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THE ARTS AND THEOLOGY  
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# EUREKA STREET

A MAGAZINE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, THE ARTS AND THEOLOGY  
VOLUME 11 NUMBER 10 DECEMBER 2001

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This month:

Cover: Afghan refugees, mother and son from Kabul, resting in their tent four days after arriving in Peshawar, Pakistan. Photograph by Mathias Heng. Cover design by Siobhan Jackson. Cartoon p12 by Trevor McDonald. Graphics pp6, 10, 15, 25-30, 40, 42 by Siobhan Jackson. Photograph p18 from the Communications Factory.

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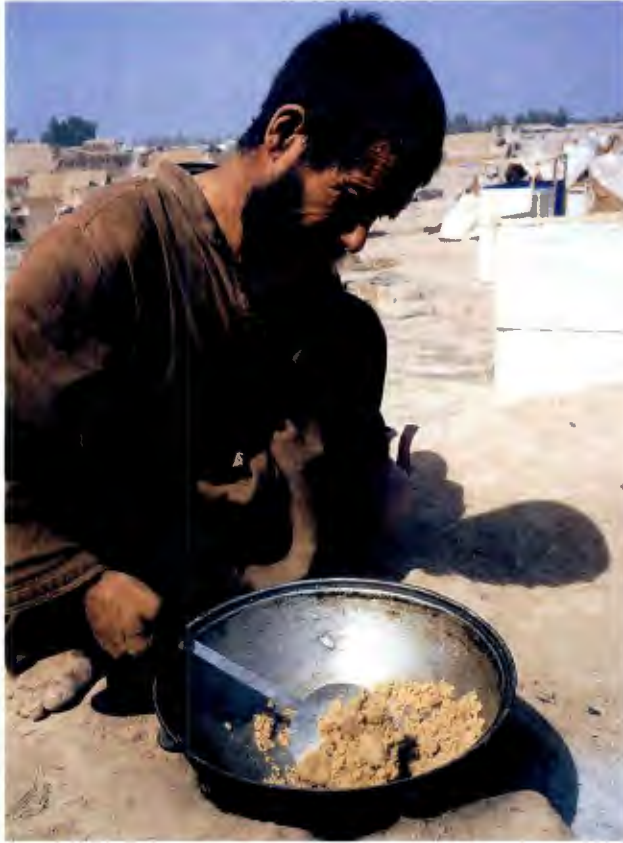
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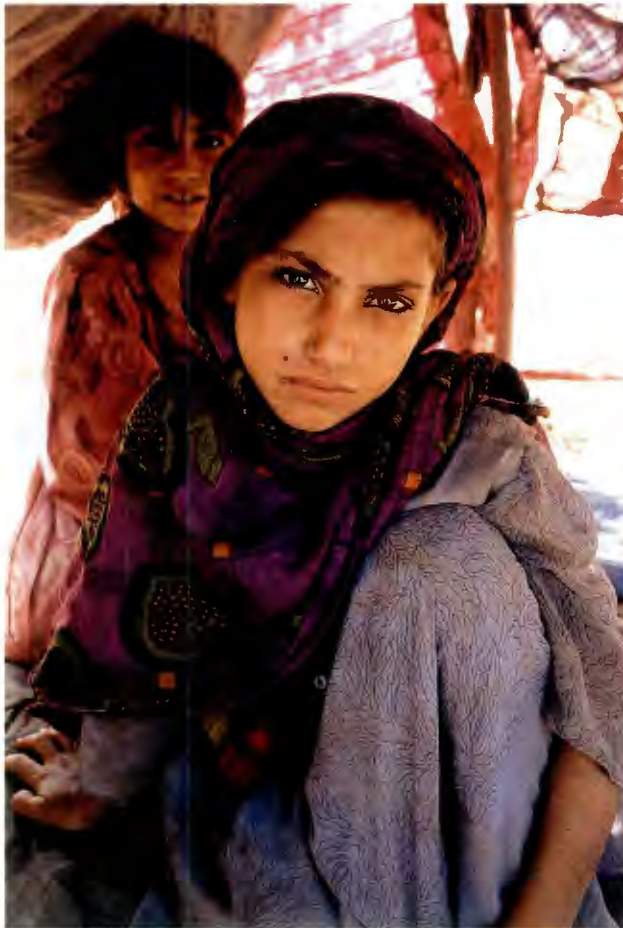
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Afghan refugees from Kabul, in the camp at Peshawar, Pakistan, October 2001. Photographs by Mathias Heng.



# Just war

**P**UBLIC DISCUSSION OF the military action in Afghanistan has sometimes seemed to mirror the war itself. Total loyalty to a bellicose or pacifist cause is demanded; declamations and principles are used as cluster bombs. What is often lacking is reasoned argument.

Classical 'just war' theory is useful in encouraging argument. While the theory does not provide answers, its categories suggest a range of questions pertinent to terrorism and the response to it.

When reflecting on war, moralists generally treat separately the question of whether we are right to go to war, and whether we act rightly in our conduct of war. The distinction is important, because theorists generally treat issues of justice in declaring war and of justice in conducting war separately. The distinction recognises that those who fight even a war for a just cause can do immoral and indefensible things within it. It suggests, too, that we should be suspicious of those who argue that once we have accepted the justice of the cause we should commit ourselves to the war without reservation.

In evaluating the morality of a war, we should certainly first ask whether it is fought for a just cause. To resist aggression and to defeat terrorism may be just causes. To take revenge, to extend national boundaries or to express racial and religious hatred would not be seen by most as just causes.

Second, just war theory demands that war must be legitimately authorised. This test excludes wars waged by private armies. It also places difficulties in the way of any defence of national sovereignty. While declaration by a national government usually satisfies this test, some writers have asked whether modern warfare makes even this insufficient. They ask whether for an action like that directed against Afghanistan, approval of international bodies, like the United Nations, may be necessary.

Third, war must be waged with a right intention. This criterion bears on the declaration of war on Afghanistan, where the precise intention for undertaking war has not been clearly stated. Unless intention is clear, warfare can take on a life of its own, developing intentions to fit the moment.

To be conducted morally, the military actions that develop in a war must also be fought with a right intention. Theorists would generally insist that it is right to intend to kill combatants in a war, but not to target non-combatants. It would also be wrong to massacre a fleeing army. A handy test of right intention

in the war in Afghanistan may be found in the seriousness of the measures taken to protect the civilian population from the effects of the military action.

Fourth, for a war to be justified there must be proportion between the good hoped for and the evil inflicted. This criterion causes most debate. The defenders of the action in Afghanistan often fudge the question, by appealing to the proportion between the harm done by enemy action and that caused by our action. So, if the terrorists killed 10,000 civilians, we would be justified in killing 10,000 of their civilians. This has to do with revenge and not with morality. The proportion needs to be established among the good and bad consequences of war and its actions. The damage to military capability done by a bombing campaign, for example, must be weighed against other consequences we can anticipate: the death and injury of non-combatants, destruction of government and infrastructure, pollution of the environment, and the rooting of hatred. Papal reflection on war has been marked by a growing conviction that the consequences of modern war are so horrific that

they can never be outweighed by presumed goods.

Fifth, war can be undertaken justly only as a last resort. This test invites us to name an alternative course of action to eradicate terrorism, and to weigh its realism.

Finally, a just war and military action must have some reasonable chance of success. Success must be measured against the cause for which the war is fought and the intention that guides its prosecution. In Afghanistan, debate has been focused on the possibility of crushing terrorism by capturing Osama bin Laden and removing from power the Taliban. The question stands: will these achievements crush terrorism?

Just war theory, then, is a nest of questions. To qualify as justly declared and prosecuted, a war must satisfy each of these questions. Understandably, the military action in Afghanistan has its apologists and its critics. The questions put by just war theory offer grounds for exchange of argument. ■

**Andrew Hamilton** SJ is *Eureka Street's* publisher.

COMMENT:2  
MORAG FRASER

# Messages of the season

**I**T IS HARD TO GET YOUR bearings. One minute we are receiving emails from Bethlehem, with names and stories about the people who died in the recent shelling. Johnny Thaljiya, 17, shot on Manger Square. Mariam Subaih, 38, mother of six, killed by tank shells next to her home in a village called El-Khader.

Then comes an outbreak of music on the streets of Kabul as the Afghan Northern Alliance moves into the city. Who knows at this stage whether their entry presages peace and goodwill. Afghan men report that they are going to the barbers to have them shave off the beards that became a symbol of Taliban oppression. Women's voices can be heard on the radio.

On the same day, the skies send death down again on poor battered New York, on Rockaway, home to firefighters and police officers. We haven't yet had time to finish the first-hand reports from families and friends who lived close by the World Trade Center. 'The Twin Towers were our Pole star', writes one correspondent from New York, 'often the first glimpse of home'.

Off Australia's coast, scattered around the Pacific, are hundreds of people who live in a kind of limbo—no home left behind them and few prospects before them. You wonder how they read our unfamiliar stars.

Australia's federal election is over, but their fates—even their immediate destinations—are undecided.

But at least now we are beginning to see some of their faces. The bleak anonymity of the early days of the *Tampa* episode has been succeeded by a glimpse of other people's humanity. On the comprehensive ABC radio coverage that Australia is lucky enough to have (Jonathan Shier was not much interested in radio), we are able to hear voices—from Afghanistan, from Queens, Bethlehem, Cairo, Jerusalem and Islamabad. We also hear hostility to strangers in Australia; as an island people we have a heightened fear of the unknown. But we have always managed to overcome it when face-to-face with people in circumstances we are permitted to understand.

Documentary photographer Mathias Heng met the people he has photographed for this month's *Eureka Street*, in their tents and hospitals and streets. He got to know their miraculously resilient children. He watched the Afghan man (opposite) beat together the flour and water that is now his daily camp ration.

We celebrate Christmas in Australia. It seems an opportune time to consider the many ways in which normal life, in Afghanistan, in the United States, indeed here at home, might be restored. —**Morag Fraser**

## In a word, maybe

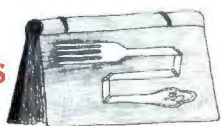


It's many years since we lived through times of such great uncertainty. Apparently. Go anywhere in the past two months and uncertainty has been confidently asserted. Leaders who 'never felt so certain' of their destiny to govern the country have, in their next breath, cast a positive pall on proceedings with gloomy proclamations of uncertainty. The U-turns have been unbridled, unashamed, unequivocal. Now is not the time to be certain. Say this often enough and it turns into a statement of belief.

A refugee might wonder how uncertainty can be limited to the last two months. The last two years, yes, even the last two decades. Displaced existence learns to treat uncertainty as a bearing rather than a fear.

'Let us live with uncertainty as with a friend' is not a message that wins votes, even if it's what everyone needs to hear. Saint Anselm's saying reminds us that simply feeling safe is a delusion of self. What is uncertainty but the breaking of our complacent illusions? Will it take away our power to choose? Anselm would have it that 'knowing we do not know is the only certainty', that we live our whole lives through a time of uncertainty.

## Charles Dickens in Canberra



Perhaps it's uncertainty that makes us cherish words and things written down in old books, old manuscripts, tattered human traces on vellum or newsprint or bone.

From 7 December, the National Library will pander to our retentive-obsessive bent with their Centenary of Federation swansong: a grand hoard of the bits we leave behind. Significant bits.

In Canberra you'll be able to see Einstein's  $E=mc^2$  manuscript, the 1792 manuscript of the *Marseillaise* (the Brisbane Lions should organise a tour) plus the Dead Sea Scroll that contains the Ten Commandments. There's J.R.R. Tolkien's watercolour from the original *Hobbit* cover plus Charles Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby* manuscript. Even more poignantly, the exhibition includes the great peregrinator's walking stick and folding cutlery set. Can't you just see Dickens, camped in Kansas City, tucking into collard greens? There's also Caxton's first printing of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and the final typescript pages of Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech. And a Gutenberg Bible, c.1455. Johannes Gutenberg sure could put together a hardback that wouldn't break at the spine the third time you open it. But what would he have made of Chester Carlson's notebook (also in the exhibition), describing how he made the first 'XEROX' copies?

## Collaring a genre



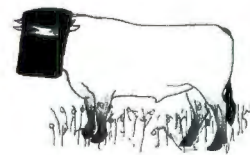
For some time we've suspected this was coming and it is now confirmed: there is a new genre in Australian letters—the life stories of men who once wore a cassock. Earlier, Morris West (*Moon in My Pocket*, 1945) and Tom Keneally (*The Place at Whitton*, 1964; *Three Cheers for the Paraclete*, 1968) had confronted their memories in fictions that travelled close to actuality. The new books, however, have come out of the fictional closet and present themselves as personal history.

Gerard Windsor started the trend, in 1996, with an account of his days as a Jesuit, *Heaven Where the Bachelors Sit*. Windsor set the bar very high. No subsequent writer has cleared that height, although another former SJ, Michael McGirr, created an equally cogent account of Jesuit life in a later generation (*Things You Get for Free*, 2000). Then came Peter Brock's *Home Rome Home* (2001), a sundial of a book, recording only the happy hours at Propaganda Fide

College in Rome. Now, by contrast, Chris Geraghty's weather report from the Springwood (NSW) seminary, *Cassocks in the Wilderness* (2001) is chill and arctic.

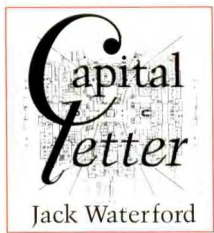
With or without partners, men came from all over Australia for the launch of Geraghty's book in Sydney a few weeks ago. Surveying them, a famous feminist asked loudly, 'Is there any man here who didn't wear a cassock?' Not many, was the answer. For two hours they shared a horrified delight in this visit to a house of dead souls. Those who had already read the book shook their heads in dismay at the rawness of the pain still carried by Judge Geraghty. 'I never suspected he had all this inside him,' one said. (Still to come: Geraghty's account of his days, as student and professor, at the Manly seminary. More arctic weather, we suppose.)

## Chewing on the purple



In Glenrowan in late spring there was a meeting between the Kelly rellies and descendants of the policemen killed at Stringybark Creek. Maybe that explains why the Great Dividing Range and all the country north to Moss Vale was swathed in purple over the green. The Herefords and Black Polls were up to their hocks in Paterson's curse (or Salvation Jane—if you like it). It rolled up hills and spread out from creeks and gullies like a funeral oration.

CSIRO, God bless them, have a more prosaic explanation. Lush weather conditions. You learn this from the young woman who answers the CSIRO phone (no press button 1, 2 or anything, just a friendly super-abundance of information). CSIRO is working on biological control. Not eradication, note—the aesthete enviro-vandal breathes a sigh of relief. The flea beetle, the root weevil, the crown weevil and the pollen beetle could all be out there spoiling the purple. Think of it as a republican gesture. And then vote more money to the CSIRO, that indispensable Australian institution.



# After the party's over

**H**UGO GREEN, of Stephen Mayne's *crikey.com.au*, had the phrase of the election: 'That loud crash echoing through the inner suburbs of Melbourne and Sydney on Saturday was the sound of the intelligentsia slamming the Volvo door in the face of the Labor party.' Slam the door they did, but it was not that which lost the election for Labor. The uncomfortable probability is this: had Labor shown the spine over refugee policy that the circumstances seemed to call for, its defeat would have been even more disastrous.

Put another way, losing first preference votes to the Greens from angry and disaffected voters because of its supine attitude to the playing of the race card was nothing compared with the loss of votes Labor was facing from its core working-class constituencies had it not gone along with the Howard policy. As it was, many Labor voters were not really convinced that Labor meant business on border protection and John Howard got their votes anyway.

Now that the tactics have worked, John Howard and the small team he had about him are busily denying either that they were using the race card at all, or that it was the factor that got them out of the hole. If this is the case, why was it implicit in the advertisement most often used during the campaign, and particularly during the last week? How was it that even moderate Liberal candidates were keeping mum about their moral reservations even as others were making them clear? It was there, all right, and it was biting.

It was biting Labor too—indeed more so among its traditional constituents than in Liberal territory—and to a point where Labor's campaign geniuses felt it absolutely impossible to confront head on. A high proportion of voters were dead against letting refugees 'invade' our country and wanted them repelled, by force if necessary. Candidates from both sides might forswear even an oblique reference to race or religion—it was simply a matter of our own right to control who was going to enter the country—but the focus groups showed quite plainly that the targeted voters had understood the code words.

That the Howard tactic—or Labor's acquiescence in it—had attracted the condemnation of journalists, business leaders, key lobbyists, diplomats, former politicians and other representatives of what John Howard might term the elite and Paddy McGuinness the chattering classes was neither here nor there. Their votes (or their ultimate votes) had already been factored into the equation.

The targeted voter was by no means only the blue-collar worker, suspected of having a red neck. It was as much John Howard's 'aspirational voter'—a suburbanite with a small

family, increasingly disconnected from the community at large, and focused not on the world outside Australia but the world outside the front gate.

It says something about Labor leadership, or even the leadership of moderate liberals, that they felt unable to resist the trend, indeed compelled to go along with it to the point where they felt (wrongly as it turned out) that they might neutralise it. It says even more, perhaps, that they were willing to brave the wrath of their middle-class and elite constituencies in doing so. The breach, indeed, may last longer than many expect, if only because the anger is palpable, relatively disinterested, and goes to the core of many people's beliefs. For some, the

Labor betrayal is more serious than Howard's, since many had never expected better of Howard.

**O**NE SHOULD NOT SEE THE ISSUE, however, purely in terms of Labor's being threatened with a loss of its privileged relationship with the elites. It goes the other way too. The charge of John Howard is that too many members of these elites are out of touch with the views and the aspirations of ordinary Australians. In many cases, they operate from completely different value systems, attaching great importance to events or to symbols (say, reconciliation, republics and refugee resettlement) that most people think completely irrelevant to their lives.

John Howard has always known he has been held in contempt by such people and has never sought their accolades. He can, however, claim that he is rather more in touch with electoral realities than they are. And, for a person who effectively went to the polls without a program, he can claim that the electorate knows what he stands for. When Howard found his issue, Labor found that too many either did not know what Labor stood for, or that they did not like it if they did. Even so, Howard's unpopularity was such that Labor nearly got over the line—one vote in every 200 in the right places would have done it comfortably.

Alas, there is little sign of Labor's learning the lesson. Within a day or two of defeat, and the resignation of Kim Beazley, the factions had got together and determined the leadership. A few old hacks were conspicuously thrown off the front bench and a few new ones will be selected. Labor's not listening either. Its branch and sub-branch system is moribund and its union base is hardly likely to provide the foundations for a revival. It might have been better had it received a real shaking up from the electors. ■

**Jack Waterford** is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

## Talking the walk

I read the comments about Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger ('Man in the Middle', *Eureka Street*, September 2001) and his theme of pilgrimage with interest. My husband and I have just returned from France, walking on The Way of St James pilgrim trail.

Without presuming a comparison with such an inspiring man, I asked myself if the image of pilgrimage was 'inherently unsettling' for my husband and me and had we 'travelled light to remind citizens of the larger journey'?

Cities were a theme of Lustiger's but we were in the rural south-west. Ironically we heard about the devastation in United States cities in a phone call to 92-year-old Mum in Australia. Two days later another elderly woman served us each course of the evening meal in her B&B with graphic but nearly unintelligible details of the explosion in Toulouse (40 dead or missing, 600 hospitalised). Despite the IT revolution it would have been possible for us to ignore these happenings for a week or so, but we chose to buy an English newspaper in the next big town. But, given the very personal pilgrimages of some of the walkers we met, would they want to know about world events?

I couldn't say we were travelling light—our combined 20kgs was heavy by comparison with most walkers, and the contents were more revealing than the actual weight. As well as the normal basics, we carried



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water, chocolate, a well-stocked medical kit, emergency blankets, a head torch, twine and rubber bands. But also cross-words, tapestry, three pens, writing paper, a phone card and two copies of our guide. And we booked accommodation three days ahead!

We didn't see our walking as 'reminding citizens of the larger journey', because we felt we were linking ourselves to it. In the non-conformist churches where we grew up, Protestant history 'stopped' at Acts and began again with the Reformation. Our first visit to Europe, in our early 50s, had been a wonderful shock. So much church history had passed us by. Our subsequent walks on The Way of St James have connected us to ancient traditions in a very personal way, despite our comfortable way of doing it. As we prayed in each church on the trail, often three a day, the bloody and warring history of the building was usually outlined somewhere, often in a timeline done by local school children. While in the cities of the world Islam and Christianity were being pitted against each other in the public domain, we were being reminded of

centuries of Christians fighting Christians.

Memories of the physical exhaustion of our pilgrimage have faded quickly. What remain are an enlarged view of the wider Christian story and a more settled view of our place in it.

**Jan Hunter**  
Albury, NSW

## The long view

When bombs are dropping and missiles are missing and politicians are politicking, perspective is an early victim. After the industrial revolution, the first shoe was the pursuit of equal rights within nations; the shoe came off slowly. The second shoe is the global pursuit of equal rights between nations; it is yet to drop.

The French revolution, taking place as the 18th century drew to a close, serves symbolically as a start to the stirring from which 'our' modern world has emerged. It has been a slow and often bloody process. Merchants and workers, bourgeoisie and proletariat, claimed their rights; aristocracy and hierarchy defended theirs. Gradually and painfully, owners, managers, and workers came to be seen as significant participants in wealth creation. Painfully, performance edged out birthright. Gradually, democracy and the idea of equal rights took over from aristocracy and the rights of birth. That was the first shoe.

The process has been largely restricted to the 'industrial' and 'post-industrial'



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world. It hasn't reached the rest yet. That will be the second shoe.

