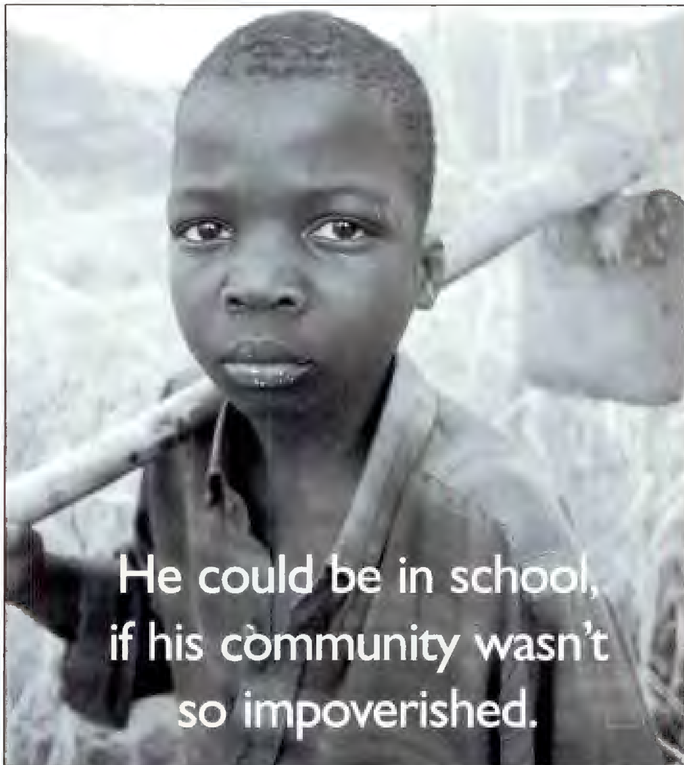
EUREKA STREET

A MAGAZINE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, THE ARTS AND THEOLOGY
Vol 13 no 10 December 2003 $7.50 (inc. GST)

In the sixth month
the angel Gabriel was sent from
God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,
to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name
was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's
name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Hail, O
favoured one, the Lord is with you!' But she was greatly
troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what
sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, 'Do
not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.
And behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a
son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great,
and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the
Lord God will give to him the throne of his father
David, and he will reign over the house of
Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom
there will be no end.'
(Lk 1.26-33)



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A Canopy of Stars
Some reflections for the journey

by Christopher Gleeson SJ

Over more than 20 years as Headmaster, Chris Gleeson gave innumerable homilies, reflections and addresses, all of them illustrated by engaging stories and quotations. Now he has made a selection of the best, and linked them with his own reflections on teaching and parenting. A wonderful collection.

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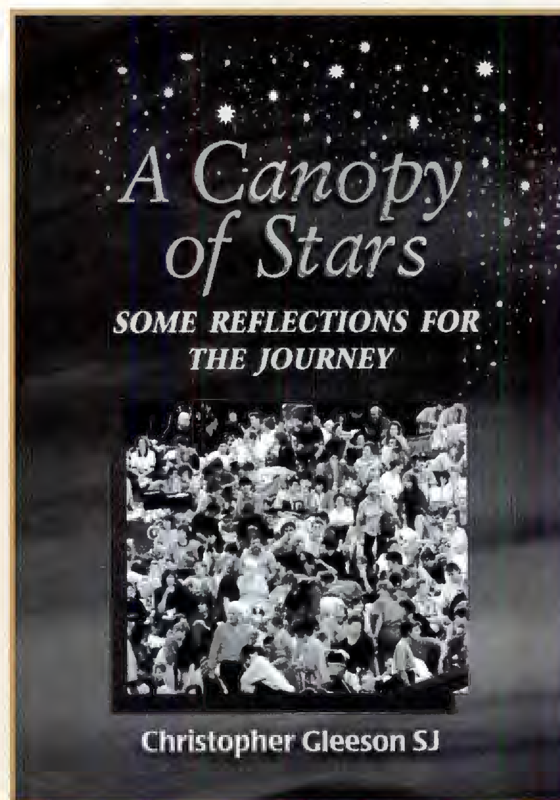

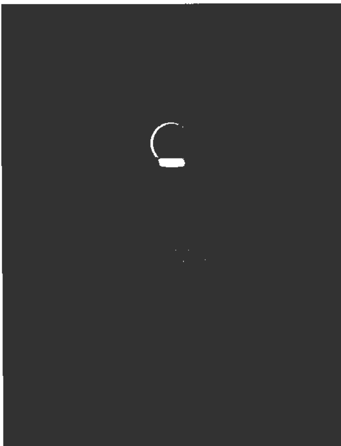

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This month
Cover design Janneke Storteboom
Cartoons p37 and p40 by Dean Moore.
Photographs p12 by Anthony Ham, pp16–17 by Pru Taylor, p24 by Bill Thomas.

letters

Freedom of thought

Andrew Hamilton's 'Truth, Conscience and Conversations' (*Eureka Street*, September 2003) was a pleasure to read. He clarified the issues through helpful distinctions. His approach to the topic was both judicious and sensitive.

The Church viewed as a community of conversation (and that entails respectful listening) reminds us of something important. We cannot be force-fed with the truth nor press-ganged into being free whether it is by individuals, the government, the Church and even, one must say, by God.

That such respect for (or right of?) the human person extends to the divine sphere is captured by Paul VI in a beautiful line in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Towards the end of Paragraph 29 he talks of the 'spirit of God, while He (sic) assists the Magisterium in proposing doctrine, *illumines internally* the hearts of the faithful, *inviting them to give their assent*' (emphasis added).

In discussions of truth and conscience and of which has precedence, it is perhaps wholesome to be reminded of the overarching primacy of the courtesy of God towards humankind.

Tom Ryan SM
College of Theology,
University of Notre Dame Australia
Fremantle, WA

Dissenting voice

In his frank and honest article 'Sunken Diplomacy', Tony Kevin—a public servant for 30 years—writes 'Writing and academic opportunities, *initially promising*, tended to dry up as my policy critique sharpened' (my emphasis). This is disturbing.

In a democracy, people make decisions based on information supplied to them mostly by the mass media. Unfortunately, the present coalition federal government, which is hell bent to retain power, unscrupulously bends the truth frequently. This forces senior public servants aware of the truth to question their conscience. As Tony found out, any questioning of the government's insidious policy is done at personal cost.

Spiro Tanti
Firle, SA

Definition

I certainly do not wish to diminish the late Edward Said, yet I am deeply troubled by the opening flourish of Anthony Ham's encomium 'The "conscious pariah"' (*Eureka Street*, November 2003). Like a lot of such writing, this essay daringly declares but does not define.

'There have been few more significant intellectuals in the 20th century than Edward Said,' Ham enthuses. What does he understand by 'significant', not to mention 'intellectual'? Ham's definition seems to be by exclusion, his notion of ideas appears limited to people who are, or ought to be, members of Faculties of Humanities.

The truth, surely, is that ideas exist in all sorts of other places and they can change societies. What, in other words, of science, engineering, architecture or medicine?

Wasn't Albert Einstein a significant 20th century intellectual? Or Irwin Schrödinger, Robert Oppenheimer, Werner Heisenberg, Max Planck, Niels Bohr? What of the chemists Linue Pauling, Max Perutz and Irwin Chargaff; the immunologist (and essayist) Peter Medawar; the geneticists Jacques Monod and Francis Crick? What of the Burley Griffins, Frank Lloyd Wright, Joern Utzon, Le Corbusier?

All of these people—and many, many others—did immensely significant intellectual work. All of them were—at the very least—just as significant as Edward Said, most of them probably even more so. None of this diminishes Said, of course, but Ham's partisan and circumscribed enthusiasm diminishes not only many other intellectual giants but the very notion of 'intellectual' itself.

John Carmody
Roseville, NSW

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comment
Andrew Hamilton

The diversions of war

It is a minor paradox of war that in film clips, the politicians and generals who confer about present wars seem larger than life, whereas in the footage of past wars they look shrivelled—diminished by the destruction they have abetted. In the longer view, wars and their makers have little to commend them.

Yet war continues to insinuate itself into conversation about other human activities, and particularly those undertaken to overcome difficulties facing human living. We hear of the international war against terrorism, of national wars against crime and drugs, of tribal war for the world cup, of church wars against liberalism, and of personal wars against cancer and ageing. Introduced into these contexts, the metaphor of war and battle is almost always unhelpful. It betrays reality and it encourages self-delusion.

When we imagine war, we see defined enemies who are separate from ourselves; we see overwhelming force brought against those enemies; we see a population united around a common cause; we see a conflict with simple causes ending in a victory that will inaugurate a better peace.

If we envisage our conduct in the face of terrorism, drugs, football, permissiveness and cancer as a war, we are seduced into an oversimplified view of reality. The people associated with these things are not separate from us, but are aspects of our own body, church, society or world. So when we bring overwhelming force against them, whether through will-power, proscription, long prison terms or military strikes, we inevitably hurt ourselves. When we imagine a society united against terrorism, crime or liberalism, too, we forget that the causes of these phenomena lie within our own world, and that we need to understand their complexity in order to address them. Unquestioning loyalty is of little help. By encouraging us to think simplistically in terms of virtue and vice, us and them, ally and enemy, power and impotence, the metaphor of war misleads us into thinking that we can win a quick victory. We will believe that we shall need neither to see the humanity of the people we treat as enemies nor to attend to relationships that need to be healed.

The metaphor of war also discourages self-reflection. In a war, leaders become generals, strategists and battle commanders. The test of greatness is their decisiveness and readiness to accept casualties. When their cause becomes a war, it is invested with goodness and righteousness. Their critics become contemptible because they give comfort to the enemy. Most attractively, warriors do not need to deal with the causes of evils or their own interests that are at stake in them. The disadvantages come later: when the ineffectiveness and destructiveness of the campaign become evident.

For dealing with evils, better and more complex metaphors than war are available. When facing illness and ageing, for example, we can speak, as Francis of Assisi might have done, of cohabitation with Brother Cancer and Sister Age. For dealing with social evils, complementary metaphors of including, restraining, conversing, nurturing and healing, catch better the complexity of the causes, remedies and effects.

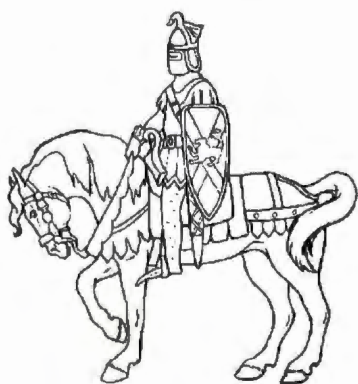
But the military metaphor comes decked in pretence and pomp that must first be pricked if better images are to be sought. The visit of President Bush to Canberra was a model exercise in decking. The war against terrorism came solemnified by imported security guards and the exclusion of Australian citizens from Parliament House, of Mr Crean from the barbie and of Aussie reporters from question time. But then the cameras spirited in by the American press sent around the world Senator Brown's demolition job on solemnity. The Metaphor of War had suddenly been deflated. ■

Andrew Hamilton SJ

snapshot

Arise Sir John

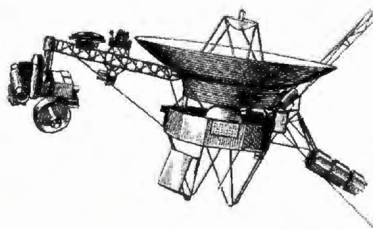
Readers of the splendid British Catholic weekly, *The Tablet*, will be delighted to hear that its editor, John Wilkins, was recently made a papal knight. *The Tablet* is notable for distinguishing between fact and advertorial, and for allowing its writers and correspondents to say what they believe, provided they write clearly and charitably. More precisely, John was made a knight of the Equestian Order of Pope Saint Sylvester I. Since, like any magazine that believes that the truth will set us free, *The Tablet* has often been accused of disloyalty, the citation that praised the editor for showing loyalty in difficult times is particularly pleasing.



Reward irony

Examined carefully, all awards are exercises in irony. Papal knighthoods are no exception. Pope Sylvester I, for example, never felt any need of horsemen. He was famous for not going anywhere. Although he was Bishop of Rome when Constantine embraced Christianity, he declined to take part in notable Councils at Arles and at Nicaea. He said he was too old. But Roman stories later placed him at the head of the Councils he had missed, and had Constantine put him over all the other patriarchs, as well as over bishops and secular rulers in the West. This useful legend was punctured by the fearless investigative reporting of the Renaissance scholar Aeneas Sylveas Piccolomini, later himself to become pope. He changed his name to Pius, after Virgil's hero, *Pius Aeneas*. He also changed his opinions, and in one of his Bulls urged his readers to 'Reject Aeneas, listen to Pius'.

The knights of the Equestrian Order of Saint Sylvester I, as every Catholic schoolboy knows, were first put on their saddles by the 19th century Pope Gregory XVI. Gregory ruled the Papal States with severity, and used to call in the Austrian army to sort out dissent there. Papal knighthoods presumably helped secure loyalty and finance for his campaigns. But Gregory may also have had a sentimental attachment to the old order of things, represented by horses, riders and knights. He hated those new fangled railway lines and banned them from the Papal States. In a nice pun, he referred to them, not as *chemins de fer*, but as *chemins d'enfer*—Hell's roadways.

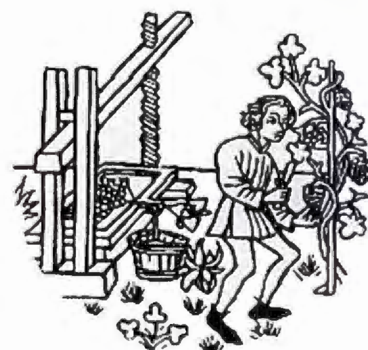


So long, farewell

Voyager 1 is our real-life Starship *Enterprise*. As it has now passed 90 astronomical units (AU) from the Sun, or 13.5 billion kilometres, it earns its place as the 'most distant human-made object in the universe'. Having successfully completed its mission of buzzing Jupiter and Saturn, beaming back images of far-flung planets and data on magnetic fields, ultraviolet light, cosmic rays and plasma waves, Voyager 1 is now headed for some long-distance R and R.

Voyager 1 has sufficient power and fuel to last until 2020, and looks set to escape our solar system. NASA predicts that in about 40,000 years, Voyager 1 will drift within 1.6 light years (14.95 trillion kilometres) of AC+79 3888, a star in the constellation of Camelopardalis, lending new meaning to the phrase 'saw the light on and thought I'd drop in'. NASA also advises that Voyager 2 will pass 4.3 light years (40 trillion kilometres) from Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, in around 296,000 years' time.

Voyager 1 is also carrying images and recordings of life on Earth should it encounter alien life in its travels. After all, one wouldn't want to arrive at the neighbours empty-handed.



Rocket fuel

It may have escaped some that 2003 is the 125th anniversary of the Essay Prize offered by the South Australian Band of Hope and the Total Temperance League. According to Charles Gent in his genial new book, *Mixed Dozen: The story of Australian winemaking since 1788* (Duffy & Snellgrove), the prize was won by Rev. Henry Burgess for his essay, 'The Fruit of the Vine'. Burgess argued that wine rotted all the bodily organs, filled the prisons and caused insanity. He believed that Australian wine was particularly noxious. Gent remarks in exculpation, however, that Burgess did not repeat the assertion of some advocates of abstinence, that those who drank alcohol were liable spontaneously to combust.

Driving the tide

IN AMERICA, THE POLITICAL scientists are trying to attract the NASCAR dads—the sort of guys who are fans of racing cars. 'NASCAR dads' was once used to describe small-town and rural men. It is used now to describe blue-collar men who have switched their basic loyalties from Democrat to Republican in recent years. About 55 per cent of American voters belong to the working or middle class group who lack a university degree. These men and women, particularly the men, are the real swing voters. Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers, in their book, *Why the Working Class Still Matters*, say that 'their loyalties shift the most from election to election and in so doing determine the winners in American politics'.

John Howard would call them aspirational voters. He'd go easy on the phrase 'working class', because, as a Labor person once said, the only thing that unites the Australian working class is the desire to get out of it. Increasingly, however, it votes for him. And what John Howard says and does is, generally, far better pitched at this constituency than anything Labor is saying or doing.

See John Howard elbowing aside Governors-General at every function of national importance—whether it's the cricket, the Rugby World Cup, barbecues for President George W. Bush, welcome-homes to the troops, or funerals and the dedication of memorials. Watch him appropriate phrases that once seemed to belong to the Labor party—mateship, fair dinkum, a fair go, fair play, a classless society and an egalitarian streak. Watch him fight the history wars by capturing and reinventing (usually in death) the nation's heroes—the Weary Dunlops, the Don Bradmans, the Alex Campbells or the R.M. Williamses. All the better if there's a horse in the background. Or a bit of khaki, since Australians have a simple love of country, a sense of duty and are selfless in looking out for their mates when there's work to be done. They're impatient with bureaucracy, red tape and procedure and are focused on getting things done. These are rugged individualists, loyal and dependable, if larrikins at times, and very cynical about politicians, but essentially, indeed quintessentially, Australian.

