here?

A wild dove's cry
and ascending butterfly.

Riverscape

What word for the water reed
broken tube drawn from mud
by the magnet sun? Or river's
ale-brown water that whispers
against the sand? Spring leaves
are green explosions frozen
arched to points symmetrical
as a ballerina's arms or clouds
framed in the painter's assessing
eye. The hills are slate and lilac
smoke hazed heat mirages already
rising. The river swallows shadow
under the bridge. A one-legged
gull wavers on its grassy ridge.

Barbarians in the blogosphere

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins



In an era dominated by personality, it's becoming more difficult for school debating coaches to maintain their advice that the most effective winning strategy is for their students to demolish the argument — rather than reputation — of their opponent.

The parliamentary performance of our political leaders hardly provides a good example. Last week, Labor focused on constructing an image of incoming shadow treasurer Julie Bishop as a plagiarist, and therefore dishonest and untrustworthy. Instead they could have easily mounted an argument to demonstrate convincingly that the Opposition's economic policy was in disarray.

The emerging setting for much debate on political and social issues is online, particularly the discussion associated with blogs and other topical publishing platforms. It is proving to be fertile ground for character assassination, more than quality argument.

George Megalogenis is a longtime political journalist with *The Australian* who also oversees the paper's Megonomics blog. Recently he [expressed](#) his dismay at the uncivil attitude of many of the bloggers who send their posts to him for moderation.

'What a significant minority of my bloggers do is begin their posts with an assumption that everyone who disagrees with them is a "moron" ...

'Beyond Mungo MacCallum and Hunter S. Thompson, there are very few writers in the political sphere that have ever done abuse as poetry. I love their work; I often yawn at some of yours — no disrespect; it's just how I see things.'

Megalogenis goes on to implore his bloggers to 'operate on a more humane footing', to 'talk to [their] fellow blogger as an equal, not as someone to belittle', for 'you cannot persuade a single person out there to change, or add to their world view by shouting at them'.

He participated in a [discussion](#) on the internet as the new (uncivil) Town Square on ABC Radio National's *Media Report* last week. Fellow panellist, former Australian Democrats leader turned blogger Andrew Bartlett compared the tendency for participants to 'shout slogans at each other' to what he had to endure when he was in the Senate. But in the end he was more optimistic:

'The battle to get a civil discussion place and an exchange of ideas is hard work, but it develops over time, and some blogs manage to achieve it.'

Online media outlets including *Eureka Street* know that publishing the comments of flame

throwers invariably draws a crowd, which is partly what they aim to do. Moreover the desire to follow the principles of free speech, and the sometimes naïve interest in giving everyone a fair go, can give oxygen to forces set on destroying reasoned discussion, and undermine the long term worth of the publications.

Debate points to refreshed post-Bush America

POLITICS

Tony Kevin

Saturday's presidential debate was fascinating to assess. Both candidates presented themselves with vigour, dignity and clarity, without resorting to gaffes, cheap jibes or innuendoes.

Although this first of three debates focused on foreign policy, the financial crisis dominated its first half. Obama focused on the realities in Main Street, with messages about the need for the state to provide universal basic health insurance and to create new industrial jobs by seriously restructuring for renewable energy. McCain added a plug for nuclear energy.

A debate over business taxes and tax breaks was eye-glazingly inconclusive. A more lively foreign policy debate centred on national security: the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and how to deal with Pakistan, Iran and Russia.

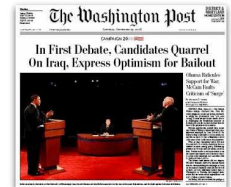
Concerned not to sound weak or indecisive, Obama came across as more soldierly than McCain on America's current wars. He labelled Iraq as a disaster, a damaging diversion from the priority of destroying Al Qaeda. McCain claimed that as a result of his favoured troop surge strategy in Iraq, this war was now going well.

Obama's powerful wrap-up stated that no US soldier ever died in vain who died obeying the lawful commands of his commander-in-chief the president, but that the latter's obligation was to take responsible decisions about when to take the country into war. This moment was a window into the pain of 4000 US soldiers dead in Iraq, a war whose human burden is being borne by poor American families.

Policy differences were pronounced on the issue of pursuing Taliban into Pakistan sanctuaries, a strategy Obama favours but of which McCain emphasised prudence. McCain showcased his foreign policy experience and sought to portray Obama as rash and inexperienced.

On Iran, both men affirmed resolute commitment to Israel and contempt for Ahmadinejad's offensive anti-Israel threats. McCain baited Obama on earlier pledges to try to begin a dialogue with Ahmadinejad. In a tedious debate on negotiating tactics, both candidates bizarrely invoked Henry Kissinger as their guide.

Both men's tone on Russia was tough: though rejecting the idea of a new cold war, they spoke of how the conflict with Georgia showed a new, more threatening Russia. With surprising command of detail, McCain reeled off easily unfamiliar words like Saakashvili, Tymoshenko and Yushchenko. Obama did not rise to the bait.



Though both aimed for a presumed US moderate centre, there was a perceptible difference in world view. In old-fashioned language, McCain proposed a league of Western democracies (naming Britain, France and Germany) to mount effective sanctions against Iran. Obama reminded that the large new world beyond the Western democracies, e.g. China and India, must be convinced for any such plan to work.

This segued into Obama's theme, regarding the need to restore American international standing after eight damaging Bush years. He neatly inserted a reference to his Kenyan father's admiration for the US, killing several birds with one stone.

A high point for McCain was his passionate, unprompted denunciation of US torture — 'it must never happen again' — and Guantanamo.

It was a typically US-centred debate. Neither candidate mentioned the United Nations or Kyoto. But environmentalists can take comfort from Obama's firm pledge to move fast towards renewables-based energy.

Age was not mentioned as an issue, except jokingly by McCain himself. Yet McCain's leitmotif was his experience and wisdom versus Obama's inexperience and naivete. If Obama can match McCain's command of foreign policy detail, he was not showing it off.

McCain, 72, looked an alert 60. Obama, 47 and a lithe six-foot basketballer, seemed to make himself older, more substantial. On radio and television, both candidates displayed equal gravitas, though Obama's radio voice was more resonant.

Both men came across honourably, with just the right note of steel to befit a US presidential candidate. Obama was tough, tougher than I remember Kerry or Gore being. There was a refreshing absence of anything like the calculated previous Republican-scripted innuendoes against Kerry and Gore.

Early polls of public reaction are mixed. American voters — many already committed — will take from the debate what they are looking for. In the end it is the impressions, not the words, which count most. I lean towards the cool victory claim of Obama's top strategist, David Axelrod:

'Only one candidate was presenting a vigorous case for change and standing up for real America. That was Barack Obama. McCain is mistaking his long resume for evidence of wisdom and judgement.'

Obama will have pleased younger Americans for his greater empathy with their concerns, McCain older voters for his dignified reaffirmation of traditional American values. After Bush, that's refreshing.

The debate, well moderated by Jim Lehrer, was a compliment to American democracy. But we can anticipate harsher tones in subsequent debates and in the vice-presidential debate.