Globalisation—whether of communications, travel, or corporations, etc.—has taken the rest of the world in its embrace. Slowly, and probably bloodily, some sort of equalisation will follow. It is unjust that shoes made by someone for a few cents an hour should be sold by someone else for multi-dollars a pair because the two 'someones' were born in different places. Birth-right will probably yield to performance; equalisation of some sort will probably follow globalisation. This struggle is not between 'believer' and 'infidel'; it is not between 'good' and 'evil'. It may be between 'largely-post-industrial' and 'largely-pre-industrial'; it may be between capital-intensive and labour-intensive. It may be between established and excluded, between born-lucky and born-elsewhere.

The second shoe is yet to drop.

A.F. Campbell SJ  
Parkville, VIC

state of Australia in the 1950s. What is often neglected (though I suspect that he understands it all too well) is the fact that a bitter sectarianism was still a part of that society. Does Mr Howard want us to return to that too, I wonder? Could it be that his appointment of Revd Hollingworth was, in part, a sectarian act (perhaps to counter the enormous esteem for his Catholic predecessor), which flouted the principle of separation of church and state? That principle has never been more important than it is now.

In any case, if Dr Head—or any other confessional Panglossian—still believes that Revd Hollingworth 'speaks only accidentally as a bishop', then let him look at the Vice-Regal notices in their newspapers over the next few Mondays to see what the Governor-General is reported as doing on Sundays and then ask themselves whether they need to re-think their position.

John Carmody  
Roseville, NSW

## On principle

Canon Ivan Head (Letters, *Eureka Street*, October 2001) speaks about the communal and political actions and responsibilities of the Governor-General from a clear Anglican perspective. If he has any denominational bias, he uses, as his authorities, St Augustine and John Locke to seek neutrality.

Despite this appeal to authority, Dr Head indeed raises the essential questions about Dr (sic) Hollingworth, though in a dismissive way. After asking, 'How many Anglicans does it take to run the country?', he asserts—with no supporting argument at all—that 'It is an accident that one of these happens to be a bishop.'

In my view, this is a misguided comment. I believe that the religious aspect of the Hollingworth appointment was entirely intentional. One of Mr Howard's almost legendary beliefs is in the quasi-Utopian

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# THE MONTH'S TRAFFIC

## In their sights

HOW THE IRISH FIND PEACE

*O land of password, handgrip, wink and nod,  
Of open minds as open as a trap,*

*Where tongues lie coiled, as under flames lie  
wicks,*

*Where half of us, as in a wooden horse  
Were cabin'd and confined like wily Greeks,  
Besieged within the siege, whispering morse.*

(Seamus Heaney, 'Whatever You Say Say  
Nothing', 1975)

**Y**OU HAVE TO IMAGINE the scene because cameras or reporters are rare at meetings of IRA bigwigs. And even if you could take a photograph, it would look just like any other company AGM: bottled water, notepaper, hotel pens, coffee percolating in the corner, a few laptops perhaps. There are no guns to indicate that many of those present are killers whose seniority and status within the organisation may depend on how many people have died at their hands or on their instructions.

Some of the delegates are from the cities or large towns. Others are from the countryside: used to making their own decisions, they are suspicious of the bearded man at the head of the table who is explaining to them how far they have come since a dozen of their comrades starved themselves to death 20 years ago. He tells them that it is now time to make a public gesture of putting their arms and munitions out of use.

'Gerry,' one of his listeners says, 'we put our answer on gable walls when all this decommissioning racket started: "Not a bullet. Not an ounce." We can't go back on that.' Gerry's answer is to point out that September 11 changed everything, that George W. Bush was not as well disposed to them as Bill Clinton, that he could have been looking at them when he said that you were either with him or against him in the fight against terrorism. Then there was the little matter of the three heroes found playing footsie with the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia) drug distributors. That went down rather poorly in America and Gerry explained how hard even he, an Olympic champion stonewaller,

was finding it to stonewall when the media asked pesky questions.

The discussions progress: tactics, strategy, logistics, political opportunity. The term 'peace dividend' is used: they are the leading nationalist party in the North and they have every expectation of holding the balance of power in the next Dail of the Irish Republic.

Somebody mentions the little girls in North Belfast who need a police escort to get to school, but a local commander says that this is under control: morse for the longer it goes on, the more reasonable we look and the more neanderthal the other side appears.

Then the inevitable comment is made, the one thing that is on everybody's mind. 'It really doesn't matter what we do, we could take every ordnance we have and stockpile them outside 10 Downing Street. The bottom line is that the other tribe will never willingly share power; as soon as this is done, they will look for something else.' Even the bearded one knows there is no answer to that.

Northern Ireland Assembly began to look less like petulance and more like a masterstroke. He now received massive endorsement from his Party and everyone breathed a sigh of relief. Tony Blair flew off to the Middle East to lecture to the crowd there about how part of the United Kingdom was a model of peacemaking from which they should learn.

Poor Tony. He is British, God bless him, and burdened with an innate sense of fairness. He doesn't understand that Ulster unionism is more or less evenly divided between decent God-fearing folk and others, children of an older God, who want only one thing: a return to a Protestant state for a Protestant people, a little backwoods in which the idea that all citizens have equal rights is a papist plot to destroy their divine right to be the sectarian oligarchy they have always been.

Enter Peter Weir and Pauline Armitage. They were elected to the farthest backbenches of the Ulster Unionist Party on a ticket supporting the Good Friday Agreement. Now they found they could not



Nevertheless the decommissioning gesture was made and the word went around the world that the IRA had eaten crow and done the one thing they said they would never do. In a separate statement Gerry Adams admitted that one of the people in FARClan was indeed an IRA man. In the euphoria about decommissioning, few noticed it. David Trimble's desperate gamble in July when he dissolved the

vote for their leader David Trimble to head the Northern Ireland Assembly. Never mind that each had personal reasons to dislike Trimble, it was easy to dress up their action as good citizenship.

In the vote for First Minister and Deputy First Minister, David Trimble and Mark Durkan, the new leader of the nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), put themselves forward as a kind of tag

team. Under the complicated voting structures of the Assembly, they could only be elected if they received a majority of the votes of those declaring themselves to be unionist and a majority of those calling themselves nationalist. They received 100 per cent nationalist support and more than 70 per cent overall endorsement but fell two votes short of a majority of unionists. Peter and Pauline had their 15 minutes of fame and there were guffaws from Ian Paisley and his supporters.

The Northern Ireland Secretary, John Reid, could have acceded to the request of the anti-Agreement lobby to call new Assembly elections. These would almost certainly have returned Gerry Adams or Martin McGuinness as Deputy First Minister. Alternatively, he could have suspended the Assembly and returned the running of the province to London, only now with a much greater involvement by Dublin than ever before, a kind of United Ireland by stealth. Either way, Peter and Pauline's Great Adventure was the kind of thing that gives shooting yourself in the foot a bad name.

The subterfuge of allowing some members of the Alliance Party—a group which refuses to allow themselves to be categorised as either unionist or nationalist—to become temporary unionists was a least worst option. It is a cynical political stroke which seriously undermines the credibility of the Good Friday Agreement and probably spells the end for David Trimble.

More significantly, what the whole episode has shown is that unionism as a political philosophy is a fraud. It has nothing to do with maintaining a tie with Britain and everything to do with perpetuating a status quo which demographics will soon render untenable.

The Trojan horse, predicted a quarter of a century ago by Seamus Heaney, is at the gates. And the IRA can justifiably claim to have pushed it there. —Frank O'Shea

## Timbre of terror

**A**FTERWARDS THERE WAS a column of dark sound inside—a deep chord resonating in the body. Maybe it epitomised the overall timbre of the 50 minutes that had just finished. Maybe it was the sound that composer, Christopher Willcock, gave to the orchestra between each of the brief verses in the last of the 15 poems that make up



## Apologies considered

**T**HIS YEAR IS THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY of the arrival in Beijing of the Jesuit scholar, Matteo Ricci. Pope John Paul II noted the occasion in a message which, while sent to a conference in Rome, was also clearly addressed to the Chinese government. He praised the respect shown by Ricci for Chinese culture and for the patriotic duty of Chinese citizens. He also apologised for the mistakes and excesses of Christian missionaries in China. At the conclusion of the address, the Pope reiterated his desire for good relations with China.

The Chinese response was qualified. A spokesman regarded the apology as insufficient because it did not include the decision last year to canonise a group of Chinese martyrs on the anniversary of the Communist Chinese National Day. A church celebrating the victims of various Chinese governments on a national feast day was seen as provocative.

At one level the message and response were steps in the diplomatic soft-shoe shuffle. But the Chinese insistence on an apology for contemporary events neatly found vulnerability in the theology and rhetoric of Vatican apologies.

This theology speaks first of the symbolic reality of the church, and only secondarily of its human reality. It describes the church as the bride of Christ and the body of Christ. Because of this relationship to Christ, the church is sinless and stainless. It is therefore impossible to attribute sins and mistakes to the church itself: they are assigned to individual members of the church. Pope John Paul followed this convention in apologising for the sins and frailties, not of the church, but of its individual members.

In itself this convention is unexceptionable. But it is easily confused with another distinction that has noxious political consequences. It also canonises the holiness and purity of the church or nation, but then distinguishes between the rulers and the ruled. The rulers and their officers share in the purity of the nation or church, while those who are ruled do not.

In national life, the consequence of this distinction is impunity: whatever is done in the name of the state is beyond criticism and prosecution. When applied to the church, it implies that the Pope and Curia share in the wisdom and purity of the church, so that their decisions and practices cannot be questioned.

The Chinese response to the papal apology, no doubt unwittingly, forced clarification of this ambiguity. When you apologise for wrongs done long ago, it is easy to portray curial officials as individual members of the church and to see them as distinct both from the church as the bride of Christ and from its authoritative centre. But when you apologise for recent decisions, you make it clear that Pope and Curia are ordinarily fallible and sinful.

The irony of this situation is that the coincidence of dates that so annoyed the Chinese government was more likely to have been the result of muddle than of design. But the current rhetoric of apology is misleading. We need to develop a language that recognises the sinfulness of the church as a human institution, without prejudice to its relationship to Jesus Christ. ■

**Andrew Hamilton** SJ is *Eureka Street's* publisher and teaches at the United Faculty of Theology.

Anna Akhmatova's *Requiem*, her plaint for the victims of Stalin's Terror. Merlyn Quaife's voice sang with gathering intensity through the sequence, so maybe it was a distillation of that, way way inside.

Afterwards we had a party at home to celebrate. There were a few Russians among the guests, and two of the women asked me in amazement, 'How does this man know what Leningrad felt like?' The answer has to do with the creative imagination and how it works, and how it has worked in Willcock these last eight years, always with Quaife's voice to do the singing. And with the haunting by Akhmatova's poems of his imagination, as of so many others in and out of Russia. It's hard to name a more serious, a more morally weighted poetic work from the 20th century than *Requiem*. The story of its origin is the canonical story of what poetry is for: a woman in the queue outside the prison asked Akhmatova, 'Can you describe this?', and Akhmatova said, 'Yes, I can.'

Like the poems, Willcock's orchestration, turbulently deep and nervily high, does not so much move sequentially as stand in increasing intensity outside those implacable prison walls.

The audience at St Paul's, where the trundling of Melbourne's trams outside for once reinforced the sound inside, listened with growing intensity too. Indeed, when the 13th poem, 'Crucifixion', reached its famous concluding image: 'But, for the Mother, where she stood in silence, / No-one as much as dared to look that way', the music just managed to dare, bringing the audience, orchestra and singer to that terrible place. In these words the Mother of the Lord, Akhmatova, and all the other mothers queue as their sons undergo the Terror. You could hear the music, barely there.

The event was presented by the Faculty of Music at Melbourne University as the performance examination for the conductor, Yanna Talpis, a Russian herself. The piece was commissioned from Christopher Willcock as a consequence of his winning the Albert Maggs Award from the Faculty. For those of us familiar with Willcock's music over many years, this is his major piece so far. This was its première. I hope, and not solely as a friend, that other musical patrons will ensure that it is heard again. —Andrew Bullen sj

## The long haul

ANNEKE BULLEN

**I**MPATIENCE AND resistance are already appearing as the counter-attack on terrorism is prosecuted. The perspective is daunting.

The horror inflicted on Americans on September 11 was prefigured in the novel *Anil's Ghost*, published in 2000, by Michael Ondaatje. The Booker Prize winner compared the grieving of those defeated in classical warfare with that of victims of modern terrorism in his native Sri Lanka, recording first the words of an ancient victor: 'In the hospitality of war we left them their dead to remember us by.' Of recent Sri Lankan terrorism he lamented, 'But here there was no such gesture for the families of the dead, not even the information of who the enemy was.'

The people of the US have probably been more aggrieved by the recent hyper-terrorism of September 11 than by even the Pearl Harbour attack of 60 years ago. After all, the last attack on Washington was by the British in the war of 1812. Japan provoked a four-year war, but the anti-terrorist

war seems set to run more than one presidential term, and may see George W. Bush into a second one.

In those moments in September, Americans lost their last innocence and insularity. In its place, the terrorists have created a fundamental sense of personal outrage in the most religious of all Western countries, and a new tolerance of intrusive security.

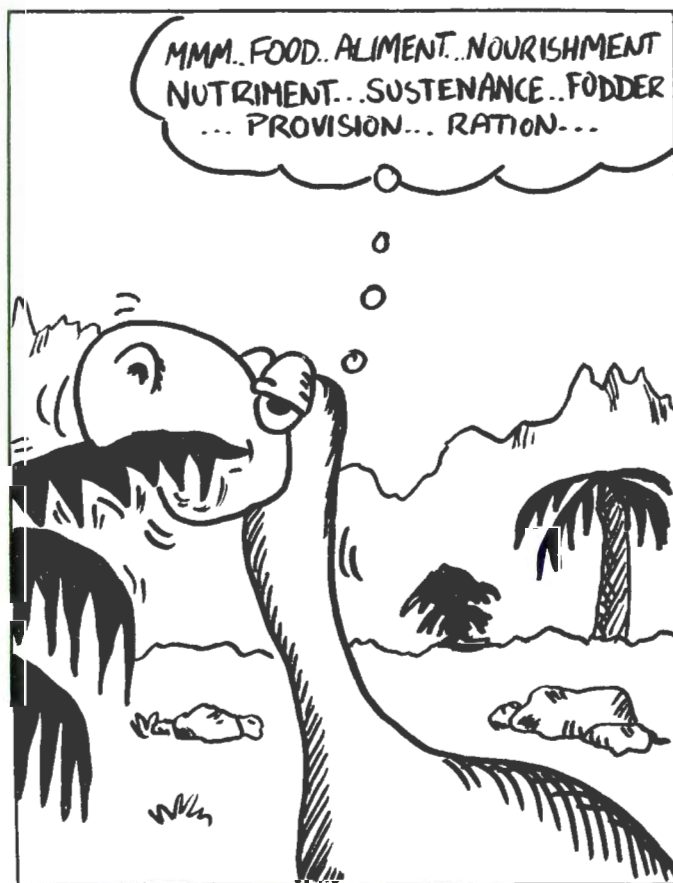
From late September to late October, I flew and drove from New York to Los Angeles, visiting family and friends. Security-check time exceeded air time for all five domestic flights.

Repetitious TV coverage aside, you cannot miss the war. The US is alive with a post-Vietnam, born-again patriotism, shown in countless flags on cars, at home or in shops, and in public prayer.

In New York on 28 September, an exemplary ecumenical service of remembrance for the Australian and New Zealand victims embraced Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish and Maori faiths. An Indonesian imam from a New York mosque led by declaring, in plain language, that if anyone claimed to commit murder or suicide in the service of Islam, 'He is a big liar.'

In Chicago several days later the Sears Tower was barricaded. My visit to Kansas City, on 7 October, coincided with the departure, from their base nearby, of the B-2 stealth bombers bound for the first strikes in Afghanistan. A day spent in Taos, New Mexico, was the occasion of a visit by Defence Secretary Rumsfeld to his ranch. This was 19 October, when US ground forces were first reported at Kandahar. The previous week I was in the Colorado ski resort of Telluride. 'Stormin' Norman', the general of Gulf War fame, lives there under close protection, and shuttle diplomat Richard Holbrooke is another resident. In Los Angeles on 20 October, conversation turned to the total depletion of a local firm's missile inventory and the boost that the war on terrorism is already giving to West Coast high-tech industries.

Consider the irony that, in the Gulf and the Balkans, the US exhibited the new warfare, the revolution in military affairs, conducted virtually without losses among its own forces. But the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were brutally successful because they



EARLY THESAURUS

were mounted by suicide machines—the worst damage done most cost-effectively.

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict exploded half a century ago with Israeli terrorism and evolved into Palestinian suicide attacks. Its duration foretells a long haul for the new international war against terrorism. So does debate in the US, and the measured campaign so far. Informed voices dwell on why the Arab world spawned terrorism, which only later turned against the West. They speak of years of work ahead. The Qatar-based Arab-language satellite TV station, Al Jazeera, has shown how the battle must be fought in what commentators' new slang calls 'the Arab street'.

The targeting of the World Trade Center, in 1993 and 2001, reveals not symbolic but substantive opposition to globalisation. The notion of one homogeneous money-making world, seemingly devoid of human input and beyond community control, has been critically weakened. Terrorism's shockwaves have the *Economist* and *Forbes* fulminating in defence of capitalism, and in denial that globalisation is 'cultural conquest'. (The *Economist* might examine the financial pressure of the saturate-and-suffocate strategy of Starbucks, nearby in central London.)

The anti-terrorist campaign encompasses three prolonged tasks: it must prevent the incubation of further terrorist cells in Arab states, particularly where oil-rich or defence-dependent governments have been pro-American; it must eliminate exasperatingly provocative elements of Western policy; and it must maintain a sensitive international coalition to prevent terrorist outbreaks. How realistic those goals are, given that key Arab regimes help the US mainly in the hope of protection from their own domestic dissident groups (whence the terrorists spring), remains to be seen.

President Bush and Secretary of State Powell, despite parlous co-ordination, are inclining the US towards the UN by settling the US debt, conforming with the writ of the UN Charter, and even contemplating a UN protectorate over Afghanistan. The UN is the only route to the next terrorist nest—in Iraq.

The American people have been thrown clear of their vestigial isolationism. In this sense they also have become another ingredient in the globalisation pot. The prescient Ondaatje quotes Robert Duncan: 'The drama of our time is the coming of all men into one fate.' Only with the self-restraint imposed by internationalist policies, through patience rather than pa-

triotism, can they sustain an alliance long enough to obliterate terrorism as an optional weapon. Their calendar will be a ten-year timeframe for restoring the Trade Center site. Great good may yet come from surreal savagery.

—Duncan Campbell

## All of a piece

YOU THE ACTION  
ON REFUGEES

THE BYWORD IS 'Nugacity', and for its members it translates into hospitality and companionship.

Nugacity, a social action group, was established last year by young graduates from Sydney's Saint Ignatius' College, Riverview. The service was kicked off by the opening of a homeless shelter and by work with street kids. For the 50 members, involvement has now spread to work alongside the international Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). It is fitting that the JRS network should be worldwide: refugees constitute an indivisible, universal problem. The famous lines of John Donne resonate here: 'No man is an Island entire of it self; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main.' If conflict and wars are an affair of the state, violations of humanitarian law are an affair for all of us—as a civil society, as a global community, and as human beings.

Members from Nugacity seized on the opportunity, in the wake of the *Tampa* crisis, to go into secondary school classrooms and help separate fact from fiction in the climate of tension fuelled by boat arrivals and electoral politics. A Nugacity team, with a Jesuit who has worked on the ground with refugees, addressed students, exhorting them to hold on to the facts in the heat of an emotional debate.

Clearly, mixed messages were being heard. This was evident in the students' responses. In some classes, it was obvious that the message being conveyed was that refugees are not the kind of people Australia wants here. But students at least agreed that it was important to hear the facts.

Nugacity's kit includes 'Pictures of Hope'—a photographic exhibition of more than 100 images from Africa, South America, Asia and the Pacific. Combined with an education supplement, the exhibition aims to bring home to students and their parents an understanding and knowledge of refugee issues.

In December, the Jesuit Refugee Service will celebrate 21 years of work defending

the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced people. Its aim worldwide: to build spaces of normalcy in the midst of what is profoundly abnormal. The work is a daily struggle, and intensely personal in its intimate relationship with people in need. But the answer to human misery is action, not despair. JRS is not an organisation of vacuous goodwill, and does not speak to the wind; instead, it labours with a clear intent to assist, to provoke change and to reveal injustice.

The young people involved with Nugacity identify with that plan for action. They also identify with the words of a former Australian Prime Minister, Ben Chifley: 'If we fight for the right, then truth and justice will prevail.'

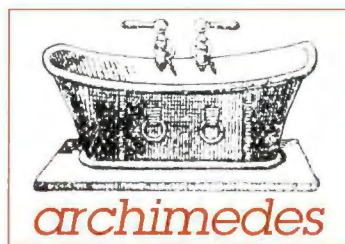
—Daniel Street

## Country music

SWITZER AND COWS  
TO PORT FAIRY

IT WAS A DARK and stormy Friday night in Port Fairy as two well-groomed cows, complete with cowbells, led the Swiss Yodel Choir down Bank Street to the Village Square. Here the choir took up position, supported by two splendid alpenhorns, and solemnly sang and yodelled in celebration of the Port Fairy Spring Music Festival. The Village Square is in fact little more than the intersection of Bank and Sackville Streets, but a patch of grass on one corner provided a space for the festival tent. The jovial, if shivering, crowd assembled were sustained by Lindt chocolates and Movenpick ice creams freely distributed throughout the Swiss-themed festival weekend. Landlocked Switzerland had come to the Australian fishing village and seaside resort.