He would be too modest to say so, but he's a bit like that himself. A simple man without much side. Loved his mum. Loves his wife and adores his kids. Loves his sport—can think of nothing better than watching the cricket. Went to the local high school and pulled himself up by his bootlaces. Plays his politics hard. But you know where he stands on all his core values, and how doggedly he will stand for them, even if he knows many people think him silly or old-fashioned. He can't help it.

There is no such legend available for any of the visible Labor frontbench, except perhaps Mark Latham. Certainly not Simon Crean or Kim Beazley, who have never in their lives wondered where the next feed is coming from or been seen to derive innocent pleasure from being a dag.

An interesting article by Arlie Hochschild, *Let them eat war* (www.motrherjones.com), wonders how George W. can so successfully con the NASCAR dads, when so much of his policy operates directly against their interests. One commentator believes that a political leader's appeal lies in the way he matches our images of the father in a good family. There are two main models: the 'strict father' who provides, is in control of the household and uses discipline to show his children how to survive in a hostile world, and the 'nurturing parent' who focuses on encouraging the kids, with the focus on empathy and responsibility. Bush, or Howard, may better suit the self-image his battlers hold of themselves.

BUT THERE IS MORE, Hochschild says. Richard Nixon played the strict father, but his real skill was in appealing to a sense among male battlers that they had been forgotten as other groups were advancing. Bush, she says, takes it further. Instead of appealing to anger at economic decline, he is appealing to fear of economic displacement and offering new villains to blame.

> 'Unhinging the personal from the political, playing on identity politics, Republican strategists have offered the blue-collar voter a Faustian bargain: We'll lift your self-respect by putting down women, minorities, immigrants, even those spotted owls. We'll honour the manly fortitude you've shown in taking bad news. But (and this is implicit), don't ask us to do anything to change that bad news. Paired with this is an aggressive right wing attempt to mobilise blue-collar fear, resentment and a sense of being lost—and attach it to the fear of American vulnerability. [Bush] speaks to a working man's lost pride and his fear of the future by offering an image of fearlessness. He has in effect been strip-mining the emotional responses of blue-collar men to the problems his administration is so intent on causing.'

Far be it from me to suggest that John Howard could be so cynical. But last month I was at ground zero in Bali when he came by to pay his respects. Hundreds of Australians were there, typically from western Sydney or Perth. Not only did they love him, but they treated him with some reverence. Simon Crean was there too, but there was no chance of his being noticed. Even when he remembers to invite the leader of the Opposition to the platform—and sometimes Howard will deliberately forget—there's little chance of his being overshadowed. ■

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

Unnecessary necessities

INVENTIONS THAT CURE SOCIAL ILLS

INVENTIONS THAT revolutionise society seem to sneak up on us and before we even learn to pronounce the absurdly pneumonic names these curiosities are christened with, they have become a requirement rather than an option. Microwaves, word processors, internet and email, mobile phones and home espresso machines. Hard to think of life before them, eh?

Last month the office I was working at in central London lost its internet for a week thanks to a piece of grand bureaucratic negligence on the part of British Telecom. Hastening our trip into the Dark Ages, the UK was hit by a postal strike—the sort of malevolent coincidence this country specialises in, such as cold weather and bad television. Yet we didn't all curl up into balls beneath our desks and wail but managed to get done what needed to be done. This has led me to the notion that technology has been marching in the wrong direction and needs to take an abrupt left turn so that inventions that really make a difference get invented.

A start would be a device that detects bores at parties. It could fit discreetly inside the ear and bark out warnings like 'paisley shirt hogging the fondue—self-obsessed currency trader—collects odd-shaped house bricks as a hobby', saving you from unnecessary conversations. Another would be a machine that compressed and expanded time, so you could stretch it out like the horizon when you are sitting on a surfboard with the sun on your back and the swell full and constant, and shorten it to the blink of an eye during meetings on how to cut stationery costs. Even better would be a new car that doesn't ding at you when you leave the door open, forget to turn the lights off, or prevent you taking a sideways look at a pretty girl walking.

The only problem is how to get a logo on all of these.

—Jon Greenaway

Waiting time

LETTER FROM BROOME

ALONG EVERY STREET in Old Broome, pinky-green mangoes dangle on long stems, clustered in sixes and sevens. This morning I woke to the sound of my neighbours shaking the lower branches of their enormous tree, and the soft plop of half-ripe mangoes on the dust. They tell me that in a few weeks I will be sick of the sight of them, and of the rich smell of rotting fruit lining the nature strips. The fruit is so prolific and its stench so strong that holes have to be dug in backyards to dispose of it.

I have the first five of the season lined up on a high shelf in my kitchen. I check on them often as if they are eggs waiting to hatch. They fit in my hand like smooth river rocks, and I stand at the window with one in each hand, inhaling the smell that grows sweeter and stronger every day.

The ocean is warm now, and every time I swim I wonder whether it will be my last before the stingers arrive to scare us out of the water till June. It seems impossibly far away, and impossibly cruel—to be sweltering in this town on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert, right next to all this beautiful blue water. Some of the locals assure me that they swim right through the wet season, but they are the same people who tell me stories of a friend who talked in tongues on morphine for days in the local hospital after being stung by an irikanji. These are jellyfish so small that they can't be spotted, and so toxic they can kill. It makes the idea of relaxing in the ocean somewhat oxymoronic. Besides, I tell myself, the water's so warm it's barely refreshing anyway.

The local swimming pool heats up, too, till it's a soupy mix of chlorine and urine and sun cream. In Melbourne, where I come from, swimming pools are heated, even in summer. But here I am excited by the news that one of the resort pools is refrigerated. Next weekend, if I can face the heat, I will don my resort wear (sarong, loose cotton shirt, straw hat, sunglasses) and go in search of cool, stinger-free water.

The heat has hit in the same week that a native title hearing recommences at a local hotel. The claimants and their supporters from neighbouring mobs sit all day in the courtyard outside the room where the hearing is taking place, listening to the broadcast of proceedings on large speakers. They sit in small groups, men with men, women with women. The men wear jeans, boots, cowboy hats, and the women bright dresses. On a blackboard next to the table set up with an urn and cold water, a child has written 'we will win for our country'.

Inside the hotel room, white anthropologists give competing evidence about the kinship structures and social organisation of the people sitting outside. White lawyers scribble pages of notes, and refer to documents in the dozens of lever arch folders lined up behind them. The white judge listens intently for the most part, showing occasional irritation at the slow pace of the questioning but seemingly unaffected by the length of the days and the complexity of the evidence. At the back of the room, separated by partitions, black men and women sit and watch.

At the end of every day, the claimants and their supporters wait around till everyone else has left. They wait to be told by the white lawyers whether they are going to win their case, or lose it. Every day, the lawyers tell them that it's been a good day, or that it's been a hard day, but that tomorrow should be better. They have been hearing this for years now, ever since they lodged their claim. And they will continue to wait for years before all the evidence has been heard, and compared, and analysed, and made to fit the requirements of the process, or not, as the case may be.

I have a cartoon on my fridge. It is by Michael Leunig, and it came out in *The Age* the morning after the *Yorta Yorta* decision. A white, wigged judge leans down from his bench which sits high amongst the city skyscrapers. He tells the Aboriginal man standing under a tree 'you have forfeited your claim to your land by being thrown off it and our hands have been washed clean by the tide of history.' I see it every time I go to check whether my mangoes have ripened. And I think of it every time I walk into that courtyard, and see that mob sitting there patiently waiting to be told whether the forced removal of their parents and grandparents has wiped out their claim to their country.

—Kristie Dunn

Heavy traffic

REVIEWING TRAFFICKING LAWS

WHILE AUSTRALIAN immigration policy has lurched from bad to worse, recent changes by the federal government indicate there may be light at the end of the tunnel.

The big change in the immigration arena is the October announcement of new policies in relation to people who are trafficked across our borders for sexual exploitation. This is a welcome development. The creation of a new class of visa for trafficked women could signal that the government is easing up on its strict approach.

As recently as June, members of the federal government were downplaying the seriousness of Australia's trafficking problem, inferring that even if a few women were trafficked to Australia for sex slavery, these women ought to have known that they would be working as prostitutes and deserved little sympathy. In a backflip of Olympian proportions, the federal government has recently committed serious resources to what it now recognises as a problem. It is widely acknowledged, both within and outside government, that Australia has a problem involving the exploitation of (mainly) south-east Asian women as brothel-slaves.

The federal government's $20 million dollar anti-trafficking package is good news. Not only is the figure substantial, but it is matched by proposed policy reforms which will put the victims of trafficking first and give Australia a chance of reducing this violent form of organised crime.

Three factors are critical to the success of the government's proposals. First, training for those who interact with trafficked victims will be important, to ensure that responses to trafficking victims are humane and informed. The high level of political momentum generated by this issue needs to be balanced with appropriate sensitivity to the victims involved.

Second, relevant state and federal laws need to be reformed to better address the conditions that give rise to the trafficking of women. Trafficking occurs in an environment of supply and demand. On the demand side, state governments need to examine whether the decriminalisation and regulation of prostitution is working for women in the sex industry. On the supply side, foreign aid programs need

summa theologiae

New (old) ways

'THE MORE things change, the more they stay the same', is a cynical aphorism, done best with a French shrug. Much more interesting is its converse, 'The more things are the same, the more they have changed'.

A recent Melbourne exhibition of Catholic life, part of a program encouraging religious vocations, for example, revisited an identical event held in 1955. Much was the same: the visibility of dog collars and the variety of cloaks and dress dating from the beginning of clerical congregations, the stalls manned by priests and religious, the multitude of devotions and artefacts commended, and the flocks of schoolchildren grazing at the events.

But what seemed the same was in fact very different. Fifty years ago, in the exhibition a proud church celebrated its growth and strength. The crowds reflected a well-organised church in which religious practice was high. Dress and stalls commending congregations, devotions and distinctive forms of Catholic activities expressed a cohesive church whose patterns of life were apparently unchanging and given. The only hint of future divisions lay in the entrails exposed by the nascent split in the Labor party. This was a church on the rise.

In 2003, the religious groups that sponsored the stalls were for the most part much diminished from 1955, and represented often sharply divergent versions of faithful Catholic life. Indeed, one of the great merits of the exhibition was that it brought divergent groups together. The garb, as well as the evangelical energy and devotions commended in the workshops, no longer expressed an inherited tradition, but individual choice. They were not about a given identity, but about the counter-cultural construction of a new identity.

The insight that sameness marks the deepest difference might also illuminate the spirit of the many young people who took part enthusiastically in the workshops. They are evangelical in the sense that they respond to a call to be Catholic and want to find ways to live out their commitment proudly, publicly and radically. This is a profoundly counter-cultural choice that finds little support in society. Their need to shape a distinctively Catholic way of life helps explain the popularity of Marian and Eucharistic devotions, the pride taken in John Paul II and his adamantine integrity, the popularity of World Youth days where a minority come together as friends and for a moment find themselves part of a mass movement. The exhibition and workshops were also important in this respect.

It would be a mistake to describe this adoption of older practices as conservative. The devotions may be the same as those of 50 years ago, but the movement is radically different. It is about new beginnings. The challenge is to nurture these beginnings, precariously grounded in a mixture of devotions and practices. The grounding is precarious because devotions, practices and pilgrimages depend on the support of a religious culture—a culture not given in Australia—or on a deep personal faith. The nurturing of personal faith calls for an older and deeper tradition of listening to the ways in which God draws the heart, of imagining and striving to build the just world that God wants, of following the compassionate way of Jesus. This is the sameness that can make a difference. ■

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archimedes

Spotting a niche

Charles Darwin left us with more than a model of how the biological world develops. In evolution by natural selection, he provided an analogy for how all sorts of things change over time. And haven't we seized on it. Almost everything evolves these days, from relationships to economies—but particularly technology.

And the analogy can be quite detailed. For instance, in biology there are often different approaches to solving the same problem. Birds and bats solved the problem of flying at different times in different ways; as did sharks and seals with swimming. The same forces are often at play in the development of technology.

Steep highwall rock faces in open pit mines can collapse with little warning. It seems absurd, but the traditional way of assessing this risk has been to send in a geologist to risk his or her life mapping the rock face from its base or by abseiling down from the top. So CSIRO Exploration and Mining in Brisbane started to develop a system to allow such risk assessment to be undertaken from a safe distance by using remote sensing to generate 3-D computer models of the rock face. At the time, the latest in digital surveying technology, laser ranging, seemed the obvious choice.

CSIRO hired George Poropat to do the job. 'What we need,' one of his contacts from the mining industry told him, 'is some way a geologist can drive up to a point a few hundred metres from the wall, leap out of his truck, take a couple of readings, leap back in again, and send the information off for analysis.' With its sensitive, bulky equipment worth hundreds of thousands of dollars and requiring time and care to set up, that wasn't going to be laser ranging.

So Poropat went back to the older system of photogrammetry—merging images taken from two different angles to produce a single 3-D image. It's an elaboration of how our eyes work. Using the latest digital cameras and cleverly written software, Poropat and his research team have produced SiroVision, which can generate a 3-D model from two photographs. Early on, Poropat took the technology back to the mining industry, and asked them to try it out. That way he received feedback as to exactly what he needed to do to make it useble.

Now according to consultant Paul McConachie of Geotek Pty Ltd in Brisbane, SiroVision is not only useful for determining the risks of working on a particular highwall but, because it's based on real images, it can simplify communication with those who have to work in the area. It provides them with a picture of exactly where the problems lie.

It's a great example of the sort of approach that can help to ensure that Australia continues to supply the bulk of the world's mining software. Just as in the natural world, where the environment selects the fittest to pass on their genetic material to the next generation, in the world of product development, tailoring products to their end use is of paramount importance in determining which of them survive and prosper.

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to address the increasing feminisation of poverty and the status of women, and develop feasible and lasting solutions for women whose vulnerabilities push them across borders into situations of sexual exploitation.

Third, a cooperative approach between agencies and governments is required to address the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation. Each agency has an important role to play. DIMIA needs to give trafficked women the right visas so that women fearing re-trafficking or reprisals in home countries are not deported, and so that trafficked women can remain in Australia to assist with prosecution of traffickers. From expert NGOs, trafficked women need support to recover from the sex crimes perpetrated against them, and find life solutions outside the sex industry. Local, state and federal police must be given the training and resources to implement optimal approaches to policing trafficking-related crime, including the re-establishment of targeted vice-squads with the required specialisation to undertake effective policing.

State and federal governments must find the political will to pass laws which are adequate for prosecuting trafficking criminals. The absence of a single conviction to date under the Commonwealth sex slavery laws introduced in 1999 is a clear indication that greater effort is required. Tribunals and courts need awareness-raising programs to assist their capacity to make well-informed and humane decisions about the trafficked women who appear before them, and legal and migration advisors also need special training in this area.

The government's counter-trafficking package has every indication of being the multi-sector, whole-of-government approach Australia has been crying out for. It is to be hoped the federal government will continue to abandon aspects of its former approach to immigration, in favour of more humane and sensible policy approaches. Perhaps Minister Vanstone could take another look at those children held in immigration detention centres. Their release may be another step in the right direction.

—**Georgina Costello**

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A race for stayers

YOU KNOW HOW you remember where you were when President Kennedy was shot? Well, as Melbourne Cup time comes round each year, I remember—with a mixture of dread and triumph—the Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Lecture that I gave on Tuesday, 5 November, in the Chancellors Hall of the University of London Senate House in 1996. It was like this.

In the Common Room on the previous Thursday, I mention the imminent lecture to a colleague because I've been brooding on it for weeks. The ensuing conversation is dispiriting:

Him: What's the lecture on?
Me: Henry Lawson and Manning Clark.
Him: Henry Lawson. I'm afraid I—
Me: No, it's all right. You wouldn't have heard of him. Great Australian writer. Turn of the century.
Him: And Manfred—?
Me: Manning. Manning Clark. Famous historian.
Him: I don't think I—
Me: Monumental six volume history of Australia. Very controversial. [Pause] The lecture's on Melbourne Cup Day. Could be an omen.
Him: Melbourne Cup D—?
Me: Actually, I'm backing Grey Shot. English horse. One of your mob. Front runner. They send the English horses over Business Class on British Air. Don't worry about it.

Friday

Struggling with my draft around 10am I am invaded by a catastrophic thought: what if everybody's like my Pommy interlocutor of yesterday? Suddenly I realise that, apart from a few stray Aussies, no-one will know anything—*anything*—about Lawson or Clark. They'll be all at sea. It will be a disaster. Although, perhaps no-one will come. Later, I learn via email that Grey Shot has blown out to 50s. Just as I'd predicted. Get the money on, I tell my collaborator in Melbourne.

Saturday

Up at 5am to help my wife set off to a weekend conference in Amsterdam. This leaves me an entirely uninterrupted couple of days to beautify my lecture—some honing here, some fine tuning there, a sophisticated aside somewhere else.

I begin my solitude with a large breakfast in which are heavily represented numbers of eggy, fatty and greasy items that my wife does not normally consider essential to start the day. Needing a walk after this, I set off about midday thinking, naturally enough, about Manning Clark and Henry Lawson, but ending up at Panton Street where I take in *Fargo* having missed it first time round. *Fargo* finishes just after four and a brisk walk punctuated by a couple of swift pints gets me back in front of the TV to catch up on the day's scores. I think about Lawson and Clark over a few reds and a steak, but it's been a long day and my concentration soon wavers. I've still got all of Sunday, after all.

Sunday

After heavy overnight rain, nine hundred thousand tons of lingering autumn leaves in Mecklenburg Square have acquired a banana peel slipperiness which is visibly sapping the sabbatarian resolve of the churchgoers whose faltering progress I am distractedly watching from my upstairs window while reflecting on Lawson and Clark. It's about 11am, raining and windy. For two hours I peruse the *Observer* and the *Independent* as a useful intellectual preliminary to returning to Lawson and Clark. Today, I will knock the lecture over. As it happens though, I recognise that a day of such egregious inclemency is just the time to go and see *Breaking The Waves* at the nearby Renoir cinema. I return home emotionally shattered but recover for what turns out to be the scintillating second half of Newcastle's clash with Middlesborough. Following this with a bit of channel surfing to wind down, I fluke the end of *Gunfight at OK Corral*. The Clantons lose again. Why does everybody round here know who Wyatt Earp was and no-one knows about Henry Lawson? Or Clark?

My wife rings from Amsterdam. She is pleased to hear I've had a good working weekend and that the lecture's all wrapped up and ready to go. I'm pleased to hear this too, if it comes to that. In fact I'm stunned.

Monday

The miracle of email tells me that Grey Shot has tightened but still represents excellent value. (Lawson and Clark, on the other hand, have blown out to 500/1 as they move up to the Memorial Lecture barrier stalls in my aching head.) With the money on, however, my Melbourne informant is overwhelmed with a sense of doom. *He's* got a sense of doom. Doesn't he know about the Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Lecture? Still, I finally get a good run at it during Monday and it's looking better by that night when my wife returns and we revert to healthy eating.

Tuesday

In Melbourne, Grey Shot hits the front from the jump and leads the Cup field into the straight. He's still in the money with a hundred and fifty metres to go but is overrun in a crowded finish. Seventh. No cigar.

In London, conversely, the lecture is, according to all the punters, a winner. Big audience, prolonged applause.

As we leave the Hall heading for the drinks, a cultivated English voice nearby says, 'I must admit I hadn't really heard of Lawson and Clark before tonight.' I smile enigmatically. 'And Sir Robert Menzies,' he goes on, 'wasn't he ...?'

'Prime Minister,' I explain, keen to help. 'Of Australia. You know? Australia? Veer left at Singapore ...' ■

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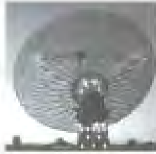
foreign correspondence



Oiling the wheels

AFRICA HAS BEEN WATCHING closely while Iraq descends into conflict.

Although events on the streets of Baghdad and Fallujah may seem a long way from the struggles for daily survival in N'Djaména or São Tomé, Africans are increasingly aware that what happens in the Middle East will have far-reaching implications for their own lives.

In the lead-up to the war in Iraq, the stage seemed to be set for Africa to finally have a meaningful say in world decision-making. Guinea, Cameroon and Angola, who occupied Africa's rotating membership of the Security Council at the time, suddenly became key players. Almost without warning, decisions made in Conakry, Yaoundé and Luanda were essential to the grave matter of whether the rush to war would have United Nations legitimacy.

The pressure from the pro- and anti-war camps was intolerable. An unprecedented diplomatic offensive of high level visits, phone calls and emails offered a crude combination of inducements—were Africans to have offered such things, they would have been called bribes—and threats.

The Streets of Chad. Photos: Anthony Ham

When Guinea took over the presidency of the Security Council on 1 March, it immediately found itself caught between the United States and France, its two largest donors. In return for a pro-war vote, the United States and its allies promised a substantial increase in military aid along with $US4 million to help Guinea cope with a massive refugee population whose numbers had been swelled by the escalating conflict in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. Soon after, the French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin touched down in Conakry. Publicly, he revealed little of what his government was promising in order to counter US overtures, but he left no-one in any doubt that a vote for the United States would be viewed most unfavourably.

Cameroon, the country with the closest ties to France, claimed to be more preoccupied with its own forthcoming elections than with any war in Iraq. To catch its attention, the United States warned the government of President Paul Biya, a government regularly described as the world's most corrupt, not to upset the world's only superpower and controller of the purse strings at the International Monetary Fund.

More than any other country, Angola had reasons to be sceptical of the need for war, having only recently emerged from decades of its own devastating conflict. Alongside such sensitivities were powerful facts of life—the US is Angola's biggest trade partner (heavily involved in Angola's oil industry) and aid donor ($US128 million last year) and the demand for its vote was sweetened by the promise of more.

The whole episode descended into farce when British Foreign Office officials arrived in the three countries claiming, disingenuously, to carry gifts of Foreign Office key rings and little else. It was, they said, an insult to think that the UK would consider trying to buy votes through large inducements.

On a superficial reading of events, America, the UK and France had suddenly discovered that Africa was important. In reality, Africa was being offered little more than neocolonial threats and attempts to purchase African compliance for a pittance.

Africa was not uniquely targeted among Security Council members. However, the unseemly rush to bully and cajole African nations carried particular resonance. Whether it was key rings or millions of dollars on offer, the whole process was like an echo of the European arrival in Africa when government agents offered token payments for African land. The modern equivalent was no less crude in its shameful re-enactment of trying to exploit Africa for imperial gain.

If either Guinea, Cameroon or Angola were in any doubt as to the serious consequences of a vote cast against the war, they needed only to consider recent history. When Yemen voted against the 1991 Gulf War, its diplomats were greeted in UN corridors minutes

later by US officials pronouncing it the most expensive vote Yemen would ever cast. A package of aid worth $US70 million was promptly cancelled.

Amid all the high-powered delegations and discussions of geopolitical strategy, there were few formal opportunities for the African people to voice their opinion, although there was little doubt that most opposed the conflict. It was also clear that little of what was being offered would be of lasting benefit to the people of Africa. That these people were irrelevant to the concerns of the superpowers was most glaringly obvious in Angola. American officials told the government of President Jose Eduardo dos Santos that, in return for Angolan support, the US would turn a blind eye to delays in moving towards democracy.

Through it all, there was widespread dismay across the continent that the impoverished sub-Saharan state of Niger—accused without foundation of selling uranium to Iraq—was used as a pawn, and then discarded without compensation, in America's pursuit of evidence that Iraq had been building a nuclear capability.

In the end, the United States and its allies invaded Iraq without UN sanction and African nations returned to the margins of world politics, again deprived of a significant voice. The continent licked its wounds. Its people's lives were not in the least improved. And Africa was left with yet another memory of an encounter with great powers who clearly believe that African independence is up for sale.

In July, Africa again took centre stage during George W. Bush's tour of the continent. Africa's media were largely unimpressed. Kenya's *Sunday Standard* made the following assessment: 'Bush's just-concluded visit to Africa, during which he spent more time in Air Force One than among the people of Africa, was of little consequence here.' In equally withering tones, the *Sunday Nation* in Uganda (a country visited by President Bush) decided that 'if there were any opportunities for Mr Bush to make a difference in Africa, no one can accuse him of taking them'.

And yet, Bush's visit does have the potential to effect a radical shift in Africa's fortunes. An underlying agenda of the president's five-nation tour was the fact that, in the aftermath of September 11 and the war in Iraq, the United States is seeking alternative sources of oil which are not subject to the instability of countries such as Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Already the US receives more than 20 per cent of its oil imports from Africa and the US government and private sector are keen to increase Africa's share. On this assessment, Africa could become one of the world's largest oil-producing regions.

What worries Africans most about a boom in oil income is that royalties from African oil have a habit of ending up in the pockets of local elites who then fight each other for the spoils, while the remainder is spirited away across the sea by Western companies.

Three of Africa's largest oil producers—Nigeria, Angola and Equatorial Guinea—provide ample reasons for taking these fears seriously. In the past decade, the number of people living in poverty in Nigeria has doubled and, in 2003, Nigeria was ranked second-to-last in Transparency International's authoritative Corruption Perceptions Index. According to the US-based NGO, Catholic Relief Services, Angola earns $US4 billion a year from its oil industry, but $US1 billion disappears into unknown pockets, to say nothing of the country's devastating civil war which was funded with oil and diamond revenues. For its part, Equatorial Guinea's oil income has won it independence from aid donors who once raised serious questions about the absence of human rights protections in this autocratic one-party state.

It is therefore not surprising that local activists in Chad declared 10 October—the day of the ceremonial opening of a pipeline to carry oil from Chad's Doba Basin to terminals off the Cameroon coast—to be a day of mourning.

Supporters of the Chadian project point to the 225,000 barrels of oil which will flow through the pipeline every day, generating annual revenues of $US80 million in what is the world's fifth poorest country. World Bank figures suggest that, as a direct result of oil production, per capita income in Chad could rise from $US250 per year to $US550 by 2005. The World Bank, which has invested more than $US200 million in the project, has sought to head off the usual disappearance of oil revenues by ensuring that all income is paid into a London bank account whose outlays are strictly supervised by a committee of Chadian and international watchdogs. The World Bank also ensured that the Chadian government pass a law whereby 80 per cent of oil revenues must be spent on education, health, protection of the environment, improving access to clean water, rural development and infrastructure.

For all that, three years ago the Chadian government admitted that $US5 million of its initial signature payment of $US25 million was diverted to buy weapons for its war against northern rebels. Perhaps more ominously than he intended, President Idriss Deby announced at the pipeline's opening that 'the coming oil income should not divert from our usual economic activities'.

Among other African nations with known oil reserves, the tiny island state of São Tomé and Príncipe has already experienced a coup since bidding was opened for its offshore drilling rights earlier this year.

Colonised and plundered of people and natural resources by European powers, ruled over in many cases by corrupt, kleptocratic and violent governments, Africa is already a continent with a deeply felt consciousness of the perils arising from natural riches and fragile independence.

It is the people of nations such as these—Guinea, Cameroon, Angola, Chad and São Tomé and Príncipe—who will soon begin to feel the consequences of the US-led war in Iraq. In the process, they will be well placed to assess whether oil is a blessing, or the curse that it has proved for the Iraqi people. They will also discover whether America's unprecedented focus on Africa is just one more example of African soil being plundered under the guise of African enrichment.

From Niamey to Dakar, from Khartoum to Yaoundé, I have heard pleas from ordinary Africans—directed at the international community and at their own governments—that the African people finally be allowed to chart their own destiny. But Africans have reason to be sceptical. Far from the world's gaze, caught between the disappointments of their continent's past and visions of war over oil as their future, few believe that Africa's financial independence will finally bring power to its people. ■

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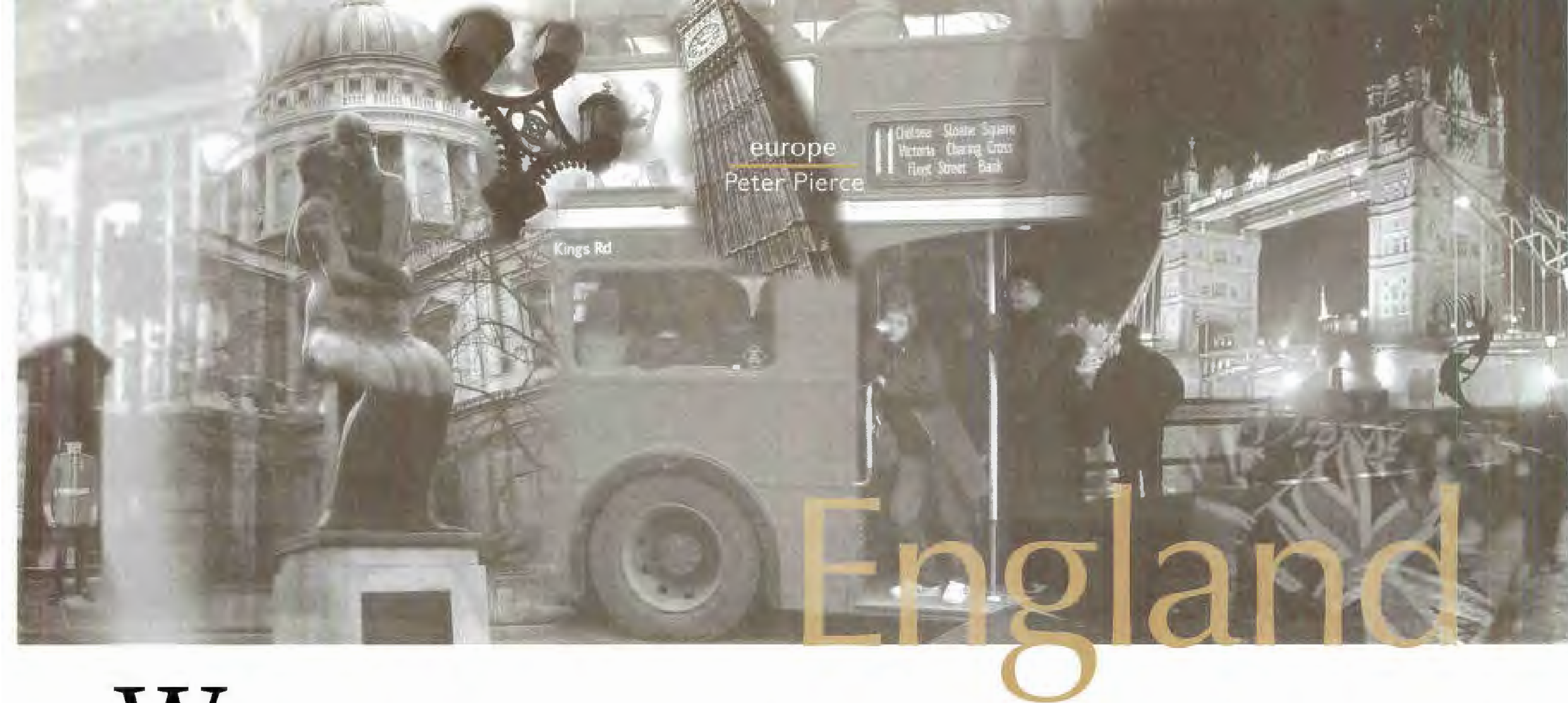

WHERE THE EUROSTAR eases out of the Channel tunnel into Kent, at Ashford, there is a vast parking lot of trains, named for English and French writers and composers. While I was musing on the prospects of an engine called Debussy, a woman nearby was coolly dictating a series of numbers to her husband. This was the first of a wash of indications that I was in England. Here were trainspotters. Behind me, a man with a trans-European voice was talking to his mobile phone. 'Where can I get any rabbits? No rabbits! You don't know where ...?' It wasn't clear whether the rabbits were intended as pets, circus props, or for the table, but somehow he had the numbers of at least four suppliers. All of them let him down.

We passed oast houses and hop fields. The countryside was as parched as an Australian summer paddock. (In England it was a summer of records: the first time that the temperature exceeded 100°F; Sussex's first county championship after 164 years as a cricket club; Labor's first by-election loss in 15 years.) I was musing about Dickens, who was born in Kent, in the naval port of Chatham, when the train went by the Staplehurst Station. Here, in June 1865, Dickens was returning to England with his mistress, Ellen Ternan, when the train was derailed at a bridge. Several people were killed. Many were injured. Dickens gave as much assistance as he could, but was nervously debilitated by the accident. Five years later, he died on its anniversary.

No back way into a city by train is ever attractive, but the squalors of Brixton have intensified in the four years since last I had this view. From there, via Waterloo, to Twickenham was a leap across a class divide, into a busy and prosperous village by the Thames. Behind the block of flats where I was to stay was a large garden. Squirrels ran about in it. Apples ripened and fell. The planes from Heathrow passed close overhead every minute. Once a fox disdainfully strolled across the lawn. In the street, chestnuts cannonaded off the roofs of parked cars, although the drought had left them too small to make good conkers. We were at home long enough to see High Chaparral beat the desperately unlucky Falbrav (which should have won on protest) in the Irish Champion Stakes at Leopardstown. Instead of the Cox Plate, Falbrav has been set for the Breeders' Cup in the United States.

To meet friends, we went to a nearby pub, the Hobgoblin. This Saturday afternoon, England was playing a Rugby Union Test against France, intent on reversing a narrow recent loss in Marseille. The pub was as full in all senses as Australian pubs once used to be: 'as full as a state school', or 'as two race trains', in the unforgettable, nostalgic similes for drunkenness of Barry Humphries. It was standing room only, and most of those standing were beefy Englishmen in the white jerseys of the national team. The bar was thick with male flesh. We negotiated our way out the back, and found a table. Sharing it with four men heading for the Twickenham Stadium ('the home of rugby', etc.), I was reminded even more strongly of the glory days of Australian boozing. Here was a six o'clock swill at four. In a final preparation for watching the game, the quartet skulled a round of pints of Guinness.