Rural and regional Australia—it seems politically incorrect to talk about the country these days—is very much into festivals. Festivals can generate interest and income for towns feeling the economic pinch. Trendy little Port Fairy boasts a cornucopia of festivals. The best-known and longest-established is the Folk Festival, but there is also something called Moyneyana which runs from Christmas Eve through January, and a winter festival rather archly known as Rhapsody in June. But, through the leadership of Michael Easton and Len Vorster, the Spring Music Festival has carved out a niche for itself in what might loosely be called chamber music.



## Ignorance in a panic

**I**N A RADIO NEWS ITEM ABOUT a supersonic jet engine being developed and tested in Australia, it was amazing to hear that the system was revolutionary because it replaced fuel with oxygen. That would indeed be revolutionary. As anyone who has tried to light a fire knows, combustion cannot occur without fuel *and* oxygen. Combustion is, in fact, the reaction of oxygen with fuel. What worried Archimedes was that, when he mentioned the story, only those with specialist scientific training seemed to notice what was wrong.

Over recent months, the anthrax scare has given us ringside seats at a battle between instinct and rational thought. To the rational mind, it is astonishing that an act of terrorism that has resulted in so few deaths (four as we went to print) can have caused such international turmoil. But the instinct for survival honed over millions of years of evolution is strong enough for all of us to understand why people have rushed out to buy gas masks, despite the fact that they are worse than useless against the current threat.

Tribal instinct seemingly makes the Americans want to assume that the anthrax scare is directly connected with the destruction of the World Trade Center. Yet the evidence emerging from sophisticated DNA analysis of the anthrax itself has been more consistent with an inside job. The strains of anthrax employed are closely related to those developed by the US military, not to the ones used by Iraq or the former Soviet Union. And the deadly brew was prepared physically and chemically according to the secret US recipe. While all this does not rule out Osama bin Laden and his ilk, it does make their involvement less than a certainty.

So there is a tension between what the scientific analysis is saying, and what Americans might prefer to believe. And so much rests on the work of a small number of bacterial geneticists. Imagine what might have happened if the lab had found conclusive proof that the anthrax came from Iraq.

Most people still feel uneasy when faced with modern science and technology. And when its findings clash with their gut feelings, they find it difficult to trust. The theory of evolution, for example, might provide by far the most rational explanation of how life came to be as it is, but how many people understand and trust that explanation?

Now more than ever we need to come to an accord between sophisticated technology and instinctual common sense. Science doesn't always get the story right, and it certainly doesn't always find it easy to integrate new developments into our culture (look at the problems over genetically modified organisms). Such integration should be the job of our political and legal systems. But they can't do the work needed by the whole community without more knowledge and education about science. Perhaps the fact that so few people noticed the little mishap on the ABC news is a timely reminder of the need to raise our general level of science education. ■

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

Festivals, of course, need sponsors. This year's Swiss option was resourceful. According to chairman Jennifer Whitehead, the centenary of federation was 'an appropriate year to recognise the close ties Australia has with Switzerland, its influence constitutionally, and its presence economically, scientifically and culturally'. Well, it must be said, the Swiss influence on the Australian constitution was not huge, but no matter: sponsors are sponsors. And considerable ingenuity was evident in maintaining the Swiss theme throughout the festival, as Swiss composers are not thick on the ground. However, composers such as Martin and Bloch were honoured, and the contemporary Swiss composer, Christoph Neidhofer, was in residence.

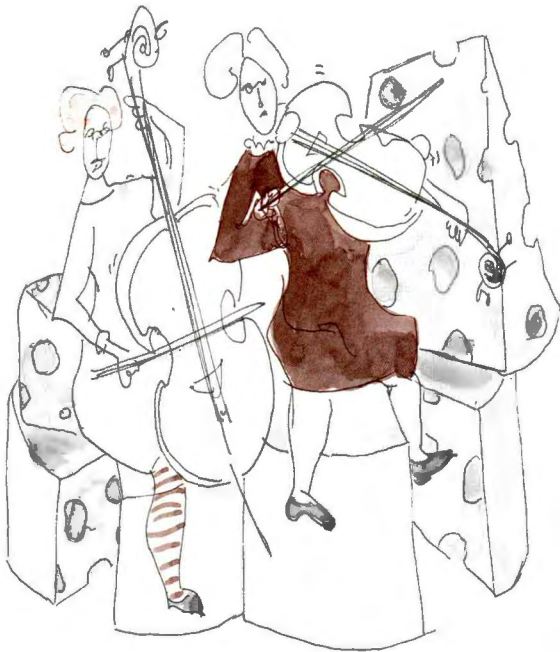
But elsewhere, Swiss connections were keenly sought too. So, for example, the delightful Duo Sol played a Brahms violin sonata allegedly composed in Switzerland (was Brahms sustained by chocolate and ice cream as we were?). A version of Stravinsky's *A Soldier's Tale* was staged, it being noted that it was based on a tale by Swiss writer Charles Ferdinand Ramuz (though only the skeleton of the original tale survived in this choreographed adaptation). Perhaps most ingeniously of all, the More Than Opera Company produced Ravel's one-act opera, *L'Heure Espagnol*, subtitled 'An Hour in the Life of the Clockmaker's Wife'. Well, Ravel was not Swiss—but clocks are. And Longines was the Festival's principal commercial sponsor. (And let me come clean here: I am on the board of More Than Opera, which provided the excuse for my visit. I hasten to add I paid for all my own tickets.)

Port Fairy provides an agreeable setting for a festival of this size. It is a historic town, conscious of its heritage. It is just far enough from Melbourne to take one beyond commuter and weekender territory. There are sufficient hotels, B&Bs, restaurants and coffee shops to cater for the needs of the festival influx. The main venues—the cinema, St John's Anglican Church, the school hall—are intimate and homely spaces and provide a refreshing change from the more clinical halls of the city. A certain informality prevails: the Fiorini Piano Trio, playing on the Saturday morning at St John's Church, had the dubious satisfaction of inspiring the birds under the eaves to make their own competitive musical contribution. The Trio gracefully accepted the compliment.

Part of this informality, it seemed, was a lack of any printed programs for the concerts, which depended instead on spoken

introductions. Unfortunately, the charming SBS arts presenter, Nym Kym, who introduced several concerts, had difficulty making herself heard, so that for those seated at the back of the church the programs remained something of a mystery, albeit a pleasant one.

The Swiss are an earnest lot, whether yodelling in the main street or playing a program of avant-garde music in the cinema.



The Ensemble für Neue Musik from Zurich wasn't notable for its playfulness as it worked its way through a percussive program. Melbourne soprano Merlyn Quaife made a brief contribution to a piece by the composer in residence, and looked serious about it too. Ice cream was much in demand when an unexpected interval was called.

But in the festival tent a kind of laid-back Aussie larrikinism prevailed as relays of pianists played Erik Satie's *Vexations* day and night in order to establish an entry in the Guinness Book of Records. Michael Easton was down to play from 2am to 4am on the Sunday morning, dressed in his night-shirt. It was a decidedly chilly night. I didn't check whether he maintained his vigil.

A modest festival such as this can also spring a surprise. Five fresh-faced and talented students from the Australian Ballet School danced a work, *Ascension*, choreographed by Leigh Rowles, and received a standing ovation. I can't remember if there was a Swiss connection, but who cares?  
—John Rickard

## See matters

ON THE ROLE OF BISHOPS

**T**HE BISHOPS' SYNOD, held in Rome during the immediate shock of the attack on New York, was concerned with the role of bishops in the contemporary church.

Its message to the church is a fine and thought-provoking document. As a message, it is pastoral in its tone, and does not come into the world padlocked by cast-iron references to other documents as the final synod documents usually do.

The quality of the text is reflected in the way it describes the relationships that shape a bishop's life. Instead of building abstract hierarchies articulated in legal and constitutional terms, the synod focuses on the lives and gifts of the people who are brought into relationship. It does not refer, for example, to Pope John Paul II as the one who enjoys primacy of jurisdiction over local churches, but as the pilgrim who visits and encourages them. His contribution to shaping community in the church is described personally.

In the same way, the synod emphasises the part that bishops play in encouraging and co-ordinating their communities through their relationships with many groups of people. It mentions and praises the gifts and commitment of priests, religious, theologians, politicians, youth and cultural leaders. In an attractive image, the bishop is described as the weaver of unity who encourages and co-ordinates the distinctive gifts of all these groups. The emphasis on community also explains the welcome and novel commendation to the bishops of a poor and simple way of life. This quality seems irrelevant in people whose position is defined in terms only of authority or of administration. But simplicity of lifestyle is indispensable in those who encourage and inspire others to live the Gospel.

The synod also addresses the current violence in world affairs. The message is addressed to the church, and so it situates public suffering and anxiety within the hope offered by the good news of Jesus Christ. Significantly, however, it locates terrorism and violence within the context of global poverty and gross inequality. It therefore urges world leaders to work for justice and peace. This larger setting of terrorism and of the responses made to it challenges the more shrill and narrow military and cultural perspectives on offer.

The message concludes intriguingly with a poignant appeal for Jerusalem, which is worth quoting in full:

We turn to you, Jerusalem,  
City where God is revealed in history:  
We pray for your well-being!  
May all the children of Abraham meet  
once again in you  
with genuine respect for one another's  
rights;  
May you remain, for all the peoples of  
the earth,  
an everlasting symbol of hope and peace.

It is easy to dismiss messages of synods as mere rhetoric which masks the failure to address issues such as the over-centralisation of the church. But this passage shows the importance and power of the rhetoric that is adopted by church documents. It draws on the symbolic power of the image of Jerusalem and its capacity to focus hope for a peaceful and transformed world. In referring to all the children of Abraham, it brings together Jews, Christians and Muslims in the image of a world at peace. And implicitly it makes a commitment to resolve old religious hatreds a condition of the credibility of Christian faith. This broad reach would be difficult to realise in a more discursive and defended document.

The message of the bishops has its limitations. But its vision of a peaceful world and the evocation of a harmonious and enabling church community is attractive. And its rhetoric provides a register against which the discordance of other tones—pessimistic, bellicose, authoritarian or brutal—can be heard. That is a service.

—Andrew Hamilton sj

*This month's contributors:* **Frank O'Shea** teaches at Marist College Canberra; **Andrew Bullen sj** is Rector of Jesuit Theological College, Melbourne; **Duncan Campbell** is a former diplomat who comments on current affairs; **Daniel Street** is a freelance writer; **John Rickard** is an honorary professorial fellow at Monash University; **Andrew Hamilton sj** is *Eureka Street's* publisher.

### October 2001 Book Offer Winners

D. Bright, Sherwood, QLD; Lyn Browne, Ballarat, VIC; J. Ellis, Darwin, NT; M. Ferla, Kew, VIC; M. Harries, Alice Springs, NT; P.W. Harris, Mornington, VIC; M.H. Henderson, West Moonah, TAS; J. Hudson, South Hobart, TAS; T. Mahedy, Culcairn, NSW; G. Morgan, Nyngan, NSW; A. Reid, Balwyn, VIC; P. Ryan, Box Hill, VIC; L. Shanahan, Mentone, VIC; J.M. Vodarovich, Claremont, WA; J. Woods, Ascot Vale, VIC.

# Thinkers in mind

**Tony Coady** pays tribute to three philosophers whose substance was matched by their originality and inimitable style.

**P**HILOSOPHY MAY be immortal, but its practitioners are all too mortal. The beginning of this year (and century) brought news of the deaths of three philosophers of note, two of them of international standing, the other of more local significance.

Elizabeth Anscombe died at 81 in England and Willard van Ormond Quine died at 92 in America. Don Gunner died at 79 in Melbourne. Quine was one of the outstanding American philosophers of the 20th century. His major contributions were to logic, philosophy of logic, philosophy of language, metaphysics and epistemology. He made no contribution to value theory, which may have been no bad thing given that his political views would have made George W. Bush seem left-wing. But I never met Quine and I want to talk about the two I did meet.

I knew Anscombe and Gunner well and owe the debts to both of them that any student owes inspiring teachers. I write in gratitude but also to pay tribute to the passing of two spectacular characters who belonged to an age when personal eccentricity and a sense of style were thought positive attributes of academics. Neither wore the grey uniforms of today's corporate academic. Neither would have scored high as 'team players', and neither sought nor secured research grants with industry. They were very different types, but were joined by certain similarities. First there was the influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein, second there was the matter of flamboyance. But the differences were also striking. Anscombe was a Catholic convert who turned to the church in her teens; Gunner was a spirited atheist who abandoned Protestantism in his

adolescence. Anscombe was productive and famous internationally as a star of post-war Oxford philosophy (though she hated the idea of being thought a purveyor of 'Oxford philosophy'). After many years in Oxford, she became Professor of Philosophy at Cambridge. Gunner hardly published at all and in later life became disillusioned with philosophy.

Elizabeth Anscombe became so close to Wittgenstein when she went from Oxford to Cambridge as a research student that she was made one of his executors and translated or helped translate his major works. Her own early writing was much under the Wittgenstein spell, a spell that had both liberating and crippling effects on many of his students. But Elizabeth was too much an individual to remain in thrall. She developed her own distinctive voice drawing upon a variety of sources including St Thomas, but most of all Aristotle. I vividly recall her delight when a nervous student in a class in Oxford slipped into calling her Miss Aristotle rather than Miss Anscombe. In personal style, she was unconventional, provocative and very formidable. She invariably wore a monocle and trousers on public occasions when the latter were not acceptable clothing for a woman in Oxbridge. In Chicago once, she went into the bar of a posh hotel and was told that trousers were unacceptable for a lady—she promptly took them off and went to drinks in her underwear.

She could be witty as well as outrageous. When someone objected to one of her views by citing her philosopher husband Peter Geach's contrary view, she replied, 'I'm not wedded to his opinions.'

Her philosophy was subtle and complex, but much of her religious and

theological outlook was almost fundamentalist. She had thought her way into the church as it was in the 1930s and the winds of change were not to shift her.

**D**ON GUNNER was a brilliant student at the University of Melbourne who went to Cambridge shortly after Wittgenstein's death in order to absorb the message from his follower John Wisdom. But the philosophical impetus had shifted to Gilbert Ryle and J.L. Austin at Oxford and Don was wrong-footed by this in a way that had a marked influence on his later development. Back in Melbourne, he was an inspiring teacher to generations of students, but (except for one article) he never published the interesting and unusual mix of ideas that he developed. He was a man of broad literary and cultural interests who made philosophy seem an important part of a civilised education. As his professor, Sandy Boyce Gibson once grudgingly conceded, 'Gunner is not an ignoramus.' He was merely bewildered by the idea that humanities disciplines like philosophy should exist in professional and technical isolation from other disciplines and from life. He thought the mission of an Arts Faculty was 'to civilise the city'.

Don had wonderful theatrical gifts: he had been on the stage in his student days as a magician with an act entitled 'Rondo Gun: Magic with a Bang', and his teaching was all performance. Don's comments in discussion were never of the common philosophical form: 'Yes, but I'm inclined to think ...' In response to a paper arguing that science had shown there was no such thing as solidity, he jumped up and down on the hard floor and thumped the solid table with his fists.



Both Don and Elizabeth had grave doubts about the justice of World War II. Don was a conscientious objector and told amusing stories about what must have been a grim ordeal during his detention. He later said that if he had known about the Holocaust he would never have been an objector. Elizabeth was shocked by the Allied terror bombings of Germany and Japan and opposed Oxford's granting of an honorary degree to Harry Truman, who had ordered the nuclear devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. She wrote and published a scathing pamphlet, 'Mr Truman's Degree', and demonstrated outside the Sheldonian while the degree was conferred. I suppose she wasn't thinking about the bad effect on the Oxford brand name. Rest in peace, Elizabeth; farewell, Don.

◆◆◆  
**S**OON AFTER I FINISHED writing about Anscombe and Gunner, word came of another loss from the ranks of philosophy. The distinguished American philosopher David Lewis died suddenly at his home in Princeton in October at the age of 60. He had been suffering for some time with complications arising from diabetes.

Lewis was in the forefront of the revival of metaphysics in the world of analytic philosophy in the last quarter of the 20th century, and his powerful, wide-ranging intellect ensured that whatever topic he addressed was treated with originality and verve. An obituary tribute from the Chair of the Princeton Philosophy Department claimed that he was the 'greatest systematic metaphysician' the world has seen since Leibniz. This struck me as a little hard on Kant and Hegel, but, allowing for the hyperbole of loss, the comment testifies to the magnitude of Lewis' achievement.

He was a regular visitor to Australia, spending most northern summers since the early 1970s in Oz, usually accompanied by his wife Stephanie. Both of them were tremendous fans of all things Australian, especially the Essendon Football Club and Australian philosophy, their devotion to these being trumped only by the depth of their devotion to each other.

Lewis' work in philosophy had a strong commonsensical streak but he didn't hesitate to strike out into territory

that left common sense well behind if he thought the argument required it. His advocacy of the view that all possible worlds were equally real was his most colourful adventure into extravagant territory. Imagine that the Axis powers won World War II and enslaved the world. With all sorts of consequences attached to that event we have a possible world or scenario that Lewis believed was just as real as the world we actually have. The actual world was only one of the myriad real worlds since every genuine possibility is part of some reality. It differs from the others in being actual, but this is merely the honorific title we give it because we are in it.

Hardly anyone wanted to follow Lewis into this terrain, but all found the structure of argument that took him there very difficult to fault. Most of his work in philosophy of mind, language, metaphysics and even applied philosophy was in fact independent of the possible worlds story and is discussed and debated wherever serious philosophy is done.

Like Anscombe and Gunner, Lewis was striking in appearance, manner and intellectual style. A tall, bulky figure wearing a wispy though comprehensive beard and an abstracted gaze, he never spoke unless he really had something to say. His most characteristic conversational stance was a disturbingly attentive silence. When you had finished your contribution, you learned to wait quietly for the insightful response, always suspecting that the Lewis pause was occasioned by the idiocy of your prior remarks. The effect could be eerie. The Oxford philosopher Gilbert Ryle once famously characterised Descartes' dualistic view of human beings as the doctrine of the 'ghost in the machine', and, taking his cue from this, the Australian philosopher David Armstrong wittily christened David Lewis 'the machine in the ghost'. This catches the intellectual steel, but obscures the warmth, kindness and flashes of humour that were equally characteristic of the man.

I remember a class in which a brash student reacted to a Lewis conclusion with that classically boring response, 'But that's only your opinion.' After a much briefer than usual pause, Lewis asked, 'You want I should have someone else's opinion?'

Lewis had a passion for trains. Not only did he have a complex model train-line in his Princeton basement, but he took immense pleasure in train trips and had a comprehensive knowledge of all things trainish. Travelling abroad, he would stay in grotty hotels just to be near

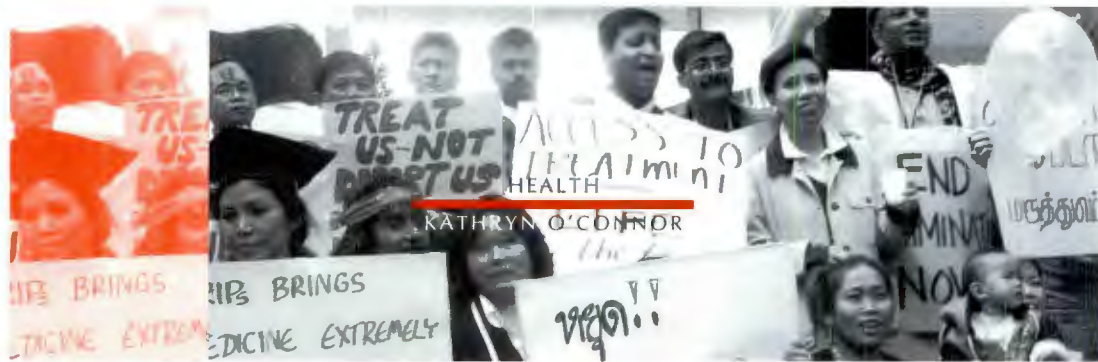


David Lewis, photographed in Canberra in 1998. A great friend to Australian philosophy, Lewis was also a habitual wearer of Blundstones.

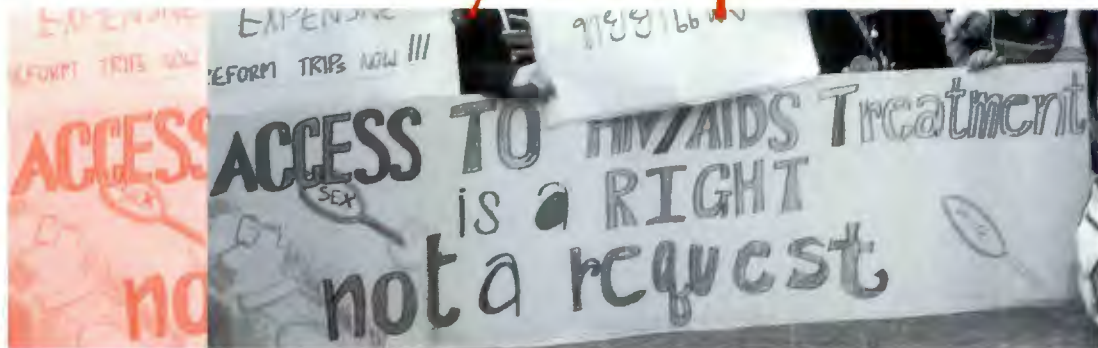
an historic railway station. He also loved universities and was delighted to receive an honorary Doctor of Letters from the University of Melbourne and an Honorary Fellowship of the Australian Academy of Humanities. He viewed with amazement the general decline in support for philosophy in Australian universities in the wake of the Dawkins 'reforms' and the broader destructive inroads of the desperate money-grubbing to which our universities have been reduced.