That evening, I was surrounded by young Australians who were on extended working holidays in Britain. This latest of many waves of adventurers probably meets a less sardonic reception than any before it. Their passage has been smoothed by Australian wine (mainstay of English liquor shops) and by Australian television programmes. Their professional, especially medical skills, are sought after and well rewarded. English counterparts seem to be in such jobs as IT consultant to the police or fencing master or pudgy-handed, spotty, 20-year-old computer geek profiled as he dreamt of his first billion pounds (new economy or false economy?). On this balmy night, a barbecue was ventured, so that the backyard became redolent of Australia. Improbably, when one looked up (and because we were far enough out of central London), there was a sky full of stars. We could have been in either continent. Is that the reassurance, or the mild disappointment, of the present Australian experience of living in England?

THIRTY YEARS AGO, WHEN I first came to Britain, I walked over lots of London. Missed lots too: the distinctiveness of its neighbourhoods, the city's 'multitudinous littleness' (as H.G. Wells finely put it) is an abiding delight, as one happens on places so near to where one knows, but till then unconnected. I fashioned a walk from The Monument, which commemorates the Great Fire of London in 1666, along the river, past the Tower and St Katharine's Dock, through Limehouse and then down the length of the Isle of Dogs to the foot tunnel beneath the Thames

that transports the traveller into the elegant and utterly different surroundings of Greenwich, with palace, observatory, museums. (Those seeking an alternative journey are directed to Iain Sinclair's marvellous novel, *Downriver*.)

For me, on the nothern side of the river, there had been the romantic East London of small Hawksmoor churches, of flock mills and spice warehouses that closed in on either side of the street, of narrow alleys leading to stairs that went down to the Thames. Each morning and evening Christopher Wren was rowed across from the south bank and back to supervise the building of St Paul's from such embarkation places as these. Fu Manchu went to ground in the East End. Sherlock Holmes knew the terrain as, of course, did Jack the Ripper. Once I lobbed in a pub in Shadwell to watch a race or two only to find, as I left, that its address was Cable Street, where Mosley's blackshirts demonstrated against local Jews in the 1930s. Opening the door of another pub, on a day when freezing sleet blew horizontally, I was severely admonished by a stripper who had not wanted me to come in from the cold and bring it along.

the pubs which are oases in a wasteland of mews and hideous apartment blocks

Much is changed now, but not the pubs which are oases in a wasteland of mews and hideous apartment blocks that line both sides of the river. Bulbous, glassy, often in brown brick with blue trim, they must surely and rightly affront the Prince of Wales. On this journey the first pub by the river is the Town of Ramsgate. The building's date is given as 1545. Wapping Old Stairs runs alongside it. On this Sunday morning, as we paused for a first half-pint, a routine of regulars was performing cockney. There was talk of a 'right Jack the lad', of 157 per cent rum, of chancers and charlatans. In Britain, class is often a droll impersonation of the attributes of the class to which the performers are supposed to belong.

WE HAD LUNCH IN a riverside terrace at the back of the Prospect of Whitby, where the bodies of traitors used to hang until three tides had washed over them. Further on was the Grapes, another intimate and narrow space that Dickens filled with life and intrigue in his novel, *Our Mutual Friend*. But by now the treats were over. No longer can one easily stroll the length of the Isle of Dogs. It is built out with apartments and offices. Canary Walk towers above them. There is a driverless light rail service to Greenwich, which meanders through a maze of nondescript, up-in-the-air stations.

With some initial relief we took a boat up the river, but this trip gave a starker view of the blighted array of apartment blocks, dourly facing each other from either bank. This reach of the Thames has been made drabber than in its days of romantic dilapidation when—if no other purpose was served—black-and-white television cop shows found congenial sites here. As the river winds around, one new building seemed to pop up on each side by turns—a new, emerald green insurance tower. Wilfully, as Thatcher's acrid spirit lingers, London is being built out.

There was one more reminiscent journey to take—to Oxford. In the first week of October 1973, I had arrived from Melbourne via Hong Kong and Israel and been taken to Highbury to see Arsenal play (a 1-0 win, by penalty). As we left the ground, a 72-point headline in the *Evening Standard* proclaimed 'It's War'. And it was—the Yom Kippur War, which I had missed by a day. That made my first train trip to Oxford appear to be even more of a journey into the past. On cue, a vision of spires seen so often before at second hand loomed up, calmingly familiar. These days, one goes up and down to London much more cheaply and conveniently by bus. In the 1970s the train was cheaper, but hardly easy. During the three-day week imposed by Edward Heath no trains ran on Sunday. Every late train back from London had an intolerable stop and change at Didcot, where the cooling towers of its nuclear reactor still smoke.

Once, on a rainy Sunday, I caught a bus from Victoria to Oxford. It was so long ago that I was reading, with shock and admiration, Thomas Keneally's *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*. Somewhere in the dark we stopped to take on a husband, wife, teenage son and a very large dog. Next stop a young woman boarded, only to be informed that the bus was full. She could wait an hour for the next one. Her utterly reasonable remonstrance: 'what about the dog?' frayed into the night. The vile youth (middle-class voice, but what was his family doing on a bus?) whinnied: 'didn't that woman know that we paid half fare for Rupert?'

This time, I went by car, through the western outskirts of London, bypassing Reading, detouring through Abingdon, missing Oxford altogether on a puzzle of ring roads. But there was a signpost to the village of Middleton Stoney, where long ago I had taught Shakespeare to senior secondary students. The Jersey Arms, tarted up these days, had been an exacting trudge down the road. We went on to Steeple Aston. It is near the former US F111 base of Upper Heyford. The infrastructure, which enabled many Americans never to stray even so far as Oxford (20 kilometres distant), remains. Friends of mine stayed at Steeple Aston in the mid-1970s. It is a hilly village of narrow streets, with an ancient church and the largest sycamore tree in England. Across the road from my friends' place lived Iris Murdoch and John Bayley. Once I delivered a book to her, while on the morning of my Oxford viva I watched with trepidation as Bayley, one of my examiners, gambolled on the roof of his barn.

Steeple Aston boasts two pubs: a White Lion and a Red Lion. The latter was my local. I had missed by less than a year the departure of the long-term publican and his wife, but the new owner welcomed us with Hook Norton ale and a beef and beer pie. This is a rich village, and some of the retired bourgeoisie use the pub. At lunchtime, we saw another English class charade. A gentleman ordered a pint and drank it while he smoked a cigar. Then he ordered a cheeseburger, pedantically insisting on what should and should not be in it. Now for the wine: Gevrey Chambertin would do with the burger, after banter over prices. We were far from the East End, but had only come to a different theatre. In the words of Humphries's Barry McKenzie: 'I'll never get to the bottom of the Poms.' ■

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

Kate Pollard

The voyage out

Migrants to Australia reunite to recall a living history

On his 20th birthday, Andrea (Andy) Andrighetto left his homeland of Italy. He travelled on the ship *Oceania*, alone and in search of a better life. Andy came from a large family: his parents, four boys and three girls. His family owned little land and their one cow could not provide for the family of nine. As Andy recalls, 'there wasn't enough to feed all of us'. Prospects of employment in post-war Italy were poor and Andy decided to emigrate from war-ravaged Europe. There was, he recollects, a choice of three destinations—America, South Africa and Australia. Leaving his family, Andy sailed to Australia in February 1952.

Andy was one of the guests at a reunion day on 5 October 2003, organised by the Immigration Museum in Melbourne. The reunion focused on migrants who travelled on one of four ships: *Neptunia*, *Oceania*, *Australia* and *Fairsea*.

These vessels, operating over two decades, carried more than 200,000 post-war European emigrants to our shores—changing the lives of many, and helping to build a multicultural Australia.

In encouraging former emigrants and their families to share memories and rekindle shipboard acquaintances, the reunion days celebrate the spirit of a life-changing journey. Maria Tence, Manager of Public Programs, reflects on the role of the reunions: 'Through these gatherings, we are able to collect personal stories, and fill in important gaps in our knowledge of Australia's immigration history—which, after all, is the history of many thousands of individuals.'

Above: The *Fairsea* brought 125,000 people to Australia. Giuseppina Cucinelli (left) and Ginetta Bianchin (right) at the reunion. Photos: Pru Taylor.

At the reunion day, I had the opportunity to speak with passengers like Andy, postwar emigrants on board the four vessels. Their narratives are filled with hope and anecdotes, personal yet representative.

Andy Andrighetto left for Australia with the tantalising promise of jobs that paid 'four times the wage in Italy', only knowing of Australia as 'a big country'. He brought no luggage, just youthful optimism, hope and 'a lot of dreams'. His abiding memories of the voyage are of the food. As a boy he had a rapacious appetite and shipboard life offered a boundless supply of 'biscuits, butter and jam'.

Food played a less significant role in the memories of Akos Kerekes, only a young boy when his family fled Hungary after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. The Kerekes family carried 'one little suitcase, and the clothes on our back'. Akos was a passenger on the motor vessel *Fairsea*, which, according to Keith Stodden, a guest speaker at the reunion day, revolutionised ship travel. It had the unusual distinction of being the first migrant ship to be air conditioned. After its postwar conversion to passenger traffic, *Fairsea* made 80 voyages to Australia, bringing 125,000 immigrants to new lives in Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia and South Australia. Akos remembers the journey as a 'mixed bag'. He recalls vividly the monotony of the voyage, the daily regimen and claustrophobia of shipboard life: 'day on

day, very often it was just the same all day.' Landing in South Africa was memorable: having never been out of Hungary, the black faces, hustle and bustle and smells of Cape Town were both strange and electrifying.

The *Neptunia*, *Oceania* and *Australia*, a trio of 13,000 tonne ships, were commissioned by the European passenger line, Lloyd Triestino, to carry the large number of displaced people emigrating to Australia after World War II.

Giuseppina Cucinelli, born in 1916, was a passenger on the *Neptunia*, arriving in Port Melbourne on 16 August 1957. When I asked Giuseppina why she had chosen to emigrate, she answered laconically, 'four children—not enough to eat.' What does one take to a new land? Giuseppina packed linen that she had embroidered, towels, a cutlery set, breakfast cups and a big spaghetti pot—with homemade spaghetti inside.

Giuseppina was miserable and lonely on the voyage; she travelled alone with four small children. Her first impression of Australia was of 'a very strange land'. This strange land became home, however, as Giuseppina was reunited with her husband.

GIUSEPPINA AND HER family were fee-paying passengers. Her husband emigrated to Australia a few years earlier and sent money home for the fare. Giuseppina's daughter accompanied her mother to the reunion day and spoke of meeting her father for the first time. He had left for Australia before she was born and she remembers not knowing her father, and being frightened of him, when they met at Station Pier. It was a long time before she was able to accept 'this strange man' as her father.

Ginetta Bianchin made the journey as a child of ten with her mother, brother and sister; like Giuseppina, to reunite the family. Her family left the province of Treviso, 50 kilometres north of Venice, for a better life. 'Conditions where I was brought up were pretty woeful.' On reflection, she notes, 'we have had a great life in Australia.'

Her family brought to Australia the 'few meagre possessions' they could carry. Freighting costs were exorbitant and, like most, they could not afford to bring more. Clothing, household paraphernalia, a few photographs, were packed in two trunks; a small space, Ginetta recalls, for four people. She remembers the journey to Australia as a 'new and wonderful experience', especially 'all the food on board'. It was Aladdin's Cave to a hungry migrant child.

It is in Ginetta's story that I am reminded of the power of the family. Ginetta was not once homesick for Italy, and believes she has her mother's 'immediate' love of Australia to thank for this. She remembers the day they arrived at Station Pier. Her mother looked around at Port Melbourne and said 'I am going to love it here'. It is with this passion and conviction that Ginetta, the next generation, also speaks of Australia.

Luggage rather than food colours the memories of Ian Shield and his brother, passengers of the *Fairsea*, 1958. Ian was nine years old, and remembers the issue of luggage being solved by a washing machine. A passenger was given a choice of 'weight' or 'size' when shipping their belongings. Ian's father chose size and dismantled a washing machine, repacking the family's belongings inside. Ian recalls that the washing machine was impossible to lift when his father had finished.

Ian and his brother confess to making mischief on the voyage. They were responsible for their younger brother in the evening, and would exhaust him by running up and down the decks all day. If he went to bed early, they could attend the pictures played after dinner on board. They admit this tomfoolery rarely worked.

As a child, the deaths of five children on the voyage made a deep impression on Ian. Still now, many years past, he remembers watching a burial at sea, and shudders at the recollection. To many families, the voyage brought more pain than the experience of leaving home.

In the minds of all these Australians, the pain, boredom, discomfort and even the food are overshadowed by the life offered in a new land. They brought with them imagination and expectation, hope and inspiration. Above all, the dream of a better life. ■

Kate Pollard is a postgraduate student at the University of Melbourne.

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Moira Rayner

Protecting the vulnerable

Children need help to protect themselves, argues **Moira Rayner**.

IN 1994 THE FEDERAL government amended the Crimes Act so Australia could prosecute 'sex tourists' when they came home from pleasure trips to developing nations where they had happily rented or raped the children of the poor. This law has not been much used: just 16 formal investigations and 12 convictions. A government spokesman reported in *The Age* on 15 September said this was OK because the law was meant to encourage prosecutions in the country where the offences occurred. That, of course, is bulldust.

We prosecute Australian paedophiles because we have more skills and resources. Australian police have supposedly better specialist skills at interviewing child victims. Poor people in Thailand or Cambodia or East Timor tend not to trust people in uniform, or what children say. Australian courts, prosecutors and lawyers are allegedly better at 'hearing' child witnesses.

Yet after 20 years of special laws, witness and courtroom processes and education and media revelations about serial, systemic sex abuse by adults with authority over children, the rate of successful prosecutions is actually dropping.

The best way to protect children from sexual exploitation is to prevent it. Since you can't pick a paedophile—their success depends on being 'nice' to children (and their folks)—then raising and encouraging children not to be victims is the only other choice.

The best way to protect children from sexual exploitation is to prevent it

If children can solve problems, if they have access to people they trust, and if they have the confidence to tell secrets because they have experienced being taken seriously, they can use that little bit of power they have: to say no, and tell someone.

Nineteen years ago I learned about a simple new program designed to give children these skills. The Protective Behaviours program is based on a couple of solid principles: letting children know they have a right to feel safe, and that nothing is so awful that they can't tell someone about it. It teaches basic skills: how to recognise the physical signs of fear and danger, and how to act on them, through their personal networks of safe adults to go to.

Professor Freda Briggs has been saying for a very long time that this is not enough and reiterated this view at the National Protective Behaviours conference in WA in October 2003. The evidence tells us some unpalatable truths, said this former London police officer/social worker/teacher who is now the underappreciated *grande dame* of child protection based in South Australia. According to her work with imprisoned paedophiles, we are neither preventing paedophiles from operating, nor 'proofing' children against them.

We cannot 'teach' protection to children unless we teach them problem-solving skills

'Protective' programs devised in the 1970s have not worked—I am summarising Professor Briggs—because their creators made several fundamental mistakes, in 'teaching' what children needed to know without checking what they could understand. The programs were either too vague (because adults don't like 'sex' or the human body mentioned) or too scary (Rape! Sodomy! Pain!). It was also wrongly assumed that adult rape and child sexual assault victims have the same kinds of experience. They don't. Rape involves violence and fear, but child sexual abuse may be cultivated over time out of natural sexual curiosity, patient 'grooming', meeting children's needs for affection/approval/love and attachment, creating dependence and exploiting adult authority.

WE KNOW THIS, just as we know that it is not true that girls are the only victims and men are the only abusers. The evidence shows that one in four or five male (self-reported) victims becomes an abuser. Most first sexual experiences are assumed to be 'good'. Of 198 male victims and imprisoned sex offenders in Australian jails interviewed by Briggs, 78.5 per cent of males who had been victims thought the abuse was 'normal' and 43 per cent liked receiving oral sex and genital stimulation. When abuse became painful and violent, they found they were trapped by threats, secrecy and the instilled belief that they were 'gay'.

To be effective, Protective Behaviours depends on

children identifying and reporting unsafe feelings. Very young children don't understand what 'safe' or unsafe means. Their concepts of safety are acquired from authoritative adults. Briggs' investigations have shown that South Australian paedophiles now use the program to their own advantage, assuring victims that they are safe, twisting both protective and sex education concepts to advance their plans.

We cannot 'teach' protective behaviours to children unless we teach them problem-solving skills, not just obedience. We cannot expect children to identify sex offences if we do not tell them, simply and clearly, what constitutes reportable behaviour. Children need parents who understand that 'protection' means skills and self-confidence; parents who don't insist that 'family' secrets are sacred; who don't teach that being 'good' means doing what adults tell you; and who, when kids try out assertiveness and say 'no' at the wrong time (i.e. bedtime) don't hit them.

Children know that adults can't handle their 'dirty' talk or 'rude' behaviour. Children know that's naughty, that 'naughty' means it's their fault, that they will be punished, not loved, and feel guilty.

We need to do something nationally, consistently, about 'protective behaviours' education for parents. We need to do some basic education about child development too, and particularly with lawyers. A 19-year-old textbook on evidence, from which most lawyers learned, said this:

> ... children sometimes behave in a way evil beyond their years. They may consent to sexual offences against themselves and then deny consent. They may completely invent sexual offences.
> Some children know that the adult world regards such matters in a serious and peculiar way, and they enjoy investigating this mystery or revenging themselves by making false accusations.

If even in enlightened Australia the law considered that children can 'consent' to acts that are serious crimes, yet not speak and be believed, what chance do the children of our struggling neighbours have?

Nothing less than a major rethink of the time, care and respect we give to all of our children will bring forth something better. Unless children know *from experience* that adults will listen to them and take them seriously, they will stay silent. We need competent children able to protect themselves from this blight on their lives today, and our future. ■

Unless children know from experience that adults will listen to them and take them seriously, they will stay silent

Moira Rayner is a barrister and Senior Fellow at the Law School, University of WA.

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Love ought to show itself in deeds more than in words.
—St. Ignatius of Loyola

1988 Missionary for child workers and their families, Tacna, Peru.
1993 Youth Leadership Instructor: Voyageurs Outward Bound School, Ely Minnesota.
1996 Enrolls at Weston Jesuit School of Theology.
1998 Founding Member of the Weston Social Justice Forum.
May 1999 Completes thesis on directing the church's mission to abused children; Graduates with Master of Divinity from Weston Jesuit School of Theology.
July 1999 Director, Ignacio Volunteer Program, Boston College Campus Ministry Office.

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Michele M. Gierck

Next generation

It must be difficult to live in the shadow of a charismatic predecessor. I've often wondered how South African president Thabo Mbeki felt taking over office from Nelson Mandela. Back home, Archbishop Peter Hollingworth struggled in the shadow of Sir William Deane, a man who brought dignity and respect to a position many Australians would prefer no longer existed.

Yet Njongonkulu Ndungane, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, who succeeded Desmond Tutu, seems to have managed well. Ndungane is a man who radiates an energy and commitment that endears him to his own people while earning the archbishop a place on the international stage; a man who often says, 'We have not inherited this world from our parents, but have borrowed it from our children'.

Recently, Archbishop Ndungane has addressed the US Congress and the World Economic Forum, but he is equally at home out in the South African townships embracing HIV/AIDS sufferers.

So determined was Ndungane to get South African men to undertake tests for HIV, he went to a public clinic in one of the townships to be tested. He smiles as he tells the story. 'That created a lot of gossip and media attention. When I walked out of the clinic, I had to face TV cameras. There was so much speculation. "How did it go?" they asked. "I'll let you know," I told them.'

'HIV/AIDS is a disease, not a punishment,' he says. 'And the challenge is to break the stigma attached to it.'

An international advocate on the issue of HIV/AIDS, Ndungane knows it is to the corridors of power that he must take his message. Yet he is also aware that he has been entrusted with the voices and hopes of Africa's most vulnerable.

Invited to Australia recently by Anglicord, the archbishop launched their annual appeal.

Gentle of voice, expressive with his hands, deliberate in word choice, Ndungane's speech to launch the appeal begins. Two minutes later he has the audience laughing, and within ten minutes he has the momentum of a steam train, taking those gathered on a ride, to a destination only he is aware of.

Words such as human community, interdependence, vulnerability and September 11 crop up. And while the archbishop says statistics can dazzle us, there is one he mentions. 'Twice as many people die daily due to HIV/AIDS as died in the attacks on September 11 in the USA.' It's a sobering thought.

'Many who contract HIV/AIDS are innocent victims, not only children, but women who have been faithful to their husbands.

Yet so many of the mothers carry the pain and guilt of their children contracting the disease.'

While in Australia, Archbishop Ndungane also spoke at an NGO forum on HIV/AIDS, and to Melbourne's top end of town. The corporate lunch, organised by a prominent law firm, was attended by 45 selected guests. With this latter engagement in mind, I asked Ndungane about motivation for change. Why should Australians be involved or even care about issues such as HIV/AIDS, debt relief and other issues affecting southern Africa?

'First of all I believe that all human beings, generally speaking, would like to live with peace and security. But a starting point for why Australians should be involved goes back to World War II. The thinking was that we didn't want any more world wars and there was a joint effort to form an institution, the United Nations, to arbitrate between nations in the case of a dispute. Related to this was the establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Here was the human community driven by solidarity among human beings and a desire to live in peace.'

His second point relates to recent events. 'The greatest event of our days that has made the world come to a standstill is September 11 ... What it shows us is our vulnerability as a human community and our mutual interdependence.

'So for those of us with eyes to see, what that said is that we need to work together for the common good in this world, to seek to eliminate conditions that make such deadly fanaticism—terrorism—survive. We need to enable people to have access to all that is essential for human welfare: food, shelter, water, health care, education, etc. That would eliminate the conditions in which deadly fanaticism breeds.'

The archbishop stresses that access for all to the basics of life *is* possible.

Third, he says the global village is a world without walls, one in which the rich and powerful, not just the poor, are vulnerable.

'Therefore it is in our enlightened self-interest that we provide the conditions that bring about security. This means investing in human capital—the advancement of human beings. 'Whether Australians like it or not, or whether they are a faith loving community or not, this is God's world. And God has created this world, providing enough resources for our needs, not for our greed.'

NDUNGANE SAYS EVEN the World Economic Forum will focus on values in its next session, on how to order our lives today in a responsible way that reflects our role as God's stewards. And the archbishop expects to be there for those discussions.

He also believes creating sustainable development, peace and security is not work that should be left to others. Government, civil society and business all have their role to play. 'We can't leave politics to the politicians or theology to the theologians.'

According to Ndungane, the latest research indicates that if nothing is done to combat HIV/AIDS in South Africa, the economy will collapse within three generations, having devastating effects on surrounding economies and communities, in turn affecting the international community. So once again he refers to 'our enlightened self-interest'. This time the interest is making sure democracies like South Africa succeed.

At this point the conversation turns to the topic of leadership. I comment on the number of leaders in South Africa who came through the school of Robben Island, the prison where Ndungane spent three years. The archbishop jokes that he built Nelson Mandela's cell.

'One of the greatest miracles of our time has been that transition from apartheid to democracy, and having the right person at the right time in the person of Nelson Mandela, who is a person of forgiveness par excellence, to lead us in the direction of reconciliation. I think there are a lot of lessons to be learnt from that.'

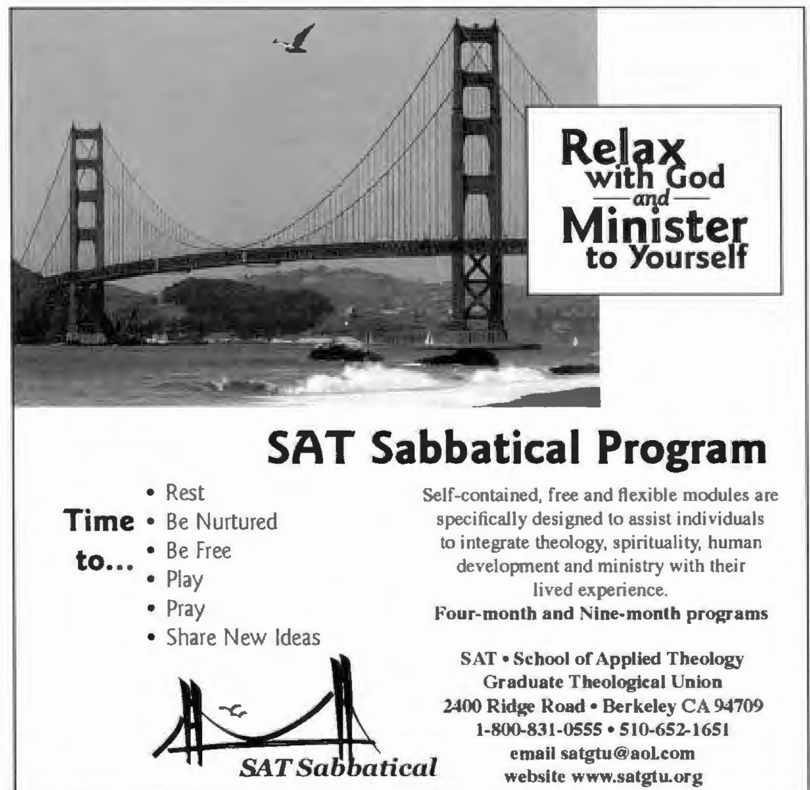
Ndungane adds if he had his way, no-one would be given public office or hold a senior position in church, business or politics without an experience of another culture in another part of the world. 'When you have met with the people and been immersed in the conditions, you begin to appreciate how people are living, and have a real dialogue.'

One final question. Will South Africa survive after Mandela? 'You know,' he says, pausing to consider his words carefully, 'People used to say, will there be church after Tutu?' He looks directly at me, and a broad smile breaks out across his face.

Eventually he adds: 'Others will come to the fore. The spirit will live on.'

If the example of the Archbishop of Cape Town, Njongonkulu Ndungane, is anything to go by, it seems the special South African spirit—which draws so much vitality from the example of Nelson Mandela—will live on. ■

Michele M. Gierck is a writer, educator and public speaker. Njongonkulu Ndungane's recent book *A World With A Human Face: A Voice From Africa* is published by David Philip, 2003.



Matthew Klugman

Soul food

Richard Tognetti charts a new course for the ACO

IN *Other People's Words* Hilary McPhee describes the long continuing struggle to establish a publishing culture that nurtures and promotes Australian writers. McPhee knew Australian writers brought unique voices, grounded in the otherness of a strange small society at the end of the world. The struggle was to convince publishers, both here and overseas, that these voices were valuable and that the reading public would take to them if only given the chance. Since 1989, Richard Tognetti, the Artistic Director and Leader of the Australian Chamber Orchestra (ACO), has been engaged in a similar struggle to cultivate the possibilities of Australian orchestral music.

It is not a path Tognetti expected to take. These days the ACO is celebrated around the world for combining excellence with a fresh voice. Yet the idea that he would find such success with an Australian group must have seemed far-fetched to Tognetti when he left Sydney in the mid-1980s to study at the Berne Conservatory in Switzerland.

Like many of his contemporaries and predecessors, Richard Tognetti left highly critical of his homeland. 'I believed Australia was a cultural desert, that there was no audience here, that not much was happening, that the real possibilities were elsewhere,' he tells me. Nevertheless, Tognetti was surprised at the end of his studies to discover 'a sleeping affinity with Australia'. His girlfriend (now wife) was here and he decided to give Australia a go, accepting the job of leading and directing the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

Coming home, Tognetti found what he hadn't been taught before—a tradition of Australian art with a spirit of endeavour, a boldness and freedom that is quite different from a lot of European art. (Think, for instance, of Sidney Nolan, Helen Garner, Percy Grainger and Peter Sculthorpe, and you get a sense of this.) Emboldened, he set out to have some 'serious fun', approaching each piece anew, rearranging string quartet and symphony pieces for chamber orchestra, commissioning new pieces from various Australian composers, and pioneering a series of daring collaborations with performers from outside classical music. For Tognetti, this has been no 'vacuous vision to turn Australia upside down'; rather, it has been a highly disciplined search.

Observing the portraits of Melbourne painter Gabrielle Martin, Kevin Hart wrote:

> I am reminded of an old saying amongst poets: 'Good poets write two poems. Great poets write one poem.' It is true. My favourite artists do one thing but endlessly contest what they do. That probing of subject is not undertaken to astonish the world by their breadth of vision. It is not done in order to call representation into question. It is pursued because they are called by something that evades being represented in their work. There is always more to say about the curtain's shadow on a breakfast table, for example. It is always possible to say it more simply. It is always possible to open oneself to a mystery that can be conducted only through the simplest words.

The ACO pursue the inner vitality, the life, of the pieces they play. *Musical Renegades*—a recent documentary on the ACO—shows how the orchestra takes each piece apart, bar by bar, almost note by note, to see what it reveals, what it hides, what the composer wittingly and unwittingly captured. There is something here of the Gnostic search for the lost sparks of divinity that have been scattered through the world, finding the strangeness and beauty of what others passed over.

Tognetti is alive to the sacred aspects of their task. 'Concert halls are the modern day church,' he tells me, 'and concerts invite us into the indulgence of believing in a universal spirit, call it God or humanity, a wonderful indulgence that relies on discipline, understanding and mutual respect.' Still, as Kevin Hart notes, artists can never completely grasp what they seek. What they can do is keep searching further and further. It is here that the ACO's particular form of collaboration is important.

The Australian Chamber Orchestra has been described as an ensemble of soloists. Each player is encouraged to find their voice, each plays with their own charisma and flair. And yet they are also part of a greater whole. The bringing together of difference is a challenging brief, but the rewards are great—shared discovery and the chance to learn more both about themselves as performers and about the music they play.

'We're incredibly hard on each other,' states Helena Rathbone, the ACO's principal second violinist, in *Musical Renegades*. 'Collaborations are an affirmation of what you're doing,' expands Tognetti, 'but they are also a terrific way of hearing honest appraisal ... a critic writes from the outside and often is way off the mark in their praise and condemnation. When you play music with others they say very honest things about the connection.'

IT IS THIS HONEST APPRAISAL, this hardness on each other, that allows the orchestra to keep moving deeper into the life of music. 'A child learns to talk, constantly grappling with speech patterns and getting appropriate criticism and support and it is possible to continue this into adulthood. It's a pleasure to work with people in artistic life, it builds your being and there is the challenge of being a single cell in a larger organism.' The creative impulse needs to be worked out 'when you are in a room and feeling lonely', continues Tognetti, but the sharing of differences can help bring the results to life.

The play of differences within the ACO is echoed by their repertoire—in their reinterpretations, their Australian commissions and most famously in their work with people from outside classical music. These are not, Tognetti emphasises, 'gratuitous' acts. Rather, in working with the Bell Shakespeare Company, or with Tim Freedman, Michael Leunig, Peter Garrett and Neil Finn, the ACO is bringing together strange things to see what they might teach us.

Next year the ACO will give around 120 concerts, travelling all over Australia and the rest of the world. They will play music from Australia, Europe and South America—joining an accordionist, a violinist, a pianist and a soprano to play classics, forgotten jewels and world premieres. Having collaborated with Australian actors, pop stars and artists, next year the ACO will collaborate with Australian writers, commissioning Dorothy Porter, Michael Leunig, Helen Garner, David Malouf, composer Georges Lentz and others to create a piece based on Christ's last words. To make their music as accessible as possible they have increased the range of their youth tickets (which are less than half the adult price) from under 26 to under 30, and plan to travel through country Australia.

The ACO are still on the journey Richard Tognetti started with them in 1989. That was a time when 'everyone believed that nothing was possible, that there were no audiences'. Tognetti has experienced otherwise. 'People are the same everywhere, there is more difference between individuals than between groups. There is a universal human condition, everyone laughs and cries about roughly the same things, and artists distil and exaggerate these emotions. The difficulty, the challenge, lies in getting the audience to understand what you are speaking. We have been successful in developing a wonderful audience everywhere, although we could do with some more people coming in Melbourne.' Yet despite being embraced by audiences here and overseas, Tognetti and the ACO are somewhat isolated in Australia. 'We're not encouraging Australian conductors, there are no musical directors at the performing establishments, apart from me at the ACO. It's a shame that should be investigated. Why is this so?'

THE RECENT EVENTS at Opera Australia provide an example of the difficulties of establishing a new voice in Australia. Last year they 'just threw out a terrific musical director [Simone Young], who is a woman'. Though it was undoubtedly a complex situation, 'the historical details pale into insignificance in light of the fact that they lost this person, in light of the bigger philosophical issues.' More specifically 'it would seem there was something in the attitude to an Australian, to a woman, an Australian woman ... you can imagine an overseas director coming here and being seen as authoritarian and sticking to his guns, whereas she was seen as temperamental and out of control.'

Tognetti feels that if he hadn't made something for himself he would never have been asked to perform by the establishment. Even now he is rarely asked to perform here. Nevertheless, he has been luckier than Simone Young, luckier too, perhaps, than Hilary McPhee whose publishing company eventually ran aground. Tognetti has learnt that his initial criticisms of Australia were not entirely true, but a distressing paradox remains. While Australia has afforded Tognetti the chance to find a voice that is bold and free, he feels that 'if I resigned from my job at the ACO I might be forced to go overseas, as I would not be invited to do anything else here'. The work to create a culture and infrastructure that truly nurtures and promotes Australian artists is not yet complete. ■

Matthew Klugman is a Melbourne writer.

Daring collaborations

SINCE 2000, the Australian Chamber Orchestra has been challenging the boundaries of chamber music with a series of collaborations with significant artists from outside the realms of orchestral music. The pioneering collaboration in 2000 featured the drawings and text of Michael Leunig with the voice of Peter Garret performing, among others, Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, Camille Saint-Saën's *Carnival of the Animals*, and Gavin Bryars' *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*. (The ACO later released a live recording of *Carnival of the Animals* with Leunig's text and images.)