David was not at all religious, though he took religious beliefs seriously even when he couldn't share them and had many religious friends. These may cherish the hope that he now inhabits a possible world that has an actuality richer than he could have expected. ■

**Tony Coady** is Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics at the University of Melbourne.



# AIDS: why the poor die



Drugs, money and trade practices are part of the potent mix that makes AIDS a scourge of the developing world.

**T**HE RICH GET TREATMENT, the poor have to die.' These were the words of AIDS activist Celina DeCosta at the first session of 'Breaking Down Barriers', the Sixth International Conference on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP) in Melbourne this October. She should know. She is an HIV-positive woman living in India, where only a tiny percentage of the 3.9 million infected individuals (the largest HIV-positive population in the world) have access to life-prolonging antiretroviral drugs (ARVs). With 95 per cent of HIV-infected people living in the developing world, and 70 per cent of treated HIV patients living in the developed world, it clearly is a problem of rich and poor.

HIV incidence is not uniform across the Asia-Pacific region. Some countries, such as Bangladesh, the Philippines and Laos, show persistently low rates. Areas of high incidence include Cambodia (2.8 per cent of the population), Burma and India. But there are widespread difficulties with access to treatment for HIV-infected people. Drug pricing is one part of this complex problem.

TRIPS, the dirty word in the HIV/AIDS drug price war (and at ICAAP) stands for Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights. This World Trade Organisation

(WTO) agreement came in on 1 January 1995 with a ten-year grace period for developing countries to comply. It protects the patent rights of companies and guarantees royalties. For drugs, patent protection must be guaranteed for a minimum of 20 years.

During ICAAP, a colourful crowd of several hundred activists, workers from non-government organisations (NGOs) and people living with HIV/AIDS stopped traffic on the Spencer Street Bridge between the Melbourne Exhibition Centre and the Melbourne Convention Centre. They chanted in multiple languages: 'Drugs for all!' and 'People before profits!'; and held banners: 'TRIPS turn life to death', 'Compassionate Commerce: We need drugs! We need them now!' and 'WTO: Bad For Your Health'. Professor Rob Moodie, CEO of the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and co-chair of the conference, addressed the crowd. 'Thank you ... for being the voice of PLWHA [People Living With HIV/AIDS], the voices of those who have been pushed out to the side and need to be brought into the centre.'

His message is timely, given a recent attempt by developing nations to bring these voices directly to the WTO. In September the TRIPS Council met to discuss the impact of TRIPS on access to medicines.

At the meeting a draft declaration was put forward by 60 developing nations stating that 'nothing in the TRIPS agreements shall prevent members from taking measures to protect public health'. This declaration was opposed by the US and Switzerland (both countries with large pharmaceutical industries), Japan and Canada. A revised declaration without the 'public health' clause is due to be tabled at another meeting of the council in Qatar in November. Australia has already signed. Many NGOs fear that this will set in stone TRIPS and the predicted dire consequences of putting 'profits before people'.

Around the time of the September meeting, pharmaceutical industry representatives were claiming that the consequences of TRIPS might not be so dire. In their defence, they cited an interpretation of the African situation by Amir Attaran of the Harvard Center for International Development and Lee Gillespie-White of the International Intellectual Property Institute, who claim that 'patents have generally not been a factor in either pharmaceutical economics or antiretroviral drug treatment access'. Their research compared prices of patented and non-patented drugs and found little significant difference. They concluded that other barriers, like poor health infrastructure, were more important and claimed that even if prices for ARVs came down, Africa would not be able to afford them.

African NGOs reacted strongly to this research. They pointed out that many of the non-patented drugs used in the comparison were combinations not used in areas with high levels of HIV because of special dietary requirements and the need for monitoring for side effects. Their experience in the field showed that patented drugs cost at least three times as much as non-patented drugs (even at the lower prices now being offered by some pharmaceutical companies). They also suggested that one of the authors received funding from pharmaceutical giant Merck, and that the research shows how data can be manipulated to give a desired result. Why would the South African government spend three years in court fighting the Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association to override patents if a problem did not exist?

Patents are important; true innovation should be protected; funding for future research should be protected. But most research undertaken by drug companies is to improve existing products, not to develop completely new drugs. Developing nations cannot be expected to bear the cost of protecting patent rights while receiving little benefit from the research and development those profits fund. Companies should receive a reasonable return from their products but how do we define reasonable? And what does this say of the value we place on human life?

The view that Africa cannot afford even generically produced drugs is harsh but true. The same goes for India which has a thriving pharmaceutical industry as a result of current patent laws allowing

for generic manufacturing of drugs including anti-retrovirals (violating TRIPS). Cipla makes Trio-immune—a single tablet containing three antiretroviral drugs for around US\$480 per patient per year. By comparison, standard 'triple therapy' in the US costs between US\$12,000 and US\$15,000 per patient per year. But the lower price is still well beyond the budget of the average Indian who has an annual income of less than US\$500. And HIV rates in India are highest among the poor and marginalised, those with low to negligible annual incomes. The market for locally made drugs is restricted to upper-middle-class Indians and export around Asia.

The Indian government's funding of HIV treatment extends to a pilot program of drug prevention of mother-to-child transmission and prevention of infection after exposure to the virus for health workers. They also fund treatment of secondary infections like TB. Long-term treatment with ARVs is just too expensive. Public HIV programs focus mainly on prevention, difficult in a country where sex is rarely spoken of, and where the groups most affected—IV drug users, commercial sex workers and men who have sex with men—are already discriminated against. And there is little incentive to have an HIV test when testing positive means further discrimination and when no treatment is offered.

Can foreign aid foot the bill for treatment? At the New York UN Summit on HIV/AIDS in June 2001, US\$644 million was pledged to the global fight against AIDS. A place to start. But treating the current Indian HIV-positive population with generically produced ARVs would cost around US\$1.8 billion per year. And as the Attaran and Gillespie-White research pointed out, it's not just drugs that are needed. There are other huge barriers in the fight against HIV.

This became startlingly clear to me at the ICAAP Conference during a conversation with George Swamy of the John Paul Slum Development Project in Pune, India. I asked him whether any of the HIV-infected people he looked after were receiving treatment. He shook his head firmly. I asked what he thought the barriers were. Once again he shook his head. He said, 'We don't think or talk about treatment, nobody would listen.' He removed a dog-eared scrapbook from his bag. It was puckered and buckled with the glue which held photos to the pages. Photos of his work in the slums.

*I asked George Swamy, of the John Paul Development Project in Pune, whether any of the HIV-infected people he looked after were receiving treatment. He shook his head firmly. I asked what he thought the barriers were. Once again he shook his head. He said, 'We don't think or talk about treatment, nobody would listen.'*

"In Australia, a worrying hardening of heart is emerging, and not just toward asylum seekers. It is deeply troubling that a rhetoric of rejection is emerging as the favoured way to respond to refugees."

*Archbishop Watson's Presidential Address to Synod.*

"We must define ourselves not as victims of an atrocious crime against humanity, nor as citizens of a great nation under attack, but as disciples of Jesus."

*The Revd Paul Perini preaching in New York in the wake of September 11.*

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Pune is in Southern Maharashtra, three hours by fast train inland from Mumbai. It has a population of 3.5 million people, around 60 per cent of whom live in slums (makeshift housing on illegal land). Their presence is tolerated by the authorities because they serve as a 'vote bank' for the local government, but these areas have little provision for sanitation, fresh water, electricity, education or basic health care. Around 2.5-3 per cent of slum dwellers are HIV-positive.

George Swamy's photos showed row upon row of shelters made of scrap metal, plastic and cardboard, a woman throwing refuse into shallow gutters between houses, extended families crowded into tiny rooms. As he turned the pages he said, 'There is no way to talk about HIV until we have addressed the immediate need.' His project liaises with government agencies and NGOs to begin to provide basic infrastructure, and acts on behalf of people to negotiate daily wages, access to ration cards and basic health care. 'This way we can get the trust of the people.'

Despite the high levels of HIV in the slums, this community knows little about the disease. 'They see people around them dying,' says Mr Swamy, 'but through fear and ignorance they throw them out of the house.'

His organisation provides a mobile service which attempts to remove sick people from the streets, to find and educate their families, bring doctors to treat secondary infections, to support home-based care of the dying. For the dead who have been abandoned, they organise funerals and burial. For the living, they attempt to provide information about prevention. In this community there is no question that HIV is a terminal disease.

In the slums of Pune where basic human needs are a luxury, treatment of HIV is the icing on an invisible cake. Pharmaceutical companies maintain that, in this context, patents are only a minuscule part of the problem. This 'all too hard' argument has resonance in developed and developing countries alike. The idea is that the divide between rich and poor is becoming too difficult to bridge. Some still believe it is important to try. At the Melbourne ICAAP Conference NGOs talked loudly and passionately about solutions.

Until 2005 India will be able to make cheap generically produced drugs, but even so, most of its HIV-positive population will be unable to afford to buy them. HIV is a treatable disease in the developed world and a terminal disease in the developing world. TRIPS, if it goes ahead, will reinforce this inequality. ■

**Kathryn O'Connor** is a freelance writer.

*George Swamy's organisation is the John Paul Slum Development Project, Post Bag No.5, Yerwada, Pune - 6, India; email: [jpsdpin@yahoo.com.uk](mailto:jpsdpin@yahoo.com.uk).*



# Some kind of shelter

Wars may rage but people will always need something—even a simple flap of canvas—to protect them from the cold or the heat or the dust. **Michele M. Gierck** meets an Australian engineer who has become the ‘man who knows about tents’. **Mathias Heng** documents life for Afghan refugees in Pakistan.



**I**N THE LEAD-UP to the US military deployment in Afghanistan, ABC news announced that 75,000 more tents would be required on the Afghanistan–Pakistan border to cope with the expected refugee influx. I began wondering about those tents.

Were tent-makers around the globe furiously working overtime in their workshops, sewing seams and flaps? If so, where exactly were they and what sort of tents were they making?

Tents are a critical component of many emergency humanitarian responses, providing shelter for millions of refugees and internally displaced people (those who flee, but technically remain within the borders of their country of origin). What’s more, accommodation which begins as temporary in nature, can become increasingly permanent, as displaced people find no possibility of returning home and little chance of resettlement in a third country.

Ray Coughran, an Australian engineer deployed through RedR (an organisation that runs an international register of engineers for emergency humanitarian situations), worked in Ingushetia with the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) as a water/sanitation and shelter specialist. He is a man who knows about tents: procuring them, setting them up with all the required ancillary services and, at times, investigating why they burned down.



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His work as a shelter specialist included the set-up of refugee camps and improving the living conditions of thousands of displaced families, the vast majority of them women and children, living in appalling conditions in farm sheds and old railway carriages—what is officially referred to as ‘spontaneous settlements’.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Republic of Chechnya in the north Caucasus declared its independence. The Moscow-led response included the 1995 ‘offensive’ by Russian troops to secure the area for the Russian Federation.

Yet it was not able to achieve its objective. In 1999 the Russian Federation attempted once more to retake Chechnya, this time flattening the capital city of Grozny. The conflict was brutal, with massive mountain attacks and military ‘cleansing’ exercises. Many people ‘disappeared’. Since 1995, it is estimated that tens of thousands of Russian Federation soldiers and Chechen separatists have been killed. As a result, more than a quarter of a million Chechens fled, many to neighbouring Ingushetia.

While 60 per cent of those who fled to Ingushetia were taken in by host

families, 20,000 found themselves in spontaneous settlements, barely able to survive, and an equal number were in tent camps. Of all of the internally displaced people, those in spontaneous settlements were the most vulnerable. An old animal shed 100 x 20m, which once accommodated 5000 cows, was now home to up to 1500 people. With dried manure on the floor, and no ventilation, insulation, lighting or water, respiratory and other diseases were rife.

Ray Coughran was one of the co-ordinators setting up new tent camps for 12,000 people to be moved from the

### Images of the unaccommodated

Previous page: In Peshawar, Pakistan, the makeshift shelter of thousands of refugees from Kabul who arrived five days before the US air strikes began; and an Afghan child in his Pakistani home.

These pages, clockwise from left:

1. Afghan women with their children, suffering from malnutrition and diarrhoea, in the Peshawar Government Hospital, in Pakistan 40km from the Afghanistan border.



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2. Mother and recovering child in the Peshawar Government Hospital.

3. Pro-Taliban protesters in Peshawar, 8 October.

4. The 11-year-old protester holding the brick is shouting, 'America is a terrorist!'

5. Raising a smile: Afghan sisters in the Peshawar camp, ten days after their arrival from Kabul.

6. Mother and daughter, in their tent, four days after arriving from Kabul.

7. Peshawar: Afghan refugees in the market, hoping for food and help from the locals, 3 October.

8. Afghan refugees hoping to get information about Afghanistan from photographer, Mathias Heng.



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spontaneous settlements, prior to the onslaught of punishing winter conditions in the Caucasus. With little lead-time and insufficient funding, the logistical challenge began.

First on the list was the procurement of tents—3000 of them. As the UNHCR has links with a Pakistani supplier of tents (most useful in the current Afghanistan–Pakistan border refugee crisis), 2000 Pakistani tents were purchased. One of the advantages of the Pakistani tents was that large stocks were available and more could be manufactured on demand.

**I**N THE MEANTIME, on-site at the tent camp, the basic groundwork was being prepared: roads, drainage, water, electricity and gas, as well as the gravel base for the tents, to stop them floating away in winter. The anticipation of moving from overcrowded, unheated, rat-infested disused railway carriages or farm sheds, into more bearable living conditions inspired hope in lives that were otherwise despairing and traumatised.

International procurement, however, can be a slow process. Used Swedish tents were delayed for over two months in the customs process, because of problems with language, documentation and the transfer of customs fees between government agencies. When the Swedish tents did arrive, only 50 of the 850 tents were suitable. One quarter of them were damaged and used for the repair of other tents, while others were given to families attempting to return to their homeland.

Delays in the procurement of Pakistani tents caused other problems. The mood in the spontaneous settlements degenerated dramatically. Community monitors reporting back to the UNHCR became concerned for their own safety. Many of the women who had been displaced since 1999 became anxious, if not angry, in the face of another extreme winter in inhuman conditions. They took on the role of presenting the community's concerns—a role they would have been most unlikely to have assumed in pre-conflict Chechen society.

This was not the only transformation taking place. Coping with the technical side of establishing a refugee camp is one thing, but dealing with the human aspect is another. Did the thought ever cross Coughran's mind, 'What's a nice bloke like me doing in a place like this?' One senses so. Yet there was too much to be done, and little time for pondering, especially when all UN staff were under 24-hour armed guard because of the high incidence of kidnapping. 'Kidnapping is a way of life for some in this region,' he explains, and internationals were considered prime targets. Prior to Coughran's arrival in the region, a UNHCR Head of Office had been kidnapped and held for ten months. Other

thinking, Coughran solved the problem by cutting off the flaps.

The most suitable tents were locally supplied from St Petersburg. These were triple-walled tents with a waterproof, insulation and hygienic layer, sliding windows and stove heaters. The 60m<sup>2</sup> of tent provided accommodation for two families, or up to 20 people. Had the economy of the Russian Federation not been in such difficulty, the manufacture and supply of essentials such as tents and stoves for the construction of the refugee camps might not have been so challenging.

Just after the second tent camp had been built, in the middle of winter, people from the spontaneous settlements moved in. For them, Coughran explains, 'the tent was like a palace'. They had privacy, warm living conditions and access to water and heating. The children were so happy they were out playing in the lanes between the tents. Snow covered the ground, and the children were dragging each other around on pieces of cardboard—homemade sleds.

Coughran, a quiet, polite man, with over 30 years of engineering experience, reflects, 'A tent to a person who is used to living in a house is probably not regarded very highly. But to a refugee who has lived in a railway wagon under inhuman conditions—overcrowding, severe cold, rat and lice infestations—to move into a warm, new tent is just a wonderful experience.'

One senses that Coughran is proud that he was able to make a difference. A small difference perhaps, but a significant one as displaced and dislocated Chechen families moved into dignified housing—that is, into Russian or Pakistani tents.

With the recent strengthening of the alliance between Presidents Bush and Putin, and the subsequent easing of international pressure for a resolution of the Chechen crisis, the displaced communities Coughran worked with look set for at least one more winter in their tent camps, if not longer. ■

**Michele M. Gierck** is a freelance writer.



Peshawar, Pakistan, 8 October: local businessmen lock themselves up in order not to get caught in the crossfire between pro-Taliban supporters and riot police. Many local shops were destroyed.

non-government organisations working in the same area had also been subject to kidnapping and shooting. It's not really the kind of reassuring information one writes on postcards to friends and family.

When the Pakistani tents arrived after a six-week delay, they were in good condition and speedily erected. These two-walled tents were suitable for six to eight people, yet lacked sufficient insulation for the sub-zero temperatures, which reach as low as minus 20°C. To cope with the conditions, blankets were hung on the inside of the walls and heaters ran all night. Occasionally tents burned down as non-essential flaps caught in the heating apparatus. It was devastating for people to lose the few possessions they had escaped with. With a little lateral





# Japan's Afghan expedition

While the world focuses on Afghanistan and the war on terrorism, Japan has made a major shift away from its post Second World War 'pacifism in one country' stance, to assume a diplomatic and military role in the region. From Japan, **Gavan McCormack** analyses the implications of the change.

**O**N SEPTEMBER 11, New York and Washington were attacked. Three weeks later, on 7 October, after intense diplomatic efforts, the 'Global Coalition against Terror' began retaliatory operations against Afghanistan. Though supported in various ways by many governments, the initial force was Anglo-American. Units from Canada, France, Italy, Australia and Germany, together with Japanese logistic, intelligence and humanitarian support, were expected to follow. The world's richest and most powerful countries, under unquestioned US leadership and without Asian or African representation save for the units from Japan, began bombing one of the world's poorest countries, Afghanistan.

By the end of October the war had wrought heavy civilian casualties and destruction of social infrastructure, and it had driven thousands of people from their homes without dislodging its supposed targets, Osama bin Laden and the Taliban leadership. As fresh recruits gathered in neighbouring countries to support the Taliban cause, Washington talked of a war that might continue for years.

In November (as I write) winter gripped Afghanistan and the Islamic holy

season of Ramadan began. Japanese, Australian, and other forces set off to join this war, directly in combat in the Australian case and indirectly in a support role in the Japanese case. The legislation that underpins the Japanese Self-Defence Forces dispatch stipulates various conditions and limitations, but the leaders of both countries, backed by substantial parliamentary majorities, pledge their unqualified support to the American cause and American leadership, so that the Australian and Japanese flags may be seen flying alongside the Stars and Stripes.

In the Gulf War, conducted by President Bush's father, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians were killed and the country laid waste. The suffering of civilians, especially women and children, continues to this day because of the sanctions, but Saddam Hussein and his regime remain. The UN's Human Rights Commissioner, Mary Robinson, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Jean Ziegler, Oxfam and other aid organisations all stress that the situation in Afghanistan is extremely dire. They warn of a vast tragedy that will unfold if the bombing continues to block relief and

food supply operations for a population that, in the mountain parts of the country especially, will be cut off and face starvation as the winter deepens. Estimates of the likely casualties range from about half a million to 7.5 million. For Australia, Japan, and other countries to pledge their support for the bombing and the war under these circumstances is to embrace, in the name of security and justice, a revenge war with potentially genocidal consequences. Fighting terror with terror is as likely to spawn terrorists as to contain or eradicate them, and to diminish rather than enhance security, raising the likelihood of the conflict spilling over to engulf the region.

## The Japanese response

For several days after September 11, the Japanese government did not respond other than by expressions of shock and sympathy. It was suddenly galvanised, however, by blunt advice from US Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, on 15 September that it make sure that the Rising Sun flag be visible in the coming war. This was followed a little later by the advice that it was time for Japan to pull its head out of the sand.

In the space of a few days—while the US-planned operations were being described in Washington as a clash of good against evil, a ‘crusade’, under the name ‘Infinite Justice’ and with the old Western slogan of ‘Wanted—Dead or Alive’ applied to Osama bin Laden—the Japanese response was prepared.

The ‘7 Point Plan’ for Japanese co-operation was drawn up, apparently under close direction by the prime minister, and published on 19 September. A few days later the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Forces were mobilised to escort a US aircraft-carrier departing from Yokosuka en route for the war zone. In due course the legislation to incorporate the prime minister’s design was drafted and passed both houses of the Diet on 29 October. Under the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, the Self-Defence Forces were authorised to provide ‘non-combat and humanitarian’ support, including transport of weapons and ammunition, to the US-led coalition in the Indian Ocean, and to carry and, if necessary, use weapons. By separate legislation the Japanese coast guard was authorised to fire on suspicious vessels in Japanese waters.

The legislation was subjected to a debate that was almost perfunctory, amounting in total to 62 hours, as compared with 179 hours for the International Peace Co-operation Law of 1992 and 154 hours for the Guidelines legislation of 1999. The novelist Nosaka Akiyuki observed acridly that never before had any Japanese prime minister acted so swiftly and decisively to commit the nation on issues of such magnitude. While scorning what he described as Prime Minister Koizumi’s combination of deviousness, inferiority and cravenness towards US President Bush, he pointed to the disaster into which Japan plunged with its last ‘holy war’ (1931–1945, first against China and then much of the world).

Though occasioned by the events of September 11, the Japanese participation represents a further step in a slow process of ‘coming out’ by the Japanese military (the Self-Defence Forces, or SDF). September 11 was providential in the sense that Japanese governments have long been seeking to advance their quest for ‘normalcy’—‘normalcy’ meaning the normalcy of a great power, able to possess and project military force on a global

scale and therefore entitled to a seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Furthermore, apart from military and humanitarian co-operation, a large financial contribution would clearly be required of Japan. In the immediate aftermath of the September catastrophe, while Wall Street remained closed and the collapse of the dollar was a possibility, the Japanese government committed a staggering ¥3 trillion to financial markets to hold up the dollar. That sum alone was more than double Japan’s contribution to the costs of the Gulf War, and it was only a down payment.

Still to come would be a substantial contribution to the actual war budget, plus, as President Bush and others repeatedly stressed, a central role in the post-war reconstruction of Afghanistan and its surrounding region. Koizumi’s stress on the dispatch of the SDF contrasted with Bush’s insistence that Japan clean up its bad loans and fix its economy.

At the crucial White House meeting on 25 September, Koizumi committed the SDF even without Bush’s asking for them. He then made the following remarkable speech, in English, at the press conference that followed on the White House lawns: ‘I’m very pleased to say, we are friends. Had a great talk, friendly. And I convey what I am thinking. We Japanese are ready to stand by the United States government to combat terrorism. We could make sure of this global objective. We must fight terrorism with a determination and a patience. Very good meeting. Fantastic meeting.’

His excitement over the ‘great talk’ and the ‘fantastic meeting’, and his friendship with the US president, were oddly out of keeping with the gravity of the occasion and the immensity of the commitment he was making. When asked by the press corps as to the extent of the financial contribution that Japan would make, he responded with one word: ‘Everything.’ It was an unscripted moment, but one in which Koizumi expressed his real sentiments. The huge sum that Japan paid for the Gulf War in 1991 was already a burden, requiring special taxes to pay for it, but then the country’s coffers were flush with money; by 2001 they were empty.

As the special legislation passed the Japanese Diet on 29 October, it could be

seen as a triumph for the US and, to a lesser extent, Australia. Japan is seen at last to be overcoming its war-and-defeat syndrome, moving from ‘pacifism in one country’ to assume a diplomatic and military role in the region commensurate with its status as the world’s number two economy.

Three sets of questions are raised by this process: the legal basis for the war to which Japan commits its support, the constitutional implications, and the question of the wisdom of this, as distinct from other possible ways Japan might have chosen to intervene.



### Legality

The attacks on New York and Washington were immediately described, by the president and others, as acts of war. The term stuck, and led to the retaliatory actions in Afghanistan. The alternative term ‘crime against humanity’ might equally have been adopted with very different consequences—police and judicial action to seek out and punish those responsible for planning and executing the deeds. This would have followed the precedent of the tribunals specially set up by the UN to try crimes committed in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, some of which are of similar magnitude—in terms of victims—to those in New York and Washington. The US had been engaged with the Taliban in talks designed to secure the handover of Osama bin Laden for trial even before September 11. After the attacks, the Taliban actually offered to hand him over for trial, an offer which may or may not

have been serious but which in the event the US ignored. It preferred, or believed there was no alternative to, war. In other words, before we even turn to legal questions, the factual claim on which the war is justified is at best dubious and at worst false.

The legal justification for the bombing and invasion of Afghanistan rests on Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, the 'self-defence' clause. The position taken by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan is that the two Security Council resolutions, of 12 and 28 September, which affirm the right under Article 51

and the expectation of continuing for years, is to part with established understandings of the law and to abdicate its own responsibility for matters of peace and international order. The process, however dubious, seems nevertheless to have been given a seal of approval, with the subsequent award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Kofi Annan and the UN.

The most influential defence of the war as legitimate, the 'first truly just war since World War II', necessary to defeat 'genocidal' and 'apocalyptic terrorism', was advanced by Richard Falk, well known and respected as a scholar and

York and Washington. The Secretary-General's support for the US complicates matters, but his understanding of the law cannot actually change the law.

The most severe legal assessment is that given by the Canadian specialist in international criminal law, Michael Mandel:

The bombing of Afghanistan is the legal and moral equivalent of what was done to the Americans on September 11. We may come to remember this day, not for its human tragedy, but for the beginning of a headlong plunge into a violent, lawless world.

Although most Japanese almost certainly support the principle of close co-operation with both the UN and the US, few have grasped the fact that the US sees itself as above the law and has long worked to ensure that the UN function only as its instrument, endorsing, but not interfering in, its policy aims and actions. The attempts within the UN to set up a special jurisdiction, known as the International Criminal Court, to try major crimes such as genocide, war crimes and major crimes against humanity, has been resisted by the US (although President Clinton did attach his signature in one of the last acts of his presidency). This court has still not been established because the Treaty of Rome requires ratification by 60 countries and so far only 43 have given it. The Bush administration is implacably opposed.

As for the World Court, which handles disputes between states, the US withdrew from it in 1986 when the United States itself was found guilty of 'unlawful use of force' (the mining of harbours and funding of the Contras, in effect terrorism) against Nicaragua. Other recent acts by the US authorities have also been probably illegal in the strict sense, including the decade-long bombing of Iraq and the 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia.

In these matters, as in its rejection of the Kyoto Agreement on Climate Change and its decision to secede from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the US insists it is a country above the law. Richard Perle, a key figure in the Reagan administration and an adviser to the Bush administration, told a conference in Toronto in May 2001 (as noted by a senior Canadian government official, Gordon Smith) that



to 'individual and collective self-defence' and the need to combat threats 'by all means', are sufficient authorisation for the war. Neither Annan nor the UN demurred from the view expressed by the US ambassador to the UN, John Negroponte, that the US entitlement was without defined limits and extended to the right to 'further actions with regard to other organisations and other states', or from President Bush's statements that the war may continue for two years or more. It seems that the US is being issued a blank cheque. Furthermore, the limits of the Article 51 right as it had hitherto been understood are plain. The legal right to 'self-defence' is confined to cases that are 'instant, overwhelming, and leaving no choice of means, and no moment for deliberation'. Revenge is forbidden. For the UN to authorise the launch of the war on Afghanistan one month after the attacks on New York and Washington, with possible broad regional expansion

advocate of international peace and justice. While declaring the war legitimate, however, Falk insisted that the legitimacy was dependent: the means must be appropriate to the end of 'the destruction of both the Taliban regime and the al Qaeda network'; 'the justice of the cause and of the limited ends' could be negated by 'improper means and excessive ends'; the 'relevant frameworks of moral, legal and religious restraint' must be scrupulously respected. As the weeks of war lengthen and the casualties among civilian Afghan people mount, with millions of people fleeing, it is clear that those frameworks are not being respected; the principles of necessity, proportionality, discrimination and humanity are being violated. Falk's theoretical justification fails in practice when his own conditions are applied. No reading of international law can justify the terror bombing of Afghanistan as retaliation for the terror bombing of New

the United States 'should not be bound by any international agreements that would restrict its unilateral capacity to ensure American security. The friends of the United States should have no worries about a "Pax Americana" since America's intentions are benign.' However, as Smith observes, 'If the United States is not to be constrained or accountable to anyone outside its sovereign borders, why should anybody else? Why should anybody accept international norms and rules?'

The initial rationale for this clause was to reassure Japan's neighbours, including Australia, that there was nothing to fear from a Japan which, at American insistence, would retain at its helm the same emperor who had just led it through fascism and war. When a post-war Japanese military was established (in 1950), it was called first a 'National Police Reserve' (1950) and then the 'Self-Defence Forces' (1954). Throughout the Cold War the SDF played a passive and subsidiary role to the US, which prose-

But these slow shifts by Japan have fed the US desire to turn it into a full and active alliance partner. Most recently, the 'Armitage report' (after Richard Armitage, who became Deputy Secretary of State in the Bush administration) of October 2000, the Rand Corporation report of June 2001, and Armitage's September 2001 advice to Japan were signs of the growing pressure. The goal seems to be to have Japan become a 'partner', rendering full military, political and diplomatic support on a global scale, as the 'Britain' of East Asia. The insistence on the need for Japan to revise its constitution is implicit in the Armitage Report, and explicit in the Rand Report, whose Recommendation 3 (Executive Summary) reads: 'Support efforts in Japan to revise its constitution, to expand its horizon beyond territorial defense, and to acquire capabilities for supporting coalition operations.' The Americans insist that the SDF should be able to engage not only in peacekeeping operations where some enforcement might be expected, but also in collective self-defence; that is, full military operations.

The constitutional problem with this is two-fold. First, the legitimacy of the SDF, despite Article 9 ('land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained'), rests exclusively on the inherent right of all states to self-defence. Already tenuous because of the contradiction with the words of Article 9, recognition of the 'collective self-defence' principle would open the way to joint participation in military operations up to and including war, thus emptying the clause of virtually all content. As with the Richard Perle statement of American unilateralism, the Japanese would be saying, in effect: 'we will do whatever we find necessary for collective security as determined by the US, but our intentions will always be benign'.

Legislation in 1999 authorised participation by the SDF in 'rear support' in the case of 'situations' in areas surrounding Japan, but participation in the international force for Afghanistan, by any reasonable definition, goes beyond even this deliberately vague formulation; hence the special enabling legislation. The Washington consensus is shared by the Australian bureaucracy, media, and political leadership, which is also 'realist', urging Japan to become a 'normal

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For countries heavily dependent on the US, the implications of being forced to endorse these attitudes are profound, but a true debate on such questions in Japan would be difficult and painful because it would raise unpalatable questions about the entire US-Japan relationship. As one prominent Japanese scholar wrote:

The United States, which claims to be the world's policeman, has been acting on its own values, logic and interests since the end of the Cold War, ignoring the United Nations and other international circles. It is the United States that is becoming a rogue state.

### **War participation and the peace constitution**

Ever since 1946, when the US imposed on Japan its 'peace constitution', Japan's leaders have been seeking ways to circumvent or revise it, to delete or neutralise Article 9:

(1) Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

(2) In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognised.

cuted wars in Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf from its chain of bases scattered the length of the Japanese archipelago. However, as the SDF grew in size and sophistication of equipment the US became increasingly dissatisfied with passive support limited to hosting, and paying for the bases. It pressed Japan to do more.

In 1991, even though it bankrolled the Gulf War to the tune of US\$13 billion, Japan was roundly criticised for having done 'too little, too late' because it declined on constitutional grounds to participate in the Multinational Force. Tokyo was shocked—even, in the view of some commentators, traumatised—by the criticism, and has ever since been struggling to overcome the 'handicap' of its constitution.

In 1992 the International Peace Co-operation Law was passed, under which Japanese SDF units were dispatched overseas, first to Cambodia, then to Mozambique, the Golan Heights, Rwanda and Honduras, but always in non-combat (post-conflict) roles, constructing roads, helping run refugee camps and hospitals. In the East Timor crisis of 1999–2000, where there was a perceived risk of being embroiled in conflict, Japanese forces were at first withheld, but it seems clear that as the situation stabilises they will be dispatched early in 2002.

state', that is, to overcome its inhibitions about the possession or exercise of military force. Neither the US nor the Australian government feels sympathy today for the pacifist aspiration they once cultivated in Japan.

Throughout the Cold War, conservative Japanese governments were committed to revision, but they could never muster the political forces to accomplish it. After the Cold War, too, despite a concerted campaign by conservative political parties, media groups and bureaucrats, revision remained politically impossible. Popular Japanese commitment to the peace clause held firm even though, under a policy of 'revision by interpretation', the words were simply emptied of much of their meaning.

Nevertheless, although the most recent opinion surveys show a majority in favour of constitutional revision (47 per cent to 36 per cent), the revision that they want is one that would allow direct election of the prime minister, greater devolution of powers from Tokyo to the regions, better provision for privacy, and environmental rights. Revision of Article 9, the cause promoted by Washington (and Canberra) and endorsed by conservative Japanese politicians, is supported by only between three and five per cent of the Japanese people. If those who favour clarification of the self-defence power (that is, by changing the interpretation but not the words) are added to the literal revisionists, the total comes to 41 per cent, as against 46 per cent in favour of retaining or even reinforcing the peace commitment of Article 9 (by moving to unarmed neutrality). This means that, while Japan's governments—and their powerful foreign friends—in recent decades have fought to impose their vision of Japan as a great power seated in the Security Council, armed and deploying its forces globally like other great powers, the Japanese people have retained a commitment to the constitutional ideal of a distinctive 'peace power' identity.

It is of course clear that opinion shifted somewhat after September 11. Those who believe the constitution should be 'reinterpreted' to allow participation in collective security jumped suddenly from 25 per cent in August to 52 per cent by mid-September after the attacks in New York and Washington.

Co-operation with the US in anti-terrorism measures is very strongly supported (62 per cent in September, rising to 71 per cent in October), but still, reflecting the confusion in the public mind as to what 'collective security' means, more than half the people believe such support should be confined to medical and refugee aid. A Mainichi survey found that only six per cent believed the SDF should be able to offer logistic support to the American forces. Most, by 46 to 42, opposed the dispatch of the SDF that the prime minister promised, although by 16 October a majority was apparently prepared to support the special legislation that would authorise its dispatch (51:29 according to Asahi, 57:37 according to Mainichi and 57:39 according to Kyodo). By a small majority (46 per cent in Asahi, 63 per cent in Kyodo) even the bombing was supported. The confusion in this was palpable.

Whatever the legislation, however, the engagement in joint military operations in the Indian Ocean, Pakistan and Afghanistan of forces whose only justification is 'self-defence' stretches the self-defence principle to the limit. Secondly, whatever else they are doing, as Japan rushes to dispatch forces—including (if Prime Minister Koizumi has his way) its missile and torpedo-equipped,

Koizumi). While the humanitarian role is not to be belittled, critics insist it could be better performed by a disaster-response unit trained in the necessary skills, rather than a force of professional soldiers whose only *raison d'être* is the defence of the Japanese islands from attack.

Although the Japanese forces are not being sent to fight, the careful distinctions being advanced in Tokyo as to the definition of 'combat zone' and 'belligerent activities', and between rear and front lines will be difficult to maintain in and around the war zone. One SDF major was quoted as saying: 'Our government's interpretation of logistical support is that we are not participating in the war. This is wrong. Any forces that engage in logistic support will be identified as the enemy and will become the target of enemy attack. This is common sense.' If the conflict widens and begins to embroil states in the region, Japan's protestations of non-belligerent intent will be worth even less.

### Alternatives

Characteristic of the political, legal, constitutional and moral confusion that swirls around these issues in Japan is the statement by Prime Minister Koizumi on the adoption of the special legislation on



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state-of-the-art, Aegis frigate—to the Indian Ocean, they are plainly engaged in a collective exercise in the 'threat or use of force as a means of settling disputes', which is proscribed by Japan's constitution.

Within Japan, doubts about the constitutionality of the SDF were only worn down slowly during the Cold War decades as the SDF was deployed exclusively in disaster and rescue work. The same tactic now is used, by committing them internationally in the same way, to move them one step closer to full 'national Army' status (as favoured by

29 October. 'What was being questioned,' he said, 'was our basic stance—whether or not we can share the sorrow and anger of the American people.' In his mind it was clear that the only way he could think to 'share the sorrow and anger' was by sending Japan's forces. Such impoverished imagination is characteristic of Koizumi and his party.

The Japanese case for being a 'peace power' rather than a 'great power' is never advanced from within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and is seldom heard outside of Japan at all. Essentially,

the argument goes that there are many steps that could and should be taken that would constitute a greater international contribution than the dispatch of armed forces. In the present critical situation, with the moral authority of its constitutional pacifism, with no enemies in the Islamic world and no involvement in the historic disputes and wars of the Middle East, Japan should be ideally placed to play a mediating, conciliating role. As a rich industrial power it should also be in a position to play a leading role in

*It is a sad commentary on the triumph of 'realism' in world affairs that those who once united to impose a peace constitution on Japan now unite to demand it be scrapped.*



formulating the sort of regional 'Marshall Plan' for development, education and welfare that is plainly necessary for the region.

Japan's ability to understand the forces that have erupted in the Middle East should also be enhanced by the fact that collective madness and desperation are phenomena with which it is familiar from its own, relatively recent past. Although the Japanese media do not dwell on the point, the suicide bomb is itself a Japanese invention and instrument of its World War II planning. Japan's wartime 'Kamikaze' pilots have remained national heroes to many, including Prime Minister Koizumi and, in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and other cities, Japan itself had experience of terror attacks, albeit in wartime, of even greater scale than New York. In other words, Japan could have served the same goals of human rights, democracy, and justice that US leaders invoke. But it could have done so in a way befitting its distinctive international position and its history, mobilising doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, experts in locating and removing mines, and developing in the process an international understanding of the Japanese flag as a symbol of peace and co-operation. Actually, as UNHCR head Sadako Ogata bitterly recounts, Japan (and the world generally) paid no

attention to Afghanistan before September 11. Afterwards, it rushed to offer its armed forces.

There were over two million Afghan refugees even before the present war began. Japan faces a declining population problem, with many of its villages semi-abandoned and slowly dying. The UN in March 2000 estimated that Japan would have to accept 17 million foreigners between now and 2050 if it wished to maintain its present population level. However, the suggestion that part of the

Japanese contribution to the present crisis might lie in the admission of a significant number of refugees has not been heard.

The case for an independent Japanese role is not put in any way as a counter to the US

insistence that the problem of terrorism demands global attention by police or military action, but as its necessary complement. Yamamoto Yoshiyuki, head of the UNHCR field office in Kabul, writes:

The Taliban and the US resemble each other, both convinced that truth is on their side ... A terror attack such as this could hardly have taken place unless there was a deep accumulation of hatred in the group. Although the US should be taking a long hard look at the spring from which this hatred comes, instead it moves to deepen the confrontation.

In a similar vein, Jitsuro Terashima, president of Mitsui Global Strategic Studies Institute, pleads:

It is in the interest of the United States that it has Japan as a friend—a friend that keeps a certain distance from the Middle East and has a variety of connections ... It is better for the United States to have a variety of friends that provide directions, introductions and, at times, warnings.

Terashima sees the events of September 11 as an attack by 'Islamic fundamentalism' on US-centred 'market fundamentalism' and draws attention to the increasing priority given by the latter to 'money games' over the production of goods and services. Countries, like Japan, which host large numbers of foreign

troops on their soil, believe unquestioningly in the US-led cause of 'democracy and freedom', and lack any sense of their own subjective national interest, cannot be recognised by the world as 'adult countries', says Terashima. Other prominent Japanese figures have argued that participation in a true multinational force, organised in accordance with a specific UN resolution, would not present the sort of constitutional difficulty for Japan that the present US-led coalition does. Such participation would have indisputable credibility throughout the world, including the Islamic world. Even more importantly, such co-operation would not diminish the precious resource of neutrality that Japan should conserve in order to play its most important role when the time comes to set about the post-war reconstruction of the region.

What the people of Afghanistan would seek of Japan, if they were asked, is impossible to know. One Japanese correspondent did, however, seek opinions of refugees in a camp in Peshawar. He was told:

'We are fleeing because Afghanistan is like a house on fire. What we would like Japan to do is not rush to come to the fire but appeal to the world for help in putting an end to the war.'

'It would be really helpful if Japan were to admit refugees with some technical skills and give them further training.'

'You are sending your army to help us? If you are going to be coming to refugee camps, ordinary people would be fine. For us, armies are what fight wars.'

'What we seek from Japan is co-operation in peace and reconstruction, taking advantage of Japan's own experience of recovery from the war.'

## Conclusion

Facing simultaneous economic, political, and diplomatic crises, and a darker, more complex outlook than at any time since the 1930s, Japan has now made huge commitments. What the LDP, supported by allies such as the US (and Australia) has long worked towards is now coming to pass: Japan is on the way to 'normalcy'. The world, however, is rapidly becoming highly abnormal.

It is a sad commentary on the triumph of 'realism' in world affairs that those who once united to impose a peace constitution on Japan now unite to

demand it be scrapped. The one major 20th-century state that, however feebly and ambiguously, was committed to oppose 'the threat and use of force' as a means of settling disputes, is now swallowed in the ancient dynamic of vengeance and counter-vengeance. The decision to dispatch the SDF, while one step in a long series of moves taken towards neutralising the peace constitution, was taken in haste after heavy US pressure and is almost certainly unconstitutional and not the reflection of any Japanese consensus. Japan, for the first time in half a century, is actively involved (albeit initially nominally and in a rear and logistic role) in a war. It is bound to complicate the sort of independent, humanitarian role that Japan might have played if committed to the peace principle as an alternative way of contributing to the international community.

In 1918, a Japanese force was dispatched, nominally to rescue Czech soldiers stranded in Russia by the Bolshevik revolution. Actually, the aim was to fish in the troubled waters of Siberia, Mongolia and Manchuria in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution, in order to advance Japanese national and imperial interests. Eventually 70,000 men were sent. Only after four years and huge expense did they return, having attained nothing but the sowing of seeds of distrust among their supposed allies (including the US). One can only wonder what will be the eventual cost of the present Afghan expedition, and when and how the SDF will return to Japan.

The Japanese antennae remain firmly directed across the Pacific, striving to understand and accommodate Washington, but insensitive to continental neighbours in China, Korea and South East Asia, regions that once bore the brunt of Japan's aggression. Japan's pole-star from 1945 has always been the US, but the UN was also, for a long time, the focus of hopeful idealism. Now the US star alone lights Japan's path and the UN is sidelined, even as Japan presses its case for a Security Council seat.