In 2001 the orchestra worked with Neil Finn, Michael Leunig, a number of Australian composers and Lynn William's national children's choir, Gondwana Voices, to develop an Australian opera, *Parables, Lullabies and Secrets*. The year 2002 saw a production of Igor Stravinsky's *A Soldier's Tale* with The Bell Shakespeare Company, while in 2003 the ACO commissioned Australian composers, including Peter Sculthorpe, to arrange the songs of The Whitlams lead singer Tim Freedman for chamber orchestra. In 2004 the orchestra will collaborate with Australian composers and writers to create a piece informed by Christ's seven last words.

profile

Kerrie O'Brien

Respecting Australian rules

AUSTRALIAN WRITER Martin Flanagan is like a modern day *shanachie*. In Irish tradition, every village, no matter how small, had a storyteller, known as a shanachie, who told stories about their people and the society they lived in. The shanachies effectively helped preserve Irish culture and a sense of history; they instilled a sense of justice in their children.

Flanagan's writing is like the story-telling of the shanachies on several levels. He too addresses issues of fairness and history, and tells the untold stories of the ordinary person. Through that process, he looks at many of the major issues confronting Australian society today.

Both in his daily journalism, writing for *The Age* newspaper, and his books (there are eight to date), Flanagan is a beautiful writer. He writes about Australian culture, Australian people and the games they play. The relationship between black and white Australia has long been a focus of his work. He has been called Australia's best sports writer but his work deals with much more than sport. Of course, sport embraces much more than just a game. 'Any popular game properly understood will always tell you about the values of the society at the time,' Flanagan says.

His latest book, *The Game in Time of War*, was inspired by the events of September 11 and the subsequent attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq. In short, it is the story of three men going to the football, and the events in the world around them during that time.

In the book, he examines society using the medium of sport—from World War I to the present day. Flanagan found solace in the football at a time when the world seemed to be going mad. 'So all of a sudden this bloody war's coming and the only thing which provides me with any sort of degree of relief is going to watch this game. I'm as aware as anyone that that's almost absurd but equally it was the reality.'

So what is it about Australian Rules that provides that relief? 'There is something about the Australianness of it ... going and watching a game of footy—which some people would say is violent, but to me isn't 'cos it's sort of codified Greek conduct—and just the earthy candour that surrounds the game that was no longer in our public life. And the egalitarian nature of it, all those sort of things.'

The Game In Time of War deals with culture and politics, religion and self-discovery, nationality and humanity—like much of Flanagan's work, it is heartfelt and raw. While dealing with complex and confronting issues, his writing remains simple and accessible.

This is no coincidence—he works hard at the process. He puts it down to his experience as a journalist, wanting his writing to speak to the broadest possible audience. He also credits other influences: 'I was persuaded of that by [cartoonist Michael] Leunig, who said "the simpler you can make your work the more people you'll take with you".'

'I am in the business of trying to deposit ideas in mainstream Australian culture. It's like posting letters—you've got to get the ideas through a slit and I regard my art in part as making the complex simple, so it's absolutely about accessibility. People have got no idea the labour that goes into being simple. I try and be really hard-headed about my writing, like I interrogate it, [asking] "What are you saying? If you say this, do you mean that?" I just go back and through it again and again.'

Actor/writer John Clarke also made an impact, saying 'The trick to performing is not to perform'. According to Flanagan: 'I translated that to mean the trick to writing is not to write elaborately, showoffedly, unduly, expansively or indeed for effect. Simply say what it is you have to say, *trust* the words that appear before you. And they are your truest words. It's simply about having the guts and the courage and maybe the patience to wait for the words to appear and to learn how to be in the right places for them to appear and then having the courage to just write them down when they do. That's the process.'

Writing was a secret passion for Flanagan from an early age, but he completed a law degree, painted houses and travelled the world before getting a cadetship at the Launceston *Examiner*. The interest in law is not surprising. There is a strong social

conscience in Flanagan's writing, a desire to tell the stories that deserve to be told. Studying law in his early 20s left an indelible imprint on him. 'Law was good for me because it taught me a certain intellectual discipline,' he says. 'It taught me that when the rules are defined you won't get away with bullshit. When the rules aren't defined, you will. When the rules are defined, good minds will catch you out.

'It also led me to think much more seriously about the notion of witness and the notion of evidence. Good reportage is about the act of witness.'

COMMITMENT TO THESE themes is particularly important to Flanagan; they recur throughout his writing, both in *The Age* and in his books. 'When I got into journalism, one of the things I found was that you can speak for other people,' he says.

'That became one of the really meaningful things to me. Early on I met Ernie Dingo and he said to me "White artists always see themselves as being outside of the group but black artists see themselves as speaking on behalf of the group".

'So I've always taken incredibly seriously the role of being the medium for other people's stories. And that's a lot of what I've done as a journalist, is just try to convey other people's stories I thought the public should know. And try to get them to the public. That's a very intimate thing to do, there are huge amounts of trust and you've got to have this sensitivity and reception to what other people are on about.'

That intimacy and honesty is reflected in Flanagan's writing about himself. Reading *In Sunshine or In Shadow*, you feel you have travelled with him on his quest to establish a sense of self. His wife, Polly, said to him when she first read the book 'It's all in there'. As a reader, you certainly get that impression—he lays himself bare.

Growing up in Tasmania, with an Irish convict background, Flanagan felt a strong desire to connect with his ancestry, which led him overseas in his early 20s. 'I think I'm actually a traditional man, it's just that I was brought up in a place where my tradition was absent and then I had to go looking for my tradition,' he says.

He travelled to Ireland on a kind of pilgrimage to seek out his forebears and to establish a connection, and found he still felt like a tourist. After his return to Australia, Flanagan started exploring this country and travelled to northern Australia, which made a huge impact on him. He was introduced to Aboriginal people and culture.

'The first people who understood my dilemma, my inner restlessness, were Aboriginal people. The last people on earth who I expected to understand me understood me. That's the great defining irony of my life,' he says.

'By exploring this country and the people and its history I have a far larger sense of what it means to be Australian. I'm not ashamed to say I love this country and a large part of the love I have for it, this comes from my relationship with Aboriginal people.

'I just hope and pray that Australians, black and white, [can] see, respect and honour what is great in Aboriginal culture and in the spirit of Aboriginal people, as demonstrated by Uncle Banjo Clark, by Patrick Dodson, by Archie Roach, by Joy Murphy Wandin, by Auntie Beryl Carmichael, by many Aboriginal people I've met ... their largeness of spirit, their compassion, just so many qualities about them I admire ... I hope that Australians will not confuse this largeness with the sort of behaviour we have seen from certain ATSIC leaders recently ...'

ASKED ABOUT WHAT might assist the process of peace and reconciliation for Australian people, Flanagan doesn't profess to having the answers. The bottom line, as he sees it, is to act.

'I'm sorry to keep bringing this back to the personal but I can only do what I do. I write a book, which is quite absurd. Which is ultimately the story of three men going to the football, one of whom is a Muslim, one of whom is a Jew and one who comes from a Christian background. It's absurd. That's what I did. That's why the war cry in that book is John Kennedy's famous half-time address: Just do something. Just do.

'I don't have the vision that will remedy the world but I do know that there's an energy that we can give one another that will give us all a better show of doing things we're proud of.'

The themes of peace and the need for respect for all people emerge again and again in Flanagan's writing. But it's not preachy or holier than thou: his stories simply tell it how it is. Writing about good things and good people can suggest that the writer is somehow beyond question or doubt; Flanagan is concerned that people might make such assumptions.

In Australia in 2003, there's still a long way to go towards achieving peace. 'As a nation, there is both a growing conformity and a dangerous blindness affecting our national intelligence,' Flanagan says. 'Over the past seven years or however long it is since Howard was elected, certain arguments have triumphed that are spiritually mean and intellectually deceitful.'

Australia's involvement in the most recent Gulf War filled Flanagan with a deep foreboding for this country: 'I suppose what offended me most was when I realised it didn't matter what Australians thought or felt, they were in it whether they liked it or not. They were in it because of one man's ego and understanding of the world.'

Even so, he has hope for the future. 'I have to be open to reality. I deny nothing. I've looked at the horror of my own nation's history in the eye I believe and, ultimately, I haven't been defeated by it.

'My view is that there will always be war. I'm not an idealist in the sense that I don't think you can create an ideal world. It seems to me that ideals are permanently born and almost immediately they begin to be corrupted. I take my faith from the fact that they keep being reborn and that's the process. What I do know from my reading of history, [is that] situations, no matter how bad they are, could always be a helluva lot worse. And the energy that keeps them from becoming so comes from us.'

Just after the start of the second Gulf War, Flanagan went to watch AFL team Hawthorn. Afterwards, he wandered into a bookshop and found a pamphlet featuring the writings of Martin Luther King. What King espoused resonated for Martin Flanagan: 'His essays were what persuaded me that peace, like love, has to be made. That's what we have to do.' ■

Martin Flanagan is currently working on a stage adaptation of his book The Call, *to be performed by the Playbox Theatre in 2004.*

Kerrie O'Brien is a freelance writer and editor. Photo by Bill Thomas.

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Watermark

My family has a shack on the edge of Great Oyster Bay, on the east coast of Tasmania. One of the island's Aboriginal tribes was known to the first whites as the Oyster Bay tribe. These may well have been the people who met the Protector of Aborigines in Van Diemen's Land, George Augustus Robinson, in 1830. They told Robinson their people had come to the island by foot and that the sea had closed behind them. They had carried that item of knowledge, correctly as it turned out, for 12,000 years. By the end of the 19th century, however, the official version, the scientific version, was that the Tasmanian blacks were Polynesian in origin, having come to the island by sea. This intellectual orthodoxy owed its origins to a speculative guess by Thomas Huxley based in part on the observation that the first Tasmanians had curly hair. Recently, I received an inquiry asking how many Aboriginal people were in Tasmania at the time of white arrival. The honest answer is I don't know. The best I can do is guess or quote the guesses of other people. To grow up in Tasmania, as I did, is to learn there is much about the past that you don't know and probably never will. In the end, you have to learn to live with the absence of the sort of certainty demanded of those who engage in intellectual jousting.

Tasmania has been in the news of late with the so-called Windschuttle debate. I've had only the one argument over Windschuttle, the subject being whether I was obliged to read him. My friend inferred that Windschuttle had become a sort of intellectual roadblock barring me from pursuing a path I had been treading all my adult life, upon which I had written scores of articles, several books and now a play. All this work has proceeded from the premise that the truth of what happened in this country lies between the races, not on one side or the other, particularly not in one side's official records and newspapers. Imagine the response if the Japanese government were to produce a pamphlet on the treatment of Allied prisoners-of-war during World War II based solely on Japanese Army records and Japanese newspapers of the day. Windschuttle, and other champions of the so-called empirical method, might at this point interrupt and say but there are also Allied records concerning those personnel and what they endured. But what if there weren't? Does that mean an open and shut verdict can be delivered in their absence?

Windschuttle is no mere individual poking around in events which occurred, after all, 170 years ago. He is a figure of our times in the way that the *Tampa*, the World Trade Centre and Pauline Hanson are. One tabloid newspaper columnist in Melbourne grandly conceded in a recent column that Windschuttle may have been wrong in some of his 'minor claims'. The columnist went on to say: 'He (Windschuttle) went too far, for instance, in denying Tasmanian Aborigines felt any ownership of the land.' Did the Tasmanian Aborigines consider their attitude to land to be a minor matter? I very much doubt it.

Tasmania has the memory of a great journalist, Henry Melville, author of *A History of Van Diemen's Land 1824–35*. This was written from a condemned cell in a Hobart jail. Melville's particular subject was the governorship of George Arthur, described by Robert Hughes as the closest thing to a totalitarian state that ever existed in the British Empire. But his history is a general one and deals with the Aboriginal issue and although his sensibility is not one we would equate with our own, he writes in a factual way and with an eye to principles of justice. He describes as a 'farce' and a 'legal outrage' trials in which Aboriginal men with only a few words of English and no defence counsel are convicted for capital offences. Arguing from precedents in international law and scholars like Grotius, he even questions the legality of the laws being applied. He notes that blacks are hung for violence against whites but no white was even brought before a court for violence against blacks. He disagrees with Governor Arthur but thankfully records Arthur's proposal to issue tribal leaders with passports to enable them to keep using their migratory paths. One marvels at the breadth of Melville's grasp of every legal, rural, commercial, political and military issue which passed before his pen, and the consistency of his judgments across the various areas. I think it is fair to describe Henry Melville as a witness to his times, and a pretty impressive one. So why is it I never hear anyone say, if it's early Tasmania you want to know about, you're obliged to read Henry Melville? And if he were alive today, would he be heard? Would he be seen as possessing the 'neutrality' our government now demands of journalists? Would we hear him on our ABC?

My brother Richard recently had a telling experience with the ABC. He was contacted as one of a number of Australian writers and asked to read a passage from a favourite novel together with some comments about it. He chose James Joyce's *Ulysses* and for his comment spoke of John Howard as the great fictionalist of our time, citing some of his statements during the children-overboard affair. The segment was recorded and agreed upon, then was broadcast with all reference to Howard missing. When Richard's agent contacted the ABC, he was offered, by way of compensation, a place on a radio panel discussing disillusionment in contemporary Australia. There is an exquisite irony here. There is also what I would call a trade in beliefs. The citizen hands in his or her belief that their views matter and that they have some sort of right to be heard. In return, they are allowed to sit at the table of those publicly expressing their despair over their inability to alter or influence the world in which they now find themselves. ■

Martin Flanagan is a journalist and writer. This is an edited version of an address given at the Watermark Writers' Muster at Kendall in northern NSW.

Stormy Weather

28 December 1999

It'll all blow over ... but in the meantime
Kerry Murphy's body has washed up on the beach
at Apollo Bay, that home of shipwrecks.

Tall, proud, handsome and strong,
Kerry *a dozen years ago*
was protective of my somewhat timorous daughter.

Lost by parents too anonymous to reproach,
she took to the streets: sleeping rough, drugs, on the game
as things fell out; locked up for madness—
paranoia took her out of reach ...

She came back: she seemed no longer on the rocks,
she seemed fine. But anything can go wrong
as almost all of us know
most of the time.

But—death by water?
that comes out of the blue.

Poor Kerry, rest in peace, another victim
of no indictable crime.

—Evan Jones

Matching

An exile in New York, instinctively proud
of a culture higher than that of China Town,
delicate, small, fine-drawn, retiring,
she is never one of a crowd.

A poor North Country boy with a good degree
from Manchester, his crucial vocational move
was down:
he has given up his whole career to curing
intractable diseases of the South.
He's living in Nairobi in a hovel.

There's no affinity that anyone might see
between these two, only unlimited friction
between their different kinds of worth.
What binds them, though, is an undying love.

Given that truth is always stranger than fiction,
it's up to you, dear reader, to write the novel.

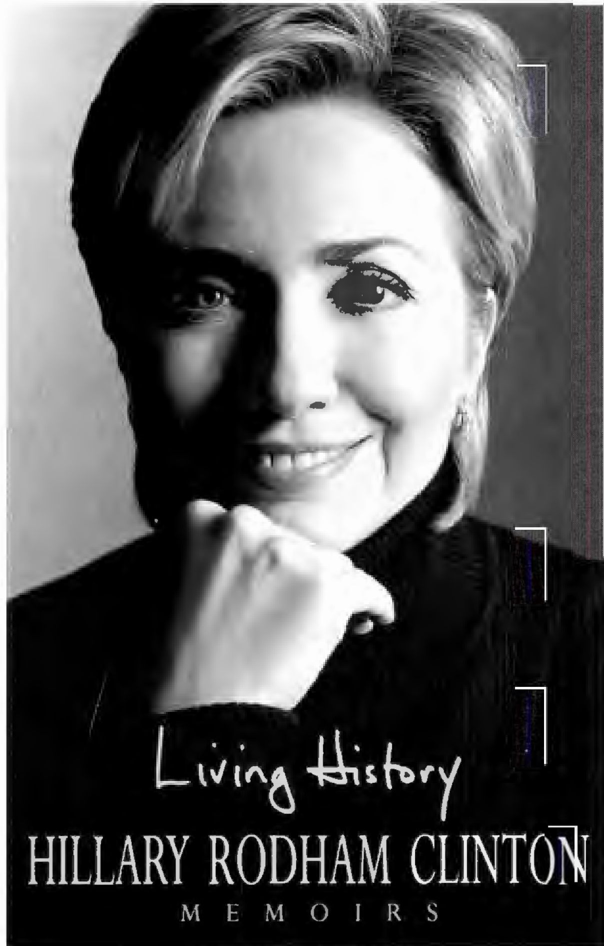
—Evan Jones

First impressions

Living History, Hillary Rodham Clinton.
Hodder Headline, 2003. ISBN 0 7472 5515 6, RRP $44.95

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON is her own woman and a smart and successful lawyer, a former young Republican who became America's First (Democrat) Lady not when her husband became its president, but when she lost her role as his appointed but independently powerful policy-maker. JFK's appointment of his brother Robert as attorney-general could be borne, but not a later Democrat's sharing real power with his wife.

Most First Ladies are assumed to have at least some influence from their supposed intimate relationships with powerful men, and exercise it in their own ways—fashion icon (Jacqueline Kennedy), drugs campaigner (Nancy 'Just Say No' Reagan) or grandmother to the nation (Mrs Bush, no-nonsense wife to George the First). Eleanor Roosevelt exercised her real power after FDR succumbed humiliatingly, in the arms of his mistress, and she was appointed to chair the committee then drafting the declaration on human rights in the United Nations. But when first-term President Clinton appointed his wife to do the serious job, in his own administration, of reforming health policy, neither the power brokers in Congress, nor the public, nor the self-appointed guardians of public policy (the columnists, pundits, reporters and talk-show hosts) were willing to make the best—or any—use of what Clinton jokingly offered as 'two for the price of one'. The joke was sour.