For Japan and Australia, the two richest and most advanced industrial societies of East Asia and the Western Pacific, both with complex civil societies, to opt for '200 per cent' support for Washington is to weaken the hold of international institutions and inter-

national law. It is also doubtful if their choice will do anything to improve regional security and stability. Australia's relations with its nearest neighbour, Indonesia, a largely Islamic country, have sunk to such a level that Indonesian President Megawati refused even to answer Australian Prime Minister Howard's telephone calls, or to meet him in Shanghai during the APEC conference in October. Meanwhile, Japan's neighbours watch with scarcely concealed concern as the peace constitution is eviscerated and Japan's armed forces once again venture forth carrying the Hinomaru (the same flag as their predecessors) into Asia.

Japan and Australia resemble each other in the way their leaders combine servility towards the US, especially its president, with coldness and insensitivity towards the victims of the Afghan tragedy: Japan refuses to admit any but the tiniest handful of refugees—22 in 2000. In 1999–2000, Australia, with its much smaller population, admitted 447 Afghan refugees, as compared with around 10,000 each for the US, Canada, and Germany. Both Japan and Australia, in defiance of the UNHCR position on how such refuge seekers should be treated, incarcerate those without proper papers, and Australia mobilises its military in greater numbers to prevent refuge seekers landing on its shores than it does to support the US war effort. Japan would almost certainly do the same if circumstances required it.

US policy seems designed to create new structures of global dependency based on its power and wealth. But neither wealth nor power can disguise the fact that, in the strict sense of a state that places itself above and outside the law, the US is itself increasingly an outlaw state. As multilateral and law-based institutions disappear or dissolve under a single Washington umbrella, so the Taliban (and its clones) are likely to grow. Neither Australia nor Japan has ever been sensitive to export of terrorism from the United States in the past (although without the support of all three it is certain that the Suharto dictatorship could not have been established, let alone have held sway so long, in Indonesia). Many of those who observe events from outside the major Western metropolitan centres note that what is truly distinctive about

September 11 is that terrorism came home to the heartland, the US getting 'the taste of what goes on around the world on a daily basis, from Sarajevo to Grozny, from Rwanda to Sierra Leone', as a commentator in Israel noted. As the 'coalition' (itself including countries whose policies within their own borders might well be described as terroristic) was put together, Robert Fisk, Middle East correspondent for the London *Independent*, observed, 'We are not fighting international terrorism, we are fighting America's enemies ... This region of the Middle East is filled with terrorists, many of whom are our friends.'

Japan's problems of identity, meaning and role in the world are rooted in the syndrome described by critical Japanese scholars as 'parasite nationalism'. The prospects for both global order and regional community in East Asia are diminished as multilateral and law-based institutions are superseded in the construction of a US-led coalition, and new structures of global dependency based on power and wealth are created under the US umbrella, outside of international law. Post-September 11, 2001, a 'new order' may be emerging, but much about it looks familiar and it is not at all clear that we will be better off under it. Japan commits much, and will be required to commit much more as the crisis evolves.

By late October, as the scale of the bombing, its consequences in civilian casualties and the widespread terror and dislocation of people became clear, whatever shreds of theoretical justification in international law had existed in September were vanishing in the smoke, debris and devastation of war. Arundhati Roy, the Indian novelist who combines a passion, insight and imagination that contrasts sharply with the military 'realism' of so many commentators, writes prophetically:

Put your ear to the ground in this part of the world, and you can hear the thrumming, the deadly drumbeat of burgeoning anger ... The smart missiles are just not smart enough. They're blowing up whole warehouses of suppressed fury. ■

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# The eloquence of fragments

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THE GERMAN-JEWISH CRITIC Walter Benjamin dreamed of writing a book made up entirely of quotations. For Benjamin, quotes had a special kind of metaphorical force. Freed from their context, and left to crystallise in the depths of history, they could be brought back from the past and rearranged, without explanation, next to one another in a new piece of writing, so that their hidden correspondences would be revealed; in this way, he believed, we might get a feeling of the inner workings or 'primal history' of an age. A collector of quotes and oddities, Benjamin wanted to 'capture the portrait of history in the most insignificant representations of reality, its scraps, as it were'. He was never to attempt this project. Fleeing from Paris, where the Gestapo had confiscated his apartment and his books, and hoping to reach America, Benjamin took his life on 26 September 1940, at the Franco-Spanish border.

The closest thing we have to this book of quotations is Benjamin's *Arcades Project*. This vast, encyclopaedic and unfinished work on the 19th-century arcades of Paris represents the material from which Benjamin intended to assemble his masterpiece, the result of his prodigious grazing of the literature and images of this fascinating, covered world with its gaudy distractions, cheek-by-jowl inhabitants and utopian profusions of merchandise lit by special lights; the birthplace in many ways of the 20th century. Opening its pages, which were assembled from Benjamin's notes in 1982, one clearly imagines Benjamin, like a slow and melancholy bee, wandering the streets and libraries with his little black notebooks, brushing the dusty books and departing with his modest treasures to his apartment. Here, on one page, is the empty Passage de l'Opéra captured in a photograph of 1822, muted half-light filtered through its glassy roof; there are pale books on a trestle table out the front of one stall, and it appears that the shelves and librarian's ladder face straight on to



the corridor without the intervention of a window. On the following pages are quotes from *La Vie et le monde du boulevard*, 1830–1879: 'In addition ... there

was Lemmonier, *artiste en cheveux*—which is to say, manufacturer of handkerchiefs, reliquaries, and funeral items made of hair.' Or, from Victor Fournel, *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris*: 'If an eruption of the hilltop of Montmartre happened to swallow up Paris, as Vesuvius swallowed up Pompeii, one would be able to reconstruct from our signboards, after fifteen hundred years, the history of our military triumphs and of our literature.'

It is a strange pleasure, this immersion in the eloquence of fragments. *The Arcades Project* is one of my favourite books. The quotations, pressed up one against another, approach the feeling of a great novel: in the narrative which drops away to different depths, the sense of hidden corners, of characters with their own interior lives. The quotations also lend the book a kind of historical gravity, in the sense that the voices of history speak to one another, repeating certain themes compulsively, enacting their own transactions, independent of any commentary. Vividly present, yet beyond our grasp, they produce a sense of awe and wonder.

I have been intrigued by Benjamin's idea for about ten years, and I have wondered whether it would be possible to perform such a feat in a novel. When I first read *The Emigrants* by W.G. Sebald I felt that I had found the closest thing to the power of this ideal, imaginary book which inhabited my own head. Sebald's books—*Vertigo*, *The Emigrants*, *The Rings of Saturn*, and now *Austerlitz*—are stitched together from fragments: shy bits of historical fact, the observations of strangers, précis of novels or biographies, photographs and postcards. The mysterious narrator of each book, who is and is not 'Sebald', allows these fragments to surface in his flat prose, only to relinquish them without analysis, or to dismiss them with a gnomic and melancholy comment of his own. This deadpan and eerily lucid delivery reads like the transcript of a Freudian case study: an edited free association or recollection of a dream. Like Freud's theory of repression, the narrative seems to imply that our behaviour is motivated by hidden and apparently inexplicable drives that tell us more than we know about ourselves in our conscious lives.

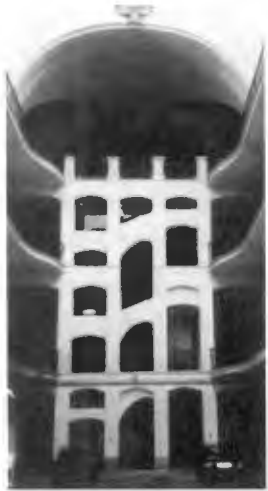
In all of Sebald's novels (which, because the narrator is always 'Sebald', demand to be read together in the same way that Balzac's novels form his



'*comédie humaine*') it is the looming knowledge of the Holocaust which seems to unite and animate these fragments. This awareness, which lurks on every page, translates the world into a realm of violence and decay. Even in *The Rings of Saturn*, which alights only briefly on the Holocaust in its final pages—a historical disquisition on silk production that ends by ruthlessly revealing all the seeds of the Holocaust in the Nazis' plan to nationalise and refine the sericulture process—the rest of the novel is tainted by this knowledge. The darkness moves backwards and forwards, into the past as well as the future, so that every moment of the novel is filled with the sense that the European landscape is poisoned by wars, torture, colonialism, environmental depredation, greed, and madness. Often, reading Sebald, one has a sense that one is not

a source of both pain and yearning, and the apparently godless world was desperately fragile. Reading Sebald, I am reminded in particular of Adorno, whose view of modern America was so jaundiced that his friend Lukacs described him as having taken residence in the Grand Hotel Abyss; but most particularly of Walter Benjamin, who saw himself in the dual roles of bookworm and collector, both kinds of passive resistance to a harmful world. The bookworm, Benjamin noted, was a gentle creature, a benign agent of history. In a recent *Guardian* interview, in the wake of September 11, Sebald observed that 'At least ... while you're sitting still in your own room, you don't do anyone any harm.'

These correspondences with Benjamin are unlikely to be coincidental: indeed, Sebald is no doubt



looking at things in themselves, but at the nature of metaphor itself, the terrible resemblance between things that forms a kind of palpable veil hanging across the real world. This world is luminous with suffering; everything is fragile, prone to flux.

**T**HE CRITICAL RECEPTION of Sebald in the English-speaking world has been rapturous. Susan Sontag has written—in an odd choice of words that echoes the distance-effect of Sebald's own writing—that his work is 'what a noble literary enterprise [would] look like now'. The law of genre is such that when something so unique appears we want to fit it into a genealogy, to understand where it came from. Critics have eagerly tied Sebald's work to the German literary canon: to writers like Bernhard, Walser, Grillparzer, and Kafka. Yet it seems to me that Sebald's writing—and his own biography which is spliced ambiguously into all his work—finds its strongest family resemblance in that generation of displaced academics and intellectuals among the Jewish refugees from Hitler's Europe. For many members of this generation, described in the *New Yorker* recently as 'orphaned cosmopolitans', everything good was the last of its kind, the city was

aware that Benjamin completed an early draft of a chapter of *The Arcades Project* called 'Der Saturnring oder Etwas vom Eisenbau' ('The Ring of Saturn, or Some Remarks on Iron Construction'). Yet what is particularly odd about Sebald's writing is that, at the turn of the 21st century, he identifies with those orphaned cosmopolitans retrospectively. In fact, his books are distinctly old-fashioned, even in their production values and their courteous prose, as if Sebald is fulfilling Benjamin's fearful image of himself, had he left Europe, as the 'last European', good for nothing but to be put on exhibit. For Sebald, although he is not himself Jewish, has lived, in a much diluted form, the exile of his characters. Born in 1944, in Wertach im Allgäu, and only apprised at university of the dreadful and suppressed history beneath the benign appearance of his homeland, Sebald left Germany for England in 1966 in a kind of self-imposed political exile. That is not strange in itself, but what is remarkable is the intensity of his identification with the Jewish exiles. In a strange mirror-effect, Sebald's narrators are uprooted, compulsive wanderers who have taken exile upon themselves as a kind of punishment. Sebald's narrative self is bleak beyond

bleakness, crippled almost to immobility by a sense of the unquantifiable suffering around him. Interestingly, when I taught *The Emigrants*, one of my students, the daughter of Polish Holocaust survivors, said that after reading it she was immobilised herself, 'too sad' to write or work; she felt that what was missing from this writing was the humour necessary for survival, light as well as shade.

It is perhaps unfair to observe this of such wonderful and humane writing, but there is a further correspondence with Benjamin in Sebald's novels, in that there is an aestheticising impulse in the detail of suffering fixed upon and collected by 'Sebald' the narrator—a glummer version of the mercurial aestheticism of Bruce Chatwin who liked to pick the brightest colours and strangest incidents from the traveller's palette. Benjamin's collector was a person who lived through the choicest morsels that he found, in the rarest examples of valueless things. The narrator 'Sebald' is almost egoless, difficult to identify as a character except in his very obliqueness, in the examples of sublimity and suffering that he ferrets out. He exists in the interstices of travel: in moments in hotel rooms, planes, parks, foyers, which are described with a peculiar intensity, filled with shadow memories of other people, of concentrated evanescence.

appear almost to have slipped between the pages on their own. In that book, which concerns itself with four refugees from Hitler's Europe who fled before the Holocaust, it is difficult to look at those pictures of Jewish families in the 1930s without a sense of bad conscience. Precisely because they are not identified by any precise label they remind one of the broken family albums scattered throughout Europe, filled with pictures of no-longer-nameable people who are dead or whose precious heirlooms were lost in flight. In other books, the blank materiality of the photos teases us. While everything is revealed, they are on some level unreadable. History, a teacher remarks in *Austerlitz*, often comes to us through images that are already pre-formed, images 'at which we keep staring while the truth lies elsewhere, away from it all, somewhere as yet undiscovered'. Instead, the meaning of the pictures lies in the unexplained connections made between them by the narrator; this adds another layer of metaphoricity to the books.

In this way the aura of mystery—which Benjamin claimed had been stolen from photographs by their ability to be readily reproduced—is restored to these pictures. Sebald's is a Romantic project, opposed to any rationalist notion that empirical observation leads to truth. The books have a dream-like quality because



While many reviewers have remarked on the inclusion of photographs and sketches in Sebald's work, few have tried to come to grips with them as part of Sebald's writing. Each novel includes photographs, often poorly reproduced: some we assume have been taken by the author, others are postcards, family photographs, perhaps lifted without acknowledgment from some archive. They make demands upon us because they are not anchored by an explanatory line of text. Sometimes they are offered as illustrations, but they are blurry or partial or indistinct; or they do not quite seem to match what is described. We are disconcertingly aware, too, that the historical photographs do not 'really' illustrate the text but have been forced to fit a work of fiction. In *The Emigrants*, in which Sebald uses photos most effectively, they



both the text and photographs refuse to yield up their meaning easily, except as a kind of penumbra which can only be glimpsed obliquely, out of the corner of the eye. The narrator of *Austerlitz* reflects upon this when he notes that in dreams there is often a nebulous, gauze-like quality through which 'everything seems much clearer'. In this way, Sebald also restores to 'Literature' its aura.

**T**HE ARRESTING FIRST image of Sebald's new novel, *Austerlitz*, occurs in the Nocturama at the Antwerp Zoo. The narrator recalls a raccoon there which

sat beside a little stream with a serious expression on its face, washing the same piece of apple over and over again, as if it hoped that all this washing,

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which went far beyond any reasonable thoroughness, would help it to escape the unreal world in which it had arrived, so to speak, through no fault of its own.

Everything we would expect of Sebald is here: the apparently innocuous image which is imbued with a strange sense of obsessive compulsion, the feeling of something dark looming behind it, the use of animals as mute witnesses of sufferings that humans cannot see. In this faithless universe, the narrative is overdetermined by the unspoken and unquantifiable, so that everything is charged with a weird significance. The narrator, another bleak traveller who may or may not be 'Sebald', used to travel to and from Belgium; once, years ago, he met the mysterious Austerlitz, a lecturer in a London institute of art history. Perhaps recognising something in each other, the two men began a conversation which they picked up as they encountered one another—at random, although it was something they expected—throughout Belgium. Twenty years later, they run into one other again in England. This time Austerlitz calls 'Sebald' to his house as the witness to a story which, uninterrupted, he unspools over several sessions.

What comes next is unexpected. So far Sebald's novels have circled around the Holocaust, as a kind

weird set of reversals and mirrorings, Austerlitz, having grown up in Wales with his origins deliberately hidden from him, shares something of Sebald's own childhood in Germany; Austerlitz has not only had the truth of the War hidden from him, but he has denied the clues that would alert him to the truth. Having moved for so long among this strange twilight brotherhood of note-takers and wanderers, it is as if the character 'Sebald' has found his Jewish brother (and Austerlitz has found his phantom 'twin'). The two men express themselves with such fastidious lucidity that, even more than usual, the narratives that Austerlitz tells blend seamlessly with the narrator's voice as he retells them. In this story, the pathology behind Sebald's narratives is made explicit: Austerlitz, already damaged by his mysterious past, has a breakdown, then manages to trace his mother's life to the ghettoisation of Prague's Jewish population at Theresienstadt. This is new territory for Sebald: his description of Austerlitz's breakdown when his repressed memories of the transport return is sublime, while his attempts to retrace his childhood are as heartbreaking and moving as much of *The Emigrants*. However, while Freud would have hoped the naming of first causes might bring about the 'talking cure', Austerlitz discovers that finding the source of his distress is 'of little use'. In this most terrible and beautiful of books, the closer that Austerlitz approaches to the past, the more it slips out of his grasp. His quest seems, in the end, eternal—and, as if to compound this sense of endlessness, the entire book is one huge text-block, a single paragraph. The past and present are more than ever luminous with suffering, fused into one endless and agonising moment. Again, I am reminded of Benjamin, and his 'angel of history' who longed to awaken the dead: 'Where a chain of events appears to us, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet.'

And yet, in Sebald's work something new and strange is formed out of these fragments. Out of bleak objects and enigmatic moments, he creates a rich sensibility. There are certain novels, like Jim Crace's *Being Dead*, which I recognise as atheists' novels: in which, in a faithless universe, the exquisite translation of thought and action into language is all we have. Reading Sebald, one learns to wait for metaphors of the ineffable and the sublime, those tiniest set pieces in which the narrator evokes the process of his own art so perfectly, in the delicate movements of the wings of moths or birds through air, or in Austerlitz's descriptions of his early experiments in photography when 'the shadows of reality, so to speak, emerge out of nothing on the exposed paper, as memories do in the middle of the night, darkening again if you try to cling to them, just like a photographic print left in the developing bath too long'. ■

**Delia Falconer** is the author of *The Service of Clouds*.



of force field that poisons past and present, without naming it specifically as the cause of their pathological wanderings. But this novel returns to the source: it turns out that Austerlitz, who has always felt, growing up with his Calvinist foster-parents in Wales, that something 'very obvious, very manifest in itself was hidden from me', who has been haunted by thoughts of the 'agony of leave-taking and the fear of foreign places', has recovered in middle age repressed memories of being sent, as a child of four-and-a-half, out of Prague on one of the children's transports, the trains on which Jewish children were sent by desperate parents out of Europe to England.

It is as if, instead of simply offering another of his unannotated case studies, Sebald has decided to allow one of his characters to stand in as analyst. In a

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# Collingwood brotherhood

*Rose Boys*, Peter Rose, Allen and Unwin, 2001. ISBN 1 86508 639 8, RRP \$29.95

**E**VERY WRITER is a hybrid. They are normally introduced as something along the lines of 'parent and author' or 'adventurer and author', although there is probably a fair overlap between those two species. The habit makes sense. Writing is a conversation. Writers need places where they can listen to voices other than their own. They need to do things.

Thomas Lynch is an undertaker and author. This is a particularly rich hybrid. His poems and essays attach words to the kind of experiences that leave most people numb. One of those essays, 'The Way We Are', part of a collection called *Bodies in Motion and at Rest*, is a masterpiece. Lynch describes mourners who are unable to face the dead body of somebody they have been close to. 'I want to remember him the way he was', they say. For Lynch, this kind of remembering has to start with 'dealing with the way he is'. In a deft description of his work, Lynch describes himself as 'an apostle of the present moment'.

Peter Rose is also an apostle of the present moment. The moment is the death of his brother, Robert. In *Rose Boys*, that one moment is stretched across 25 years.

Robert played cricket for Victoria. Peter remembers, as a young man, sitting high in a stand at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and putting aside a copy of a book by Norman Mailer to watch his brother repeatedly hook Dennis Lillee to the boundary. Robert might have played for Australia.

Robert also played football for Collingwood. The family's identity was deeply enmeshed with the club. Robert and Peter's father, Bob, had been one of the most celebrated players in its history. According to Peter, he was the first person dubbed 'Mr Football'. Bob could remember times when, if he'd played well, John Wren



would pull up in a chauffeur-driven limousine outside the family sports store and pass over ten guineas. Such patronage was a buffer against the hardship many families experienced at the time. Bob's four brothers also played for Collingwood. Robert and Peter's grandmother ran a boarding house where raw recruits from the bush could lodge. Peter writes of his father's relationship with the club that 'he was loved, watched, respected, *needed*. He belonged utterly and irreversibly'.

Few books have succeeded as well as *Rose Boys* in describing the mores and psychology of Australian sport and sporting associations. It doesn't mythologise or even analyse them. It just knows them. They have been an intimate part of Peter Rose's life. But he has also taken enough distance from them to present them, as few others have, in a way that is neither infatuated on the one hand nor rancorous on the other.

**O**N ST VALENTINE'S DAY, 1974, Robert Rose was involved in a car accident near Bacchus Marsh. He survived as a quadriplegic. Almost as soon as the extent of

Robert's injuries becomes clear, his mother, Elsie, says, 'It would have been better if he'd died.' Peter is appalled by the comment. But in the years that follow, he comes to understand it. His death was mysteriously, perhaps cruelly, suspended:

My mother was right, of course. I didn't know it then, but I would learn. Whatever the consolations, and they were profound, she was right. No one deserves to suffer as Robert did.

Rose writes about belonging to a 'family of personable giants', none larger than Bob and Robert. But in a world which seems dominated by the often undeclared needs of men, it would be

a mistake to overlook the quiet tenacity which Peter celebrates in less newsworthy characters. His mother, Elsie, for example, had been a professional singer. In the 1940s, she performed on radio and in live venues around Melbourne. An enthusiast wrote of her performances that 'Judy Garland must look to her laurels'. But in 1950, at the age of 24, she married and retired. Bob, to his credit, wanted her to keep singing, but Elsie listened to more conventional advice. Worse than that, the shock of Robert's accident has a serious impact on her hearing, a condition known as nerve deafness. The demands of having a husband coaching a major league team and a quadriplegic son could hardly have left much space for Elsie's own needs. In a rare interview, she says, 'You adjust. You don't think you will but it doesn't come with an alternative.' Peter writes plainly: 'Subtly, she held it all together. No sacrifice was too great.'