By the end of 1994, Hillary Clinton was still her husband's policy confidante and a power in Washington, but had been sidelined from direct power when what she called her 'missteps' or misjudgments sank her health care reform project that year. She writes, 'I underestimated the resistance I would meet as a First Lady with a policy mission'. That's putting it mildly.

Even strong, self-confident women have a relatively tenuous hold on power. Hillary Rodham, feminist and partner in a prestigious law firm, felt obliged to add 'Clinton' to her name well after her marriage. Her husband was Governor of Arkansas at the time, and the Arkansas electors drew unsatisfactory conclusions from her keeping her 'maiden' (and professional) name. How much did she identify with her husband, then? 'I'm not some little woman like Tammy Wynette, standing by her man', she told a TV interviewer, doing exactly that when Gennifer Flowers revealed a long affair with Hillary's husband. Following public reaction to that interview she learned not to make jokes unless they were scripted.

AN INTELLIGENT, educated and policy-driven woman, as Hillary Rodham Clinton has clearly always been, would expect a 'real job' when her partner attained the highest office in the land. Women like her observed the real power of the forces against women in positions of political determinism. As the president's wife, she had broken a great taboo in being politically active—not behind the scenes, but in paid office. Her armies of enemies sprang from the

furrows. Some attacked her husband through her. Others avenged themselves on the emancipation of women, making the president's wife, as she says, a 'lightning rod for political and ideological battles ... and a magnet for feelings ... about women's choices and roles'. The cost was enormous: not only the failure of her health reform plans, but the rallying of the right behind the odious Newt Gingrich, a focus for opposition to 'the Clinton agenda'; a hostile Congress and a spooked Democratic party.

Hillary Clinton was to be hounded on TV, on talkback radio and by newspaper columnists; by congressmen, senators and that remarkably interested 'special investigator', Kenneth Starr, throughout her White House years. She endured intense speculation about her role in their financial affairs, her understanding of Bill's other kind of affairs, a Grand Jury investigation into their joint finances, her father's death (just when the health package reached a crucial stage in its passage through Congress) and the death of her husband's mother. But most of all, she endured the loss of great friends, one to suicide but others because she walked away from their once shared, purer aims. Power has a different quality once achieved.

It is, however, not this woman's frustrations but the president's predilection for sex with much more ordinary women than his wife that will drive most people to read *Living History*. They will find this its least satisfying aspect. The name Monica Lewinsky is not even in the index. There is no mention of the details of the affair, except for her husband's late confession. There is no real clarity about 'whether she knew', before that day, though plenty of hints that the man had demons, and that warnings were sent.

PERHAPS, BECAUSE SHE is undoubtedly a feminist, Hillary Clinton could not attack her husband's nemesis, another woman. Perhaps, too, she is aware of the possibility of losing whatever she values in their ongoing relationship if she goes into too much detail. The marriage, I think, was so tough that it could withstand infidelities, but not disloyalty. Clearly it was the lies that caused the real pain. So why did she stay? Maybe a deal was done. When the last term ended, and her husband was not impeached, Hillary Rodham Clinton decided to run for the Senate.

The art of compromise she demonstrated obviously arose from her solid, Republican upbringing and the sense of agency, values and confidence taught by her resilient mother (abandoned and abused in her own childhood) and one of those generous, judgmental, strong, supportive and loving fathers who so commonly figure in the lives of remarkable women.

HILLARY RODHAM was a young Republican who changed sides in the 1960s, in part through feminism but also because of the stupidity of the establishment of the time. She became an advocate for children's rights and a member of the Watergate investigation team, a partner in a law firm who ran civil liberties litigation for the poor. She married a handsome young Rhodes scholar who shared her political values, and who had as an unhappy a childhood as her mother's. Hillary put her career second to his.

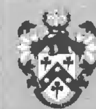
It is a careful book—as you would expect from a woman with an ongoing political career. She does not dwell on the loss of old friends from her community advocacy years—friends who did not make the transition with her into political power, which requires unthinkable compromises. When the great children's advocate Marian Edelman, a close friend and colleague, disparaged her choices and departed it must have cut deeply, but she does not say so. Nor does she wallow in her humiliation over the president's dalliances with the young intern.

She allows only superficial insights into the machinations of international politics and into what it is like to work under the most dim man to become president in the history of the United States, and to watch the rapid loss of the civil rights and the liberties fought for in the '60s and '70s.

As I finished this review, Arnold Schwarzenegger was resoundingly elected to be the Republican Governor of California. Hillary's greatest challenge is the people's desire to identify with their leaders—and they do not think they are intelligent. And yet they love Hillary Rodham Clinton, because she represents something else that they can identify with: the dignity of 'failure' and the strength in bearing betrayal.

This is an imperfect but significant book because it may say something important about what makes people love some political women. Joan Kirner, first woman premier of Victoria, is loved by many *because of*, not in spite of, her failure to return Labor to power in 1992, after a series of catastrophes under the Cain premiership since 1982. *Living History* is written by a woman favoured by 44 per cent of the national electorate to be the next Democrat president. I wouldn't write her off

Moira Rayner is Senior Fellow at the Law School, University of WA, a barrister and writing the authorised biography of Joan Kirner for Hodder Headline.



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Shaping women and men in Christian mission and ministry

Powerful lives

Hugh Dillon on Simone Weil and George Orwell

Simone Weil and George Orwell never met and it seems unlikely that they ever heard of one another. Nonetheless, the fact that 2003 is the 100th anniversary of Orwell's birth and the 60th of Weil's death allows us to note other far more significant similarities between the great English and French writers. It is not certain that they would have admired each other, but each would have recognised in the other the seriousness of purpose and prophetic qualities that they wore like stigmata.

Weil's anniversary, unlike Orwell's, has passed relatively unremarked in this country. While she left several works which are now regarded as political and spiritual classics, unlike Orwell she left no powerful motifs or aphorisms which have become part of the language of the West. She remains an essential writer of the 20th century, however, because of, as Susan Sontag put it, her 'scathing originality'. The continuing influence of Weil and Orwell upon our culture flows not only from what Albert Camus described, in Weil's case, as a 'madness for truth' but also from their manner of pursuing it. It was this combination which made them 'scathingly original'.

Orwell's history is well known but what of Simone Weil's? A potted summary might go as follows: she was a brilliant young French woman, born in Paris in 1909 in a fully assimilated, secular Jewish family. Her teachers recognised early in her a gift for philosophical thought. Like so many millions in her day, she was politically of the left and identified strongly with the unemployed and working people. In 1934, she took leave from her teaching position to work in an electrical works. The following year she worked in a forging works and a car factory and in 1936 she joined an anarchist trade union group engaged in Spain against Franco, but was injured by boiling oil and had to return to France without fighting. After the defeat of France in 1940, she escaped and worked for the Free French in London. She died aged 34, in London in 1943.

Her political experiences, especially her manual work, marked her irrevocably. She took a year's leave from teaching to 'make a bit of contact with the famous "real life"'. Writing to her Dominican friend Fr Perrin in 1942, she described the effects on her of labouring:

> After my year in the factory ... I was, as it were, broken in pieces, body and soul. That contact with affliction killed my youth. Until then ... I knew quite well that there was a great deal of affliction in the world, I was obsessed with the idea, but I had not had prolonged and first-hand experience of it. As I worked in the factory ... the affliction of others branded my flesh and my soul ... What I went through there marked me in so lasting a manner that to this day when any human being, whoever he may be and in whatever circumstance, speaks to me without brutality, I cannot help feeling that there must be a mistake ... There I received forever the mark of slavery.

Both Weil and Orwell sought to identify themselves with the poor and downtrodden, but this does not essentially distinguish them. Any full understanding of the two writers must acknowledge their common tendency to embrace what Weil called *malheur* or 'affliction'. Both Weil and Orwell were repelled by the Leninist-Stalinist notion of revolution in which the infliction of suffering was at best a necessary evil for the attainment of the socialist utopia. Both knew instinctively that the integrity of the end attained is dependent on the means used to attain it. Rather than inflicting suffering on others, they were psychologically disposed to tolerate their own suffering, even to desire it. In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell wrote of his feelings upon his return from serving as a imperial police officer in Burma:

I was conscious of an immense weight of guilt I had got to expiate ... I felt that I had got to escape not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's dominion over man ... At that time failure seemed to me to be the only virtue. Every suspicion of self-advancement ... seemed to me spiritually ugly, a species of bullying ... My mind turned immediately towards the extreme cases, the social outcasts: tramps, beggars, criminals, prostitutes ... What I profoundly wanted, at that time, was to find some way of getting out of the respectable world altogether.

He might have been reading Weil's mind. They each would have recognised the other's deep vein of compassion. For Weil the factory was a 'penal institution' in which workers were forced to suffer physically and morally to the point that their suffering was replaced by apathy, which she regarded as 'the worst form of degradation'. She wrote: 'A working woman who is on the assembly line, and with whom I returned on the tram, told me after a few years ... one ceases to suffer, even though one feels gradually stultified.' Orwell had similarly dreadful epiphanies. As his train pulled out of Wigan on the way back to London he noticed something which led to this justly famous passage:

As we moved slowly through the outskirts of the town we passed row after row of little grey slum houses ... At the back of one of the houses a young woman was kneeling on the stones, poking a stick up the leaden waste-pipe which ran from the inside and which I suppose was blocked. I had time to see everything about her—her sacking apron, her clumsy clogs, her arms reddened by the cold. She looked up as the train passed, and I was almost near enough to catch her eye. She had a round pale face ... and it wore, for the second in which I saw it, the most desperate, hopeless expression I have ever seen ... For what I saw in her face was not the ignorant suffering of an animal. She knew well enough what was happening to her—understood as well as I did how dreadful a destiny it was to be kneeling there in the bitter cold, on the slimy stones of a slum backyard, poking a stick up a foul drain-pipe.

Both Orwell and Weil were pessimists who feared a future in which Stalin's or Hitler's vision of the world would ultimately triumph. Unlike Orwell, Weil found God in such a world. Recuperating from her factory travails in 1935, she wrote '... the conviction suddenly came to me that Christianity is pre-eminently the religion of slaves, that slaves cannot help belonging to it, I among others.' Despite this, she refused baptism until on her deathbed.

LIKE ORWELL, WEIL remained passionately egalitarian but also a libertarian. However, her political thought and writing, unlike his, became more and more infused with a religious vision. This progression can be seen in her two great political works, *Oppression and Liberty* (which collects her '30s anti-Soviet essays) and *The Need for Roots*, written in London for the Free French, a manifesto for a Christian socialism (1943). The French Intelligence chief said of her after her death later that year, 'Her kingdom was not of this world.'

Simone Weil died in London of despair, anorexia and tuberculosis. She had lived ascetically to the point where she destroyed her fragile mental and physical health. Orwell, also tubercular and probably depressed, finished writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* on a bitterly desolate Scottish island, destroying his health and dying prematurely in 1950. She was 34, he was 47. Both died young because they had lived self-sacrificially to an abnormal degree—a way of life recognisable to Christians in theory, but much harder to copy and now perhaps not even intelligible to large proportions of modern Westerners.

As a romantic young man in the '70s, I spent some time with the Jesuits. I had joined the order hoping that I might follow in the footsteps of, and emulate, Weil, Orwell, Daniel Berrigan and the great Australian priest, Ted Kennedy. I could not have been more self-deluded, but it took some time for me to realise intuitively what Susan Sontag said of Weil:

Some lives are exemplary, others not; and of exemplary lives, there are those which invite us to imitate them, and those which we regard from a distance with a mixture of revulsion, pity, and reverence. It is roughly the difference between a hero and a saint ... No one who loves life would wish to imitate her dedication to martyrdom, or would wish it for his children or for anyone else whom he loves. Yet so far as we love seriousness, as well as life, we are moved by it, nourished by it.

Even if, like the Rich Young Man, we turn away sad, as most of us must, we are nourished by such lives, in all their fearful seriousness, because they open up for us redemptive possibilities without which life seems degraded and hopeless. ■

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Peter Mares

Preparing for the fifth wave

Tampering with Asylum: A Universal Humanitarian Problem, Frank Brennan. University of Queensland Press, 2003. ISBN 0 7022 3416 8, RRP $30

IN THE INTRODUCTION TO this book, Frank Brennan invites us to engage in a simple thought experiment: imagine that every country in the world adopted Australia's 'slam the back door' policy on refugees. A person suffering persecution would be confronted by two stark choices—either endure the situation while waiting in a theoretical 'queue' for a protection visa, or flee across a border without a visa and be incarcerated in a remote detention centre for an indefinite period, with no recourse to a judge or right of appeal to the courts.

This prompted me to ponder another thought. Imagine that Australia had succeeded in its initial response to the *Tampa* (refusing to allow it to land or disembark its rescued asylum seekers) and that every other nation in the world had adopted a similar policy. We would have seen a repeat of the 'voyage of the damned', the infamous 1939 journey of the *St. Louis* which took 1000 Jews from Hamburg to Havana, only to be denied entry both by Cuba and the United States. The vessel returned to Europe and many of its passengers ultimately died as victims of the Holocaust.

Such scenarios amply demonstrate Brennan's thesis that Australia's 'tampering with asylum' has been a detour on the path to 'a more decent and workable asylum policy for first world countries'. He describes the Howard government's response to the *Tampa* as a 'firebreak' policy, one designed to stop the refugee problem spreading across Australia's borders but doing nothing to address it at the source. The analogy is apt. It suggests the peculiarly Australian nature of the response—few other nations have the geographical characteristics that would allow for such a firebreak. It also suggests that this kind of policy must be temporary and unsustainable. (Unless the fire itself is put out, how long will it be before the conflagration becomes so fierce that the firebreak is jumped?)

The great strength of Brennan's book is his long engagement and close familiarity with the issues, both as a humanitarian and as a lawyer. He describes the four waves of asylum seekers who have arrived on Australia's shores by boat since the end of the Vietnam War and outlines the construction of an increasingly harsh policy response. In this way he is able to trace the lineage of the misnamed 'Pacific solution', seeing its antecedents in the 1991 opening of the Port Hedland detention centre by a Labor government. The detention centre was first used to hold a group of Cambodian asylum seekers. In Brennan's reading of this episode, mandatory detention was primarily introduced as a way of isolating the asylum seekers from lawyers and other 'do-gooders' in the community. Rationales such as deterrence or ensuring that failed asylum seekers were available for removal came later; the main consideration in 1991 was to avoid any challenge to the portrayal of the Cambodians as economic migrants.

As early as June 1990, Prime Minister Bob Hawke had told Jana Wendt emphatically on *A Current Affair* that the Cambodians were not 'political' but 'economic' refugees and that he would not allow Cambodian asylum seekers to 'jump the queue' of Australia's orderly migration program. The government was concerned to protect the peace plan for Cambodia formulated by then Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, which involved the repatriation of 300,000 Cambodian refugees from camps along the Thai border. It feared that confidence in the plan could be undermined if Cambodians in Australia *were* found to be refugees or if their personal stories were allowed to become public.

The continuities with more recent events are only too apparent. Removing asylum seekers to another jurisdiction such as Nauru or Papua New Guinea has made it all but impossible for lawyers to intervene on their behalf. And consider the directive issued during Operation Relex in 2001 by the press secretary to Defence Minister Peter Reith, instructing that no 'personalising or humanising images' were to be taken of asylum seekers intercepted by the Australian navy. Clearly there was an official realisation that an enforced distance from the media and 'do-gooders' was necessary to shore up the perception that asylum seekers arriving by boat are a threat that must be kept at bay at all costs.

BUT BRENNAN DOES not only have an eye to events in Australia. Throughout the book he compares Australian policies to those in Europe and the United States. There is a great deal of useful and interesting information here, such as Brennan's detailed account of US policies towards Haitian asylum seekers arriving by boat in the early 1990s—policies that were in many ways a precursor to Australia's so-called 'Pacific solution'. There are the attempts by European countries like Germany and France to declare part of their international airports to be 'an international zone' so that an asylum seeker landing at the airport would be deemed not to have arrived in the country (and therefore would not be in a position to invoke the protections enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention). Or the frank admission, by British Home Secretary David Blunkett, that Britain has shifted its 'border controls from England to the French coast' to ensure that 'people will not get here'. As Brennan comments:

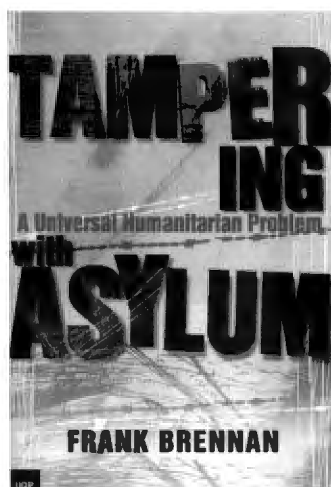
> Rarely has a modern first-world government minister made the purpose so clear. The preferred outcome is to move the border offshore so prospective asylum seekers can be turned away before they enter the territory.