Peter Rose is himself an unlikely hybrid. He grew up in an environment where people kept asking him, on the strength of his name, when he was going to play for Collingwood. He was mentioned in the papers as a prospective player even when he

was struggling in an under-age D team. Peter became a 'Rose and author', more specifically a 'Rose and poet'. He is also gay. Some of the most tender parts of *Rose Boys* come from Peter's account of the emergence of his own identity. He struggles with feelings of guilt, wondering if someone such as himself, with fewer sporting interests, might have suffered less from quadriplegia than his brother. He says of his mother's truncated artistic life: 'I feel complicit in that social conspiracy. After all, I was the son of her sacrifice.'

Peter is clear that, whatever difficulties he may have had coming to terms with himself, he was never ostracised by his family. He was part of the club. Even when Collingwood was in the finals, his father, still coach, turned up to watch his efforts in lacklustre school teams. His father was scrupulous in not showing favouritism to one son over the other. At times, if anything, Peter is unforgiving of himself, presenting himself as an insular, sometimes depressed, young man. He sees his adult world as prone to being 'solitary, bookish, egoistic, self-reliant'. He is also unforgiving of those whose attitude to Robert was hypocritical.

The word Peter uses to describe Robert's attitude to him is 'unplaceable'. Peter's world may not have been on the map of his brother's known world, but at least Robert seems happy to have believed tales of its existence. The most beautiful irony in this book is that, once Robert becomes injured, he develops quite a tactile relationship with his brother. Peter helps with bathing and toileting. Also with the heavy work of lifting. He kisses his brother. He becomes involved in the never-ending battle to ensure appropriate accommodation for Robert, something which was often threatened by government pruning. Even before hospital troopships were landed at night to spare the feelings of ordinary citizens, Australia, like most societies, has done its best to keep the injured invisible. Yet on the night Robert Rose was first taken to the Austin Hospital in 1974, there were 60 patients in the ward. None of the beds was ever empty for long.

*Rose Boys* is a wonderful story about a relationship between men. It touches core issues of identity and loss but does so in a quietly undemonstrative manner. Peter Rose has been deeply shaped by the experience of his brother. It is part of his present moment. ■

**Michael McGirr** is the author of *Things You Get for Free* and fiction editor of *Meanjin*.

# At the top

Chifley, David Day, HarperCollins, 2001. ISBN 0 732 26702, RRP \$49.95

**I**N EARLIER TIMES most working-class Australians of Irish descent observed three great verities. They enrolled in a trade union, joined or at least voted for the Australian Labor Party and attended Mass each Sunday.

The Labor icon Ben Chifley grew up in an environment suffused with a strong allegiance to this tribal trinity. The opening chapters of David Day's new biography of the train driver turned prime minister demonstrate the purity of his subject's descent from an Irish Catholic peasant community implanted in rural Australia.

The first Chifleys migrated to colonial New South Wales where they sought out the land that was denied them in Ireland. They married the Fogartys, Daleys, Murphys, Hennessys and Corrigans who feature in the array of genealogical information gathered by Day.

Chifley's cultural baggage was a source of stress as well as solace. Day is assiduous in presenting material that documents painful breaks in Chifley's identification with his ethnic heritage. He had, Day shows, too much strength of character and self-belief ever to be a comfortable conformist.

From early on Chifley, as portrayed by Day, pursued upward mobility. A rural boyhood in a slab hut was followed by advancement into the railway service. He became a trade unionist while working in the Bathurst railway depot. In the unsuccessful great wartime strike of 1917, when he had risen to the rank of engine driver, he stuck by, and later helped to rebuild, his union.

Chifley had already made his mark as a Labor stalwart during the anti-conscription struggle of 1916. Day deftly details how Bathurst's Laborites peddled claims that conscripted workers were sure to be replaced by cheap coloured labour. Always wary of dealing with unreasoning emotion, Chifley did not seek either to quell or whip up these racist fears.

For Chifley the first of the three great Irish-Australian pillars of wisdom to come under strain concerned his status as a Catholic. In 1914, despite there being a 1908 papal decree forbidding Catholics to marry outside the church, he married Elizabeth McKenzie in a Presbyterian church.



Thereafter when he attended Mass at St Philomena's in South Bathurst, he sat at the rear of the church.

Chifley's in-laws did not hold his religion against him. As a result of his marriage he became a joint homeowner and was able to pursue preselection while driving a model-T Ford. He and his wife accumulated savings and acquired shares in the company that ran a pro-Labor Bathurst newspaper. They also acquired rental and rural property. The Chifleys put together a range of assets that few Labor supporters at the time could hope to emulate.

In 1928, tired of Labor losing elections because it was seen as too radical, Chifley made it to federal parliament by playing the race card, attacking the Bruce-Page govern-

ment for allowing what he called a stream of 'undesirable immigrants'—from Italy, Yugoslavia and other non-British parts. No Marxist ideologue, he looked forward, in the name of national efficiency, to the withering away of the six Australian states rather than the disappearance of the capitalist state. He was, Day indicates, determined to 'serve all classes and all sections'.

Chifley was easily placed materially to cope with the Great Depression. Nonetheless it rocked the two remaining pillars of his Irish-Australian heritage. Because of his support for the fiscal orthodoxy of the Scullin Labor government he attracted the ire of the cantankerous Jack Lang whose influence was pervasive in New South Wales. As a result of this hostility Chifley was expelled from both the engine drivers' union and the state branch of the Labor Party.

The federal party caved in to Lang but Chifley found his embattled status hard to shake off. Day plausibly suggests that a closely contested federal preselection in 1940 was only decided in Chifley's favour because of his supporters' skulduggery, maximising votes by Australian Workers' Union members.

After his mixed inter-war record, Chifley's finest hour came in 1941 when he became Treasurer. His abstemiousness was in accord with the wartime ethos of austerity and sacrifice. He generated calm in an atmosphere of fear and tension. His approachability personified notions of democracy and equality that would have seemed abstract and lifeless under a different government.

Chifley was something that it is hard to imagine these days: a determined yet

non-threatening number two figure in the political pecking order. He took over when Curtin died. Through a consensual approach he secured caucus approval for Australian involvement in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, institutions as controversial then as they are now. Schemes for full employment and national development were funded by uniform taxation.

In 1947, when an adverse court decision threatened the supply of credit, Chifley proclaimed his intention of nationalising the private banks. He had supported this policy for over a decade but party hardheads never expected him to act on it.

A sober 'facts and figures' man, Chifley was stunned at the passionate opposition he aroused. His proposal allowed the newly born Liberal Party to present itself as a dynamic defender of freedom. Interestingly, we learn from Day that even a mildly socialist program never figured in any of Chifley's two low-key policy speeches as prime minister.

**M**EANWHILE, THE poisonous Lang legacy continued to cloud Labor's outlook. Day has uncovered fascinating correspondence which indicates that the former Lang hatchet man, Jack Beasley, played a role in helping to convince Chifley that the miners' strike of 1949 was a communist conspiracy rather than a genuine industrial dispute.

After Menzies was elected in 1949, anti-communism rather than nationalisation was the key electoral issue. Chifley, now ailing, saw his previously unchallengeable grip on his party colleagues grow ever weaker.

For the most part Chifley took a strategic approach to the threat of communism in

Australia and Asia that bears a striking resemblance to the views of more thoughtful observers of today's 'war on terrorism'. The stress was unbearable as he saw both his party and church succumbing to what he saw as an unwelcome form of fanatical anti-communism.

Chifley's death in 1951 meant that he was spared the ordeal of having to witness the resulting Labor split of the mid-1950s. This traumatic event did much to unravel the historic combination of religion, politics and trade unionism that did much to form the young Bathurst Laborite.

After his death Chifley was revered by many Australians as a tireless improver of their own and their nation's lot. Among Labor insiders, though, old feuds lived on. Yet another of Day's invaluable discoveries is that Chifley's parliamentary successor, a former internal foe, sacked Phyllis Donnelly—Chifley's secretary and alleged lover—when she protested at the presence in Bathurst of a Labor MP who had humiliated her boss by undermining Labor's initial opposition to Menzies' attempt to ban the Communist Party.

The presence of such arresting stories relieves the all too frequent piling up of unnecessary background detail that clogs the flow of Day's prose. His is a workmanlike but nonetheless thought-provoking account. He portrays a man whose iconic status should not blind us to the fact that he exhibited to the full some of the limitations of old-style Laborism as well as embodying, to an exemplary degree, a quiet ethos of selfless devotion. ■

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# Questions of intention

**An Indelible Stain? The Question of Genocide in Australia's History**, Henry Reynolds, Viking, 2001.

ISBN 0 67091 220 4, RRP \$30

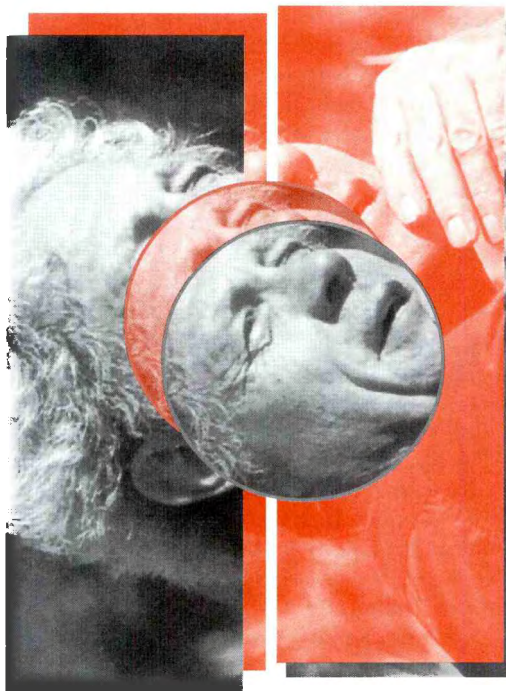
**T**HE WORD 'GENOCIDE' combines the ancient Greek *genos*, meaning race or tribe, with the Latin *cide*, meaning kill. Although the occurrence of genocide is as old as civilisation, the word itself was coined in 1944 by Raphael Lemkin, an *émigré* Polish jurist, who wished to devise a particular descriptive term to fit the enormity of the Holocaust. Just how well it could be made to fit other scenes of human atrocity, in other moments and periods of history, has been much disputed.

In his latest work, *An Indelible Stain? The Question of Genocide in Australia's History*, it is this initial, broad application of the word 'genocide' that Henry Reynolds takes as his starting point. His concern is with the dispute over the meaning and applicability of the word.

Lemkin's original use of the word covers, quite well it would seem, two clearly discernible periods in the last 213 years of Australia's history. The first phase, that of the frontier moment, was when white settlers established a relative monopoly over the use of the land and its resources. This phase entailed, as inevitable effect, the destruction of the 'national pattern of the oppressed' (Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*). In the Australian context this means that Indigenous people could no longer live in the way they had been living for many thousands of years.

Historian A.G.L. Shaw has described this state of affairs as tragic—tragic in the Hegelian sense of the word. Shaw argues that what took place during the frontier phase of Australian history was a conflict 'not between right and wrong, in which the wrong emerges triumphant, but between right and right ... between two irreconcilable conceptions of what is right, in which one or other must inevitably be overcome.'

Lemkin's 'genocide' has multiple applications. It also covers the policies of assimilation that successive governments began to implement from the 1920s and 1930s. Here we witness 'the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor upon



the oppressed group' (Lemkin). In this phase, old modes and customs of life, thought, communication and feeling—language, stories, memories, familial relations—are abolished.

Yet although Lemkin coined the term, and went on to play a significant part in the United Nations Genocide Convention, the final ratified definition of 'genocide' (and therefore, ideally, what governments and people could be held responsible for) departed from his original formulation in a crucial question of intent. Under the UN's revised, narrower definition, as Reynolds points out, 'measures resulting in the partial or total destruction of a group but taken without the intention of such purpose and result do not fall under the definition'. Therefore, under the Convention, such measures do not constitute acts of genocide. So while much of what Indigenous people in Australia have experienced has had the *effect* of genocide, the issue of intention remains unresolved. It is this that Reynolds attempts to clarify.

While noting misgivings about the Convention's limited definition, Reynolds applies it to key episodes of Australian history—the smallpox epidemic of 1789, the 'Black Wars' of Tasmania in the 1820s, the spread of pastoralists and other settlers in mainland Australia throughout the 19th century, and the government policies of assimilation in the 20th. He examines each situation in a manner that manages to be both meticulous—drawing upon a wide range of sources—and succinct. It does Reynolds credit that while his underlying sentiment is discernible throughout—a deep aversion to the actual treatment of Indigenous peoples since 1788—the narrative very rarely slips into polemic. His endeavour has been to produce 'a careful and reasonably dispassionate investigation of the topic' of genocide in Australian history. He succeeds.

Reynolds attempts to steer a middle course between the two poles of political and popular debate. While some refuse to countenance the idea that genocide—by any definition—could ever have happened here, others presume that it has, according to Reynolds, 'marked the whole history of Aboriginal-white relations'. Reynolds' great enemy remains what he calls that 'ignorance [which] appears to encourage sweeping and definitive pronouncements'. Indeed his book never bows to the temptation of neat encapsulation, terse, robust or final conclusions on the matter. No. Most of his speculation, while freely pointing to previous error in past and current understandings, remains open-ended—which, of course, is a tribute to Reynolds' ability and breadth of discernment. His judgment is continually deferred in the quest for deeper understanding. Each situation becomes, when viewed through the Reynolds lens, an opportunity for further exploration.

**T**HE BOOK'S BACK COVER is punctuated by a number of questions. Although not specifically given in the work, some broad



answers can be deduced from what Reynolds writes.

Was the killing of Aboriginal people by white settlers genocide? Sometimes, but not always. No overall campaign to carry out genocide was ever explicitly stated, and imperial then colonial governments continually sought to act as a restraining force on the expansive drive of settlers who frequently meted out the 'rough justice' (that is, methodical killings) on the original occupiers of the land. Frontier history, therefore, while never definable as one long campaign with the central *intention* of extirpation, of complete extermination, was however 'punctuated by genocidal moments'.

Were government policies designed to eliminate the Aborigines? Certainly the demographic upsurge of the half-caste population, chiefly in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, spawned deep anxieties about the 'purity' of Australia's future. Government policies were implemented to deal with the unprecedented problem of the survival—in various forms—of Aboriginal communities and lives. Prior to this, most government endeavours had been to restrain the worse excesses of the colonial population, the frontier phase of Australian history, when 'rough justice' had often been pre-emptive rather than retaliatory.

Reynolds' adhering to the Genocide Convention's definition, and its pre-occupation with intent, produces an anomaly. It is this: the periods of worst and most extensive violence against the Indigenous peoples—the destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group—do not qualify as genocide by Reynolds' reading. But later government policies, which bear very little trace of the murderous intent of the first 150 years of our history, can, by his reading, be considered culpable because they sought to remove people from their community and culture, and assimilate them into the dominant white society.

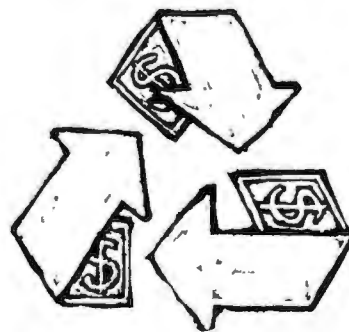
It could be argued that while not all periods of history since 1788 constitute a campaign of genocide against the original inhabitants of Australia, there have been changing patterns of racism. The bulk of our history bears witness to an inability to accept and acknowledge difference without at the same time attempting to control and dominate the object, or cultural entity, that is felt to be different and separate. In the 19th century, this difference was taken as the very proof of inferiority, of primitive-

ness. For much of the 20th century it was seen as a threat to the homogeneity of our society, something to be bred out.

Many of the people who read Reynolds' work will be drawn from the left-leaning intelligentsia, so it is worth bearing in mind that they too will have to deal with their own inability to tolerate or evaluate difference. The dismissal of our past as a nightmarish precursor to our multiculturally diverse present is not only unnecessarily distorting, but quite unfair on the past. If each generation, period or culture is judged on the basis of the murders it has carried out and on the radical inequalities it has incorporated into its daily life, then no civilisation could escape censure. None. Yet that is how many treat Australia's history. It is as narrow and limiting a view of an earlier era as the entrenched, prejudiced attitudes towards Aborigines in the past that we now condemn. ■

**Alex McDermott** is a research scholar in History at La Trobe University and the editor of *The Jerilderie Letter*.

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# Seasonal pickings

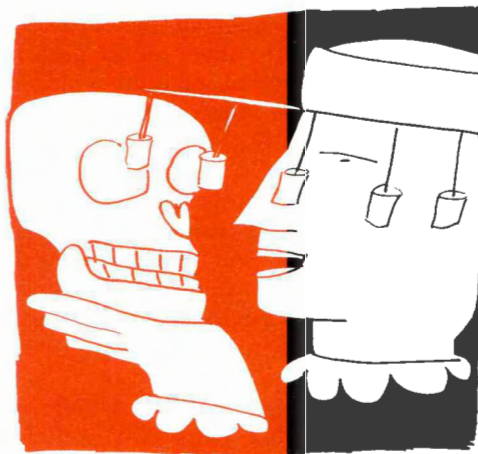
**L**ATE SPRING—it brings on hayfever. It's also an interesting time for theatre fans, because it's about then that most of our major companies launch their subscription seasons for the following year. I've got snazzy brochures from three of the four state theatre companies plus a couple of others, and they promise an interesting year ahead.

They also reveal a continuing trend away from the tried-and-true practice of the past two decades.

For many years, the Melbourne Theatre Company's artistic director, John Sumner, ran with a formula that almost became a 'golden mean' for the subsidised state theatres. That is, an annual season, typically made up of about one-third new and extant Australian plays, one-third contemporary plays from abroad and one-third classics (as plays written before the beginning of the 20th century are now called). His counterparts in Sydney (with a slightly higher percentage of Australian plays), Brisbane (with more emphasis on recent British writing) and Adelaide (leaving aside an ill-fated experiment with all-Australian drama in 1996–97) broadly followed suit for most of the 1980s and early 1990s.

No such formula seems to apply in the early years of the present decade, although the Sydney Theatre Company's 2002 season of 11 mainstage plays comes close, with four premières of Australian works, three classics, two new English plays, one extant American drama and an adaptation of an English literary classic. But across the state theatre sector, it's the classics that have fallen by the wayside.

Writing in *Theatre Australia* in 1981, John Bell—then a director at Nimrod Theatre in Sydney when that company was pushing ever closer to mainstream status—said that he 'couldn't exist in a theatre without the classics. A theatre without classics is like a man without a memory.' Looking at 2002 for the STC, the MTC and the Queensland Theatre



Company (which will produce 28 plays between them), we find just five classics. Gone is the long-predictable annual Shakespeare. The only play of his to be seen across the sector next year is QTC's *Richard III*—in a collaboration with the Bell Shakespeare Company.

Ironically, it is Bell's own company that has partly relieved the state theatres of their perceived need or obligation to preserve what he called our theatrical 'memory'.

Australian work, however, stands up well. Tony McNamara has two plays coming up (one each for STC and MTC) while David Williamson's latest annual event, *Soulmates*, premières at STC before going to MTC, presumably as a buy-in. In return, STC gets Simon Phillips' adaptation for MTC of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. The other adaptation is Michael Gow's version of Henry Handel Richardson's *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, which is a co-production by QTC (who do it first) and Playbox in Melbourne, together with the Brisbane Festival and the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts. Other well-known playwrights to have new work up in this sector are Joanna Murray-Smith (MTC) and Nick Enright (STC), while lesser-known writers to be seen next year are Andrew Upton (STC), Kathryn Ash and Billie Brown (both at

QTC). Australian content (counting the adaptations) thus looks like reaching 36 per cent of the total three-company repertoire.

The big winner in recent years has clearly been the new and extant repertoire from abroad. With three new plays from America, plus two old plays by Tennessee Williams and one from Sam Shepard, the USA clearly leads the way in 2002. The UK will be represented by five works, two by old hands Michael Frayn and Alan Bennett and three by relative newcomers. All three companies are featuring work from the USA and the UK. A new play by Frenchwoman Yasmina Reza (for MTC) and an earlier one from South African Athol Fugard (for QTC) take the contemporary foreign component up to 46 per cent across the three state companies.

**T**WO LONG-STANDING trends, however, show no signs of changing next year. One is that the state theatre sector is still no place for women playwrights. Murray-Smith, Reza, and Kathryn Ash are the only three with mainstage works next year.

The other is the extent of buy-ins from and co-productions with other companies. Apart from the STC/MTC exchange of Williamson for Dickens, MTC is also buying Frayn's *Copenhagen* from the STC. So the brochure total of 31 new productions is actually only 28. Once co-productions—like the QTC's with Playbox and Bell—are factored in, we continue to see a decline in the number of new productions actually mounted by the subsidised major theatre organisations, despite the infusion of new funding after the Nugent report.

That said, the new seasons do look pretty good. The increasing emphasis on the new and the contemporary (from home and abroad) is welcome and is clearly aimed at the younger audience that all companies are desperate to woo. Interestingly, though, the companies

are finding different ways to do this.

STC's mainstage season looks fairly orthodox. Bankable new plays by Williamson and Enright are offset by further new Australian work from Andrew Upton and Tony McNamara (both on commission) and some hot new writing from abroad, plus *The Glass Menagerie*. STC's classics are enticing; they're doing the rarely seen *Volpone* by Ben Jonson and *Life is a Dream* by Calderon de la Barca (the latter in a new adaptation by Sydney writer Beatrix Christian and controversial young associate director Benedict Andrews) as well as the perennial *A Doll's House* (also adapted by Christian).

With ten new productions (plus the MTC buy-in), STC is the most prolific, but it's their so-called 'add-ons' that show us where director Robyn Nevin is going. First, there is an entrepreneurial collaboration with the Festival of Sydney to bring the Théâtre du Soleil from Europe to Australia for the first time. Then there is an ongoing commitment to *The Wharf Revue*, with Jonathan Biggins, Phil Scott *et al.* maintaining the Tilbury Hotel tradition under the STC umbrella. On top of this are three further productions (a new take on *Macbeth*, a revival of Wesley Enoch's and Deborah Mailman's *The 7 Stages of Grieving* and a new German black comedy by David Gieselmann) which lie outside the mainstage season. They're all part of what is now called the 'Wharf 2 Blueprints' program under Benno Andrews' general direction; this

(by various names, like New Stages) has been part of STC's program to develop emerging talent and to attract new audiences since at least 1988, when Baz Luhrman's *Strictly Ballroom* first appeared as a small-scale stage show.

Michael Gow (who also ran the STC's developmental program for some years) is now into his third season at QTC—sub-titled 'Look Inside 2002'—and he, too, is striking out in new directions—putting audience *and* artist development together in a pretty brave style and, like STC, QTC is spreading its nine productions over four venues (the Cremorne, the Playhouse, the New Shed and the Powerhouse) in a very sensible bid to match horses for courses.

Simon Phillips' second MTC season (of nine new productions plus two buy-ins) aims, by contrast, at an audience acculturated by TV and commercial theatre. Sub-titled 'MTC puts stars in your eyes in 2002', the media pack and brochure unashamedly prioritise the 'array of internationally acclaimed theatre artists' ahead of the 'dynamic mix of exciting new work and great classics' (ignoring the fact that there are *no* classic plays in the season). The brochure stresses the 'experience of seeing an actor working in the flesh' (don't theatregoers normally see them doing this?) and then routinely features the actors *before* the plays they are appearing in. Thus, we are apparently to see Guy Pearce in Tennessee Williams' *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Kim Gynge in *Blue/Orange* (by Joe Penhall),

David Wenham in Sam Shepard's *True West*, and so on.

Melbourne's Playbox has also put together an enterprising season. It begins with an Indigenous theatre festival, called Blak Inside, with six new Koori Victorian plays to be staged over four weeks in association with Ilbjerri Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theatre Co-operative. This replaces the popular Inside 2000 and Inside 2001 mini-seasons in an exciting new way. The season then has two revivals (the ubiquitous *Stolen* and *Svetlana in Slingbacks*); new works by Jenny Kemp, Ben Ellis (whose *Post Felicity* falls outside the subscription program), Michael Gurr and Joanna Murray-Smith; a buy-in of La Boite's *Milo's Wake* from Brisbane and co-productions of *Richard Mahony* with QTC and a new Daniel Keene play, *Half and Half*, with the Keene/Taylor Theatre Project. Needless to say, all of Playbox's season is Australian-made and about half of it features women playwrights.

Meanwhile, the completely unsubsidised Ensemble Theatre in Sydney also looks strong in 2002, with a new play by John Misto, a revival of David Williamson's 1997 play *After the Ball*, Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*, four new American plays and possibly the last play from Simon Gray. Mainstream theatre subscribers look set for a satisfying year in 2002. ■

**Geoffrey Milne** teaches theatre and drama at La Trobe University.

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# FLASH IN THE PAN



## Redux redact

*Apocalypse Now Redux*, dir. Francis Ford Coppola. Is it worth seeing? Yes. The three-hour running time might challenge your bladder, but there's no question that this film deserves to be seen again, if only to remind yourself that there's more to the film than the lines 'I love the smell of napalm in the morning' and 'the horror, the horror'. (Walter Murch's remarkable sound editing, and the luminous darkness of Vittorio Storaro's cinematography would be two of my high points.)

Despite the fact that the *Redux* ('returned' or 'restored') version was put together from the original raw footage (rather than simply inserting the extra scenes into the 1979 version), there are no major structural changes to the film. We see a bit more on the patrol boat, a slightly expanded version of the 'Ride of the Valkyries' scene, a coda to the Playboy bunnies' fate, and more of Colonel Kurtz at the end. The most obvious addition, however, is a sequence set in a ghostly French colonial plantation deep in the jungle. The family of owners, who have been fighting off both the Viet Cong and the Americans to keep 'their' land, treat their American guests to some gourmet French cooking and a lesson in history, geopolitics and the futility of the Vietnam war (Charlie Sheen also gets laid).

That this insertion works at all is partly due to the fundamentally episodic nature of the film. It is, in fact, a road movie (even

though in this case the road is a river), more like *Easy Rider* than *The Battle of the Bulge*. *Apocalypse Now* doesn't present a coherent whole (let alone a coherent image of evil, as some have claimed) so much as it does a series of fragmentary set-pieces, strung like bloodied pearls along Charlie Sheen's noir-ish voice-over (I don't think it's unfair to suggest that this voice-over, written by Michael Herr in post-production, is the only thing that gives the film any shape at all).

As much as anything, the film is like a mad theme-park ride, careering wildly from bombast to spectacularly aestheticised violence to half-baked pretension passing itself off as philosophy (keep your eyes open for the panning shot across Kurtz's reading material and you'll know what I mean).

It's often been said that the film works because this incoherent madness is all too apt a reflection of the nature of the American involvement in Vietnam. Though it would be fatuous to claim that *Apocalypse Now Redux* has any immediate relevance to current world events, you do have to wonder what sort of films they'll be making about the war in Afghanistan in ten years time.

—Allan James Thomas

## Disenchanted evening

*One Night at McCool's*, dir. Harald Zwart. It is a truth universally acknowledged that a man's penis will lead him into all sorts of trouble. *One Night at McCool's* tries to turn this simple thesis into a rollicking

comedy about male stupidity, but so overloads itself with plot that the film barely achieves lift-off.

The story unfolds like a slapstick *Rashomon*, with three simple-minded men giving their subjective accounts of the same life-altering female. Carl (Paul Reiser) is a priapic lawyer with a secret liking for leather. Detective Dehling (John Goodman) is a former highway patrolman still pining for his dead wife. And Randy (Matt Dillon) is a dim-witted slacker who mixes drinks at a rundown bar, the McCool's of the title. The common object of their lust is Jewel (Liv Tyler), an amoral voluptuary with long legs and big ambitions.

When she walks into their lives—a goddess in soft focus—our heroes are rendered incapable of doing anything without first consulting their dicks. In short order, Randy is an accessory to murder, Dehling is corrupting the law, and Carl is getting whipped in exchange for free legal advice.

The three stories eventually converge when Randy hires a world-weary hitman, Mr Burmeister (played by the film's producer, Michael Douglas, sporting a truly fabulous grey pompadour), to rid him of further temptation by bumping off his precious Jewel. The final, antic reel mixes a slo-mo shootout, high farce, low camp and a parody of the Village People, to little comic effect.

Suffering from an overabundance of genres, this debut feature by Norwegian-born director, Harald Zwart, is like a talkative schoolboy who's learnt everything he knows about films—and sex—from watching too much late-night television.

—Brett Evans

## Fair scares

*The Others*, dir. Alejandro Amenábar. There was a point in this movie where everyone screamed. The entire cinema-full. There were some shamefaced giggles then, because you wanted to remind yourself this was only a film, but the narrative swept you along within seconds. Up to then we'd been getting along OK just clutching each other's hands, or in the case of my 13-year-old nephew, linking arms.

*The Others* is distributed by Dimensions, which is Miramax's trashy arm, more used to putting out gory slash-fests for teenagers. This is of far higher quality: a genuinely spooky movie, without a drop of blood or a whisper of sleaze.

Nicole Kidman, who is having a very creative year, is marvellous as Grace (and incidentally recalls Grace Kelly in many ways), the driven, tense mother of two children who have a life-threatening allergy to light. They inhabit a grey, lonely manor house in Jersey at the end of World War II. The resulting gloom is resplendently photographed: the cinematographer plays us on a line of chiaroscuro, fog and sudden charges of light that scare as much as the dark.

The two children are played with a worrying intensity by Alakina Mann and James Bentley. One hopes that no harm comes to them from playing such games: the things dealt with here are as dark as *The Innocents* and as frightening.

But where Amenábar shines is in the way he makes you care about Kidman even as she alienates you: the very first frame of the film has her shrieking awake from a bad dream. As the plot unfolds (or twists up) all the nightmares about isolation, fear of the dark, the Scylla and Charybdis of fundamentalism and anomie—all of these confront her and us too.

Anyone who tells you the ending is not your friend.  
—Juliette Hughes

## Grimble grumble

*There's Only One Jimmy Grimble*, dir. John Hay. This one's making an inexplicable pit stop at Australian cinemas on its way to the video store. Yes, if you believe in yourself, you'll be happier and more successful. But no, a feature film based solely on this premise doesn't cut it. Especially if you've already seen *Billy Elliot*.

Young Jimmy is a downtrodden Manchester lad. He's bullied at school; his mum's dating a loser; his mum's stopped dating the one bloke he liked; he's short; he's got jug ears. Worst of all, he can play soccer like a dream, but only if no-one's watching him. In front of an audience, he 'cacks his pants', as he puts it.

But things take a turn for the better when Jimmy lays his hands on some 'magic' soccer boots, and thereafter it's onward to the soccer finals for his school team, Jimmy the confident hero all—or almost all—the way. But it's not really the boots, is it?

It's just as well that *Jimmy Grimble* is graced with some fine acting and the downbeat comedy that seems compulsory in films set in Manchester. Lewis McKenzie, as Jimmy, moves from glum to jubilant in an easy crack of the face and you barrack for him all the way. Robert Carlyle turns in a

performance as Jimmy's washed-up soccer coach that's predictable in its skill but not in its understatement. The whole cast is sterling, in fact, thus significantly outshining the ha'penny plot.  
—Kate Manton

## Reel life

*Me You Them (Eu Tu Eles)*, dir. Andrucha Waddington. Like many films, *Me You Them* has a twist at the end. But unlike the unsettling effect most twists inflict on the viewer, this one creates peace and unity. Forty seconds before the end of this 102-minute film, I was suddenly watching a comedy—in that sense of a happy ending—rather than a tragedy, which I had assumed all along was to be the film's ultimate trajectory.

*Me You Them* is a story of one woman, Darlene (Regina Case), who, through circumstance and opportunism, ends up living with three men simultaneously, and having a son with each.

The film is set in Brazil in an arid, rural landscape. The harsh, unrelenting light sets a tone that filled me with misgivings about the ultimate fate of Darlene and at least one of her lovers, and possibly all of her sons.

But while there is sacrifice and hardship in this story, Darlene is no lamb on the altar of a macho and misogynist culture. We are aware of the possibility of her sacrifice; on the family's portable radio we hear stories of women found murdered, victims of retribution for infidelity.

We see Darlene making a terrible choice for one member of the family, a fourth son whom she sends to live with his father. We never learn the fate of Dimas although, ominously, we see him walking off with a large man who holds the small boy with one hand, and a whip with the other.

Acknowledging the alternate, dire and very real possibilities of Darlene's life is important—and the director certainly likes to play with your fears for her—but ultimately, the danger is not the central interest. This film is interested in the complexities of inter- and co-dependencies, and how, while unconventional, this household of one woman, three men and three boys offers each member a sense of belonging, of place—something not one of them has at the beginning of the story.

There is little or no romanticism in *Me You Them*. Darlene does not become a queen of a male harem. She works in the cane fields to feed the family and, after work, sorts out the jealousies and lusts of each man. But there is raw energy and gallons of life, and you have the pleasure of leaving the cinema with a feeling that much is right with the world.

—Annelise Balsamo

## Over-run

*The Princess and the Warrior*, dir. Tom Tykwer. In the sliver of space between the asphalt and a truck chassis lies Sissi (Franka Potente, below), a psychiatric nurse, knocked down while leading a blind patient across the road. She is dying. A young man, Bodo (Benno Fürmann), running from the law, crawls under the truck to hide, and so the Warrior and the Princess meet. Bodo performs an emergency tracheotomy with a drinking straw and an army knife, saves Sissi's life and disappears.

The combination of Sissi imagining her life ebbing away and Bodo sucking and spitting blood was compelling, and unexpectedly (yet appropriately) erotic. If only the film had maintained that level of concentration and strangeness.

Tykwer's last feature, *Run Lola Run*, also starring Franka Potente, was enormously popular, and for good reason. It was rough and infectious—a light-hearted anarchic fit. While *The Princess and the Warrior* is a much more ambitious film in its emotional scope and plot complexity, it falls well short of the mark set by *Lola*. Tykwer has fallen over somewhere on the murky ground between ambition and achievement. An admirable stumbling ground perhaps, but not fertile.

Ironically, if he had stopped the film short (an hour short) *The Princess and the Warrior* would have been much more substantial. At 130 minutes the material felt stretched and the plot piled high with afterthoughts and filler. And frankly, the ending was woeful.

Still, there was enough in Tykwer's last film (*Lola*) to make me look forward to his next.  
—Siobhan Jackson





## Big-noting

**E**VER BEEN TO A SCHOOL REUNION? You get an enticing letter from someone called Maree who's probably had her school hat bronzed. 'We're trying to trace Carmel, Bernadette, Deirdre, Maureen, Patricia and Mary Rose O'Hoolihan, and by the way,' it adds brightly, 'were you the Juliette Hughes who was in that photo with the rats?'

Yes, there have been rats in your past, and not all of them were two-legged. So. A relic of an old Biology project is all that remains of the Hughes legend. You are so peeved that you actually go to the reunion, but not before calling up a phalanx of sisters who went through the same place with you. You get there and it's full of 30-year-old snippets claiming to feel old and acting like they own the bloody place, which has changed beyond all recognition, with an assembly hall on the old convent garden and all the little old classrooms turned into faith development offices.

After a liturgy that disgusts your sisters, who keep whispering, 'What, no Latin? All this "I Wanna Have a Beer with Jesus" crap—it's not the church I left!', there is a final blow. No-one remembers the old school song, 'May Brigid Bless the House Wherein You Dwell'. This gem makes 'Climb Every Mountain' sound like one of the drier Haydn concertos. When it is played with heartless efficiency and no rubato by the pianist, you find that you and your sisters are the only ones left singing it. Tim Winton is right: no-one sings any more. And then the rotten cowards drop out on the last fruity high note and you are left hitting it, rather emotionally, all on your own. 'Show-off!' hisses a sister (an alto of course).

'Ah, now I remember you', says one of the Maureens.

It's always been hard being a soprano. You have to do everything backward in high heels à la Ginger Rogers, before anyone will notice you among the pack. And then they call you 'a bit of a prima donna'. Altos, now. They're a strange breed who sold their high notes to Satan so they could sing and stay thin ... Basses rumble along, masking pitch problems with vibrato. And tenors, well. Scarcity breeds complacency on a grand scale. Sopranos, however egotistical, are rarely smug—there's always some brilliant youngster waiting in the wings, sticking pins in a voodoo doll with a fur coat on its shoulders.

So I had a real soft spot for Sara Scuderi, the 87-year-old soprano living in the Casa Verdi in *Tosca's Kiss*, a 1984 documentary shown by the ABC in the last days of the Shier regime. If you missed it, write to the ABC and tell them to put it on again; God knows they've become used to repeats, so they

may as well do a good one. Madame Scuderi was shown listening to an old 78 of herself singing 'Vissi d'arte'. No pathos here—the magnificent old diva trailed enough clouds of glory to defy pity. Casa Verdi was an idea of Giuseppe Verdi's. Having no heirs, he established a retirement home for opera singers 'who were less fortunate than I and who were not endowed with the gift of thrift'. Verdi knew his divas. Opera rarely pays much, and as for thrift, it doesn't go with diva territory. High maintenance, your average diva, with all those fur coats to hang off the shoulders.

Scuderi and her mates could still sing, even if the voices were old. When I saw Victoria de los Angeles some years ago singing in the prosaic Melbourne Concert Hall, she captivated me. She must have been at least 70, but everything was there except power and youth. Important things to be missing, true, but there was something else too, that was added: the kind of beauty you get in a winter landscape, stripped back to its bones and its soul.

**Y**OU DON'T GET THAT nowadays in opera. While the boards of opera companies lament that they are serving a shrinking population of ageing aficionados, they are missing something so obvious that any kid could tell them. Over the years they have got rid of the star system, and their audiences have gone with it.

Melbourne's *Age* newspaper carried large Opera Australia ads all through October and most of November. These featured the very lovely face of a woman whom I know to be Cheryl Barker. I know this only because I'm one of the vanishing breed who occasionally goes to the opera. But I'm not going this season. Because the three operas listed in the ad are cited with conductor and director, With Not One Singer Mentioned. It could just as easily be an orchestral concert being advertised. On that same page during October was Amanda Muggleton's tribute to Maria Callas, the Diva Assoluta. If they want queues of people fighting for tickets as happened in Callas' time, the Opera Australia board have to realise that young people won't come to see your arty director or even your fancy conductor conceptualising at each other. They want to know who's singing, because opera is nothing without singers. It's strange to have to utter such a truism, but even stranger when highly paid experts need to hear it. ■

**Juliette Hughes** is a freelance writer and coloratura soprano.



## Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 99, December 2001

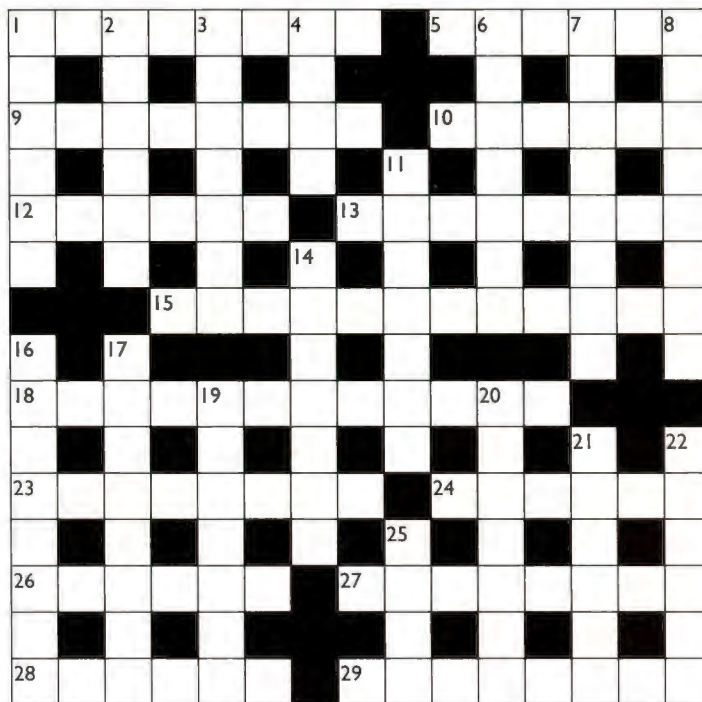
Devised by  
Joan Nowotny IBVM

### ACROSS

1. Useful headgear, it seems, to wear in a race like the Melbourne Cup. (8)
5. Some ban is hard to bear in exile. (6)
9. What's new in this writer comes first—with its muddled ending. (8)
10. Gun no French is able to use in reverse order. (6)
12. Intertwine the braid by throwing lance towards the east. (6)
13. Perhaps, astride a horse, there is a quality he gives off. (8)
15. What's in the tram for strap-hangers only? (8,4)
18. Against citation which includes plain rather than tough beginning, it has to live up to our expectation. (12)
23. A show-off not suited for running? (8)
24. Recently redirected floater off right. (2,4)
26. Referring to wedding, bid a pound, that's about right. (6)
27. Agreement by circle about composition. (8)
28. Stormy gales from the east, bringing the birds. (6)
29. The French supporter turned back rod on the dog. (8)

### DOWN

1. Composer of 27-across, for example, has a familiar name, we hear. (6)
2. Products of 9-across are in the news? (6)
3. Sick here in France, take first chance to leave, though not permitted. (7)
4. Mixed peas found in part of church. (4)
6. A 'Tab' soft drink can be taken with a gin cocktail, since the fever is diminishing. (7)
7. Return no.1 can to mounted US soldier, firing. (8)
8. Deliver a few to the chap who's easy on the eye! (8)
11. Surrounded by miserable streets, in brief, I confront the cruel perverts. (7)
14. Pick up the pins, darling, and find the fragment. (7)
16. Step taken over fur which is only so-so. (8)
17. Awaken group to something moving. (8)
19. Charge for hoisting equipment, used about a range. (7)
20. Not on ice, refrigerator initially becomes functionary. (7)
21. Somehow scared of the holy? (6)
22. We hear you roved about searching for something to eat. (6)
25. Stupor caused mis-spelling of punctuation mark—a bit short! (4)



### Solution to Crossword no. 98, November 2001



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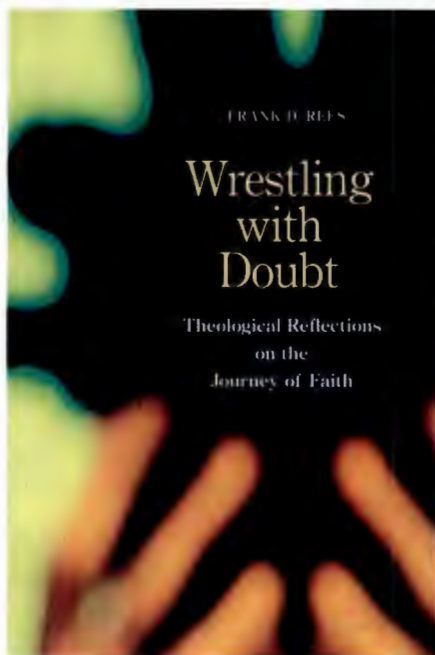
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