Again, the comparison to Australia is obvious. After the *Tampa*, the federal government redrew Australia's frontiers so that a person landing on a remote Australian territory in the Indian Ocean is deemed not to have entered Australia's 'migration zone' and so is prevented from seeking protection as a refugee.

This highlights a fundamental flaw in the global system of protection for refugees. Under international law, persecuted individuals have the right to *leave* their country and have the right *not to be returned* to their country but they do not have the right to *enter another country* without invitation. It is only *after*

crossing a border that a refugee can seek protection. As Brennan tells us, this flaw in the system is not the result of some slip-up in drafting but the product of a deliberate choice of words. When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drawn up at the end of World War II, Australia was among those countries that resisted any recognition of a general right to be 'granted asylum'. As Tasman Heyes, Secretary of the Department of Immigration, wrote at the time—in language eerily prescient of recent public pronouncements by Prime Minister Howard—recognition of such a right 'would be unacceptable to Australia as it would be tantamount to the abandonment of the right which every sovereign state possesses to determine the composition of its own population and who shall be admitted to its territories'. Instead of a general right to asylum, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights only recognises the individual's right 'to seek and enjoy' asylum, a formulation that puts no onus on the receiving state to admit the individual across its frontier. We witness the consequences of this flaw every day: nation states do all they can to keep asylum seekers out and asylum seekers do all they can to evade border controls and get in.

BRENNAN DOES NOT OFFER simple or utopian solutions. He acknowledges political realities and his specific proposals for change in Australia could be seen as a minimum program that is both modest and achievable. When the fifth wave of boat arrivals begins to enter our territorial waters (as Brennan says it inevitably will) he wants to see the navy escort those boats to Christmas Island for processing. Initial detention should only be for the purpose of health and security checks on arrival and to screen out manifestly unfounded claims. Asylum seekers should then be transferred to the mainland on a structured release program while their cases are assessed. A degree of judicial oversight would be restored to the refugee determination process to ensure that decision-making remains just and lawful. Refugees would be entitled to family reunion and to travel overseas. Those still in need of protection after three years would be eligible for permanent residency in Australia. Finally, Brennan would like to see Australia legislate to recognise the protections enshrined in the Convention Against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This would offer some protection to refugees who do not fit the narrow definition of a refugee contained in the 1951 Refugee Convention, but who nonetheless would be at risk in their homeland. (Currently the only fall back protection mechanism is personal intervention by the immigration minister.)



I have only two minor complaints about Brennan's book. The first is that it could have benefited from more rigorous editing to streamline the argument and remove duplication. His 'thought experiment', compelling as it is, need not appear twice in almost identical form (in both the introduction and the conclusion). To take another example, on p159, Brennan cites statistics to demonstrate the growing burden of refugee and asylum cases before Australian courts. ('In 1993–94 there were only 381 applications to the courts; in 2001–2002 there were 1423.') On p161 the same point is repeated, using very similar statistics taken from slightly different years. ('Back in 1987–88 the court received a modest 84 applications under the *Migration Act.* ... By 2000–2001 there were 1312 applications.')

My second complaint is that Brennan's argument does not seem entirely resolved. On the one hand he seems to be suggesting that Australia's policies are far more extreme than those of comparable nations dealing with far larger numbers of asylum seekers. The implication is that by looking elsewhere, we might see the error of our ways. If Australia were to adjust its approach, he says, we could 'join again those nations who wrestle daily with the dilemma'. On the other hand, Brennan's detailed comparisons with the US and Europe suggest that commonalities in policy approach outweigh the differences. All developed nations are treading a similar path, aiming to deter asylum seekers and contain the refugee problem to the developing world. There is evidence of a race to the bottom in refugee protection and at the moment, Australia happens to be in the lead. While this tension in Brennan's argument remains unresolved, it does prompt him to pose a searching question about Australia's approach:

> Our present policy can be posited only on one of two options. Either we want to be so tough that no other country will dare to imitate us and so we will maintain the advantage that asylum seekers will want to try anywhere but here. Or we are happy to lead other countries to a new level of toughness, leaving bona fide asylum seekers more vulnerable in the non-existent queues.

Overall, *Tampering with Asylum* makes for compelling and disturbing reading. Familiar as many of us are with the human side effects of Australia's recent obsession with border protection, individual case studies never fail to shock. For example, the story of a seven-year-old boy hit with a baton and exposed to tear gas in Woomera detention centre. (Brennan had seen the bruises with his own eyes.) Even more shocking is the dissimulation and inaction of the federal bureaucracy in the face of complaints. Allegations about a rape in Curtin detention centre were never investigated because it was unclear whether it was the responsibility of federal or state police. After a decade of detaining children in immigration detention in WA, the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs has yet to finalise a protocol on child protection with state authorities. The result is that kids in detention fall through the bureaucratic gaps with no agency to take primary responsibility for their welfare.

The 'firebreak' that John Howard put in place after the *Tampa* offers us an opportunity to think again about our approach to asylum, freed from the panic and distraction associated with new boat arrivals. It is possible to design a set of policies that secures the border while honouring our international obligations and basic human rights. As Frank Brennan says: '[it] is no answer to say that we close the door on the asylum seeker at our doorstep in order more readily to assist the refugee in the faraway camp.' ■

Peter Mares is a journalist with ABC Radio National and an adjunct research fellow at the Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University. He is the author of *Borderline: Australia's response to refugees and asylum seekers in the wake of the Tampa* (UNSW Press, 2002).

Toby O'Connor

What's a charity?

The draft Charities Bill 2003

TREASURER COSTELLO has taken on a formidable challenge with the Charities Bill 2003. His goal is to codify 400 years of common law on what constitutes a charity into a short piece of legislation.

In its present form, there are inherent problems associated with the Bill. A single joint Catholic Church submission, to which Catholic Welfare Australia is a signatory, describes the bill as 'unworkable' and 'failing to provide clarity and transparency'.

One of the principal concerns is the Bill seeks to take charitable status from those organisations whose advocacy role involves making public statements (*sic* criticising government) on behalf of those in the community who are less fortunate or in any way afflicted. Section 8 provides a list a 'disqualifying purposes' for a charity including those entities 'attempting to change the law or government policy'. Advocacy needs to be no more than 'ancillary or incidental' to other charitable purposes to expel an organisation from the charitable class. Currently, the common law requires that advocacy not become the 'dominant' purpose. So there is a significant tightening in the language in the proposed law. It is as close to a total injunction on public comment as can be brought about by the government.

The Treasurer has publicly stated the Bill does not seek to go beyond the current common law. However, it is clear from the draft legislation and the Explanatory Memorandum the current approach will make it more difficult for an organisation to receive, or in some instances retain, charitable status. Losing charitable status will mean a not-for-profit organisation loses tax exemptions, such as payroll tax, that charitable organisations have had to come to rely upon to survive.

The sector, and the churches in particular, believe there is an important principle at stake here. Those persons who seek the assistance of charities also look to those charities to speak out on their behalf. Why should the Government think such advocacy is anything but completely consistent with the legitimate charitable purpose of seeking to help the disadvantaged?

There is the fear the Government is trying to impose its own model of how the charitable sector should be structured and hence how they ought to operate within the public arena. Just think ... without public debate, or even the odd bit of 'dissent' to deal with, the Government would have all its own way.

Coalition governments have always supported the not-for-profit sector and the work they carry out. It is this sector that delivers almost all of the social support services at the local level to the Australian community—using donations, government funding and voluntary labour. Historically, it is the community sector that breathes the service delivery innovation into most new government program initiatives. It would indeed be a pity if those peak organisations with the capacity to provide government and the community with informed social policy commentary and research downsize or close due to the application of new taxation regimes.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS talk of the principle of subsidiarity to describe the natural state of relations between the state and the community whereby the state should not seek to subsume the activities that private associations can most adequately fulfil themselves. Before the economic bottom line became everything, the relationship between community organisations and government was seen very much as a partnership. The present initiative is an attempt, albeit perhaps indirect, to impose a new level of control on the community sector.

Besides the preparation of the Charities Bill there have also been significant interventions from the Prime Minister whose patience with the agitations of many charitable organisations is short fused. He has just established his hand picked Not-for-Profit Council of Australia. He has also used his Community Business Partnership committee to request the Institute of Public Affairs (which has no direct experience of the sector or its work) to review the relationships between NGOs and Government.

There is a further problem with the Bill's treatment of advocacy. The New Zealand Government has followed a similar process to Australia in setting up an Inquiry into Charities under the New Zealand Treasury. This report included a draft definition of 'advancement' of a charitable purpose that includes 'protection, maintenance, support, research, improvement, enhancement and advocacy'. The Charities Bill has been influenced by this report defining 'advancement' of a charitable purpose as 'protection, maintenance, support, research and improvement'. The deliberate decision to exclude advocacy from the Australian definition is cause for concern.

Finally, in drafting this Bill, the Government has rejected the conclusions of its own inquiry. In June 2001, after a long consultative process including a report of the Productivity Commission, the Government's committee of inquiry recommended 'that charities should be permitted to engage in advocacy on behalf of those they benefit'. It was argued that advocacy must further the main purpose or be a minor part of the agency's operations. In other words: retain the current common law position.

The Board of Taxation has had carriage of the consultation of this Bill and is due to present its final report to the Treasurer in December. Mindful of the lack of countenance given towards Section 8 in the various submissions and the Treasurer's own public assurances the Bill is not designed to 'gag' charities—surely any report would be recommending a revision of the Bill's current treatment of charitable organisations and their involvement in public advocacy.

Toby O'Connor is National Director of Catholic Welfare Australia.

Linda or Anne, in blue and green

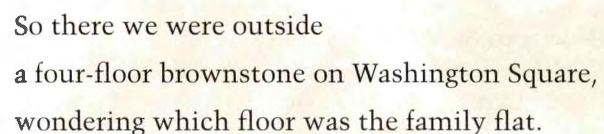
Anne Green, a name that comes back
from Washington Square,
was a Stanford girl in nineteen fifty-nine—
one of a swatch.

Now she'd be wearing black
I suppose, some forty-four or five
years later: if she's still alive—

it's all so long ago:
how could I ever know
if she were the girl who came back,
nameless and in a dream,
somewhere round five o'clock
this morning. (Later. I called up her name;
they seemed more or less to match;
also her face and stature.)

I hardly knew her at all,
nothing at all of her nature:
just one of the graduate English crowd
who never took the same courses as I
nor shared any special friends.

But when the summer vacation came
and I (and my then wife) spoke
of going to New York—
wanderers abroad—
in the American way she said
'Call in any time' ...



So there we were outside
a four-floor brownstone on Washington Square,
wondering which floor was the family flat.

We only saw the second floor,
where we chatted, met Anne's parents,
had drinks or coffee, in something like that sequence,
before, pleasing and having pleased,
we were released

into bohemian SoHo: the whole of New York spread out.

I never saw or heard of her again.

—Evan Jones

Fatima Measham

The forgotten people

Even the most conservative estimate of poverty in Australia is sobering. At the end of the 20th century, over one and a half million Australians were living in poverty in the midst of increased economic prosperity. Yet research into attitudes towards poverty suggests that while few Australians dispute its existence in the country, many fail to acknowledge it within their community.

In 1999, the Brotherhood of St Laurence conducted a study called Understanding Poverty. Only 56 per cent of respondents considered poverty in Australia to be a significant problem. In fact, poverty was placed last among eight prompted issues as the most important facing the country. In contrast, unemployment and the divide between rich and poor were rated as major concerns.

This apparent contradiction is an example of what John Fox calls the 'silo' perception of poverty, where relations between problems are not adequately recognised. Fox is the co-ordinator of social planning at Hume City Council in Victoria. He says that in reality the volume of job advertisements is not an adequate measure of opportunity, and tends to promote assumptions that the poor aren't taking advantage of vacancies.

'It's not enough that the job is advertised,' he points out, 'but that people have the chance to undertake education, have access to transport, child care, things that make it possible for them to take up the job.'

Fox asserts that there is a cultural focus on individual responsibility, such that community fails to understand why some people are barred from employment. 'We look at things, if you like, from the individual out, rather than from society in. Part of that is saying that the individual is completely responsible, that the individual can overcome any odds.'

Sally Jope, a social researcher on poverty issues, believes that this emphasis on individual behaviour feeds negative images of the poor as welfare cheats. 'If you talk about poor people,' she observes, 'you can individualise it and point out shortcomings. You can distance yourself from it. "Those people, there's something wrong with them". That sort of approach.'

In this way, she says, distinctions between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' are cultivated. The problem of poverty becomes a problem of what to do with the poor.

Jope believes that government relies on such attitudes. 'If we appreciated poverty as a real issue,' she says, 'then there would be budgetary implications, and government is very much about withdrawing and leaving it to the market to sort out everything.' She adds that this economic model discriminates between those who have capital and those who do not, and that those with meagre resources find their means being consistently diminished.

It is not just about resources, either. According to Fox, expectations about personal effort do not address the fact that poverty affects diverse groups of people. 'This isn't about individual decisions,' he says. 'If it were, you wouldn't have particular groups consistently being affected.'

It was with this thought in mind that he helped design Hume City Council's inquiry focusing on these sections of the community most at risk of falling into poverty—women (particularly as single parents), Indigenous people, young people and the elderly. 'We want them to identify the obstacles that prevent them from living the life that they would choose,' says Fox.

He suggests that because policy is shaped by the extent to which issues are raised in public discussions, some of these obstacles may be underpinned by perceptions of poverty in Australia. 'That comes back to asking what poverty really is,' he says. 'Most people tend to use the absolute model. Most people expect to see a person literally homeless, in rags and starving. That's the image we have from the developing world.'

Mark Peel, author of the book *The Lowest Rung: Voices of Australian Poverty*, agrees. 'The problem with poverty in a rich country,' he says, 'is that it will always be contrasted with poverty somewhere else. While it would be ludicrous to claim that in Australia there is poverty approaching the magnitude of, say, many African societies, so what? The problem is that a number of people, which may or may not be one million or two million, are living a kind of privation and lack of opportunity that is unjust.'

Peel suggests that this idea of relative scale leads to the conclusion that it's not a problem, or that it's a different one from elsewhere. He notes that the poor person overseas is not considered responsible for his or her own suffering, as opposed to the poor person in Australia.

'In a rich society,' he explains, 'people want to believe that the poor have themselves to blame. There is a commitment to the idea that class structure is a rough estimation of your effort and value as a person. That people who are at the top of the class structure are the best people, and that those at the bottom are the worst people.'

Peel attributes such attitudes to the kinds of stories and language used when talking about poverty. The use of phrases such as 'welfare dependency' fosters the perception that such language is the only basis for conversation. According to Peel, it is a conversation that does not acknowledge that, for the most part, inheritance and luck are instrumental to where one ends up on the economic spectrum.

Despite the negative images, attitudes towards the poor are not entirely cynical. 'I think we tend to overexaggerate the extent to which people's hearts have hardened,' says Peel. 'Most people live in this ambivalence, not quite sure, not quite confronting, but not quite denying it either. But if you ask them whether the increasing gap between the rich and the

poor is a problem, they say yes. They don't want to live in an unequal society.'

He contends that this is the more difficult issue for many: what to do with a system that evidently benefits some and not all. It would seem that part of the disapproval directed towards the poor can be traced to the question of how much responsibility poor people ought bear for this inequality.

'People will give five dollars to the Salvos,' says Peel, 'but they're not sure how tax money as a kind of collective pool might be used to better assist people in poverty. They're worried about people defrauding it. They think that poor people need to be helped, but we can't trust them.'

It's part of what he calls a 'story problem', a dearth not only of stories that would induce compassion, but of invitations to imagine the lives of those who are impoverished. 'The truly evil work of demonising the poor succeeds only as far as people can accept that they are different,' Peel says. 'We have to counter the argument that they are damaged in some way, that they don't have lives and hopes just like the rest of us.'

However, he cautions against haranguing as a means of countering negative attitudes towards the poor. 'I think it's best not to yell,' he says. 'One of the most effective things we can say about poverty is to stress vulnerability, to get people to think about how easily the best laid plans can come unstuck, and say, it could happen to any of us.'

It is a process that should lead people to realise that generosity is not unreasonable. 'It's stopping thinking about what I'm getting out of it,' says Peel. 'What you get out of it is living in the kind of place where if you fall down, someone will come and pick you up. That your taxes are an investment in a kind society that will treat you kindly should the need arise. It's about ideal systems, not about what we can't afford.'

For Fox, the challenge of re-imagining the poor means emphasising language. This is why his team regards the future as the context for asking questions about poverty. While he concedes there is a risk that the Hume City Council enquiry might amount to little more than tokenism, he hopes that will enforce the message that people who live in poverty have legitimate capabilities and a wealth of experience from which government can learn.

'Even if all we do in this is say that these people are able, these people have insights, we treat them with respect,' he muses, 'that's saying that their identity is much richer than the poverty they experience.' ■

Fatima Measham is a freelance writer.

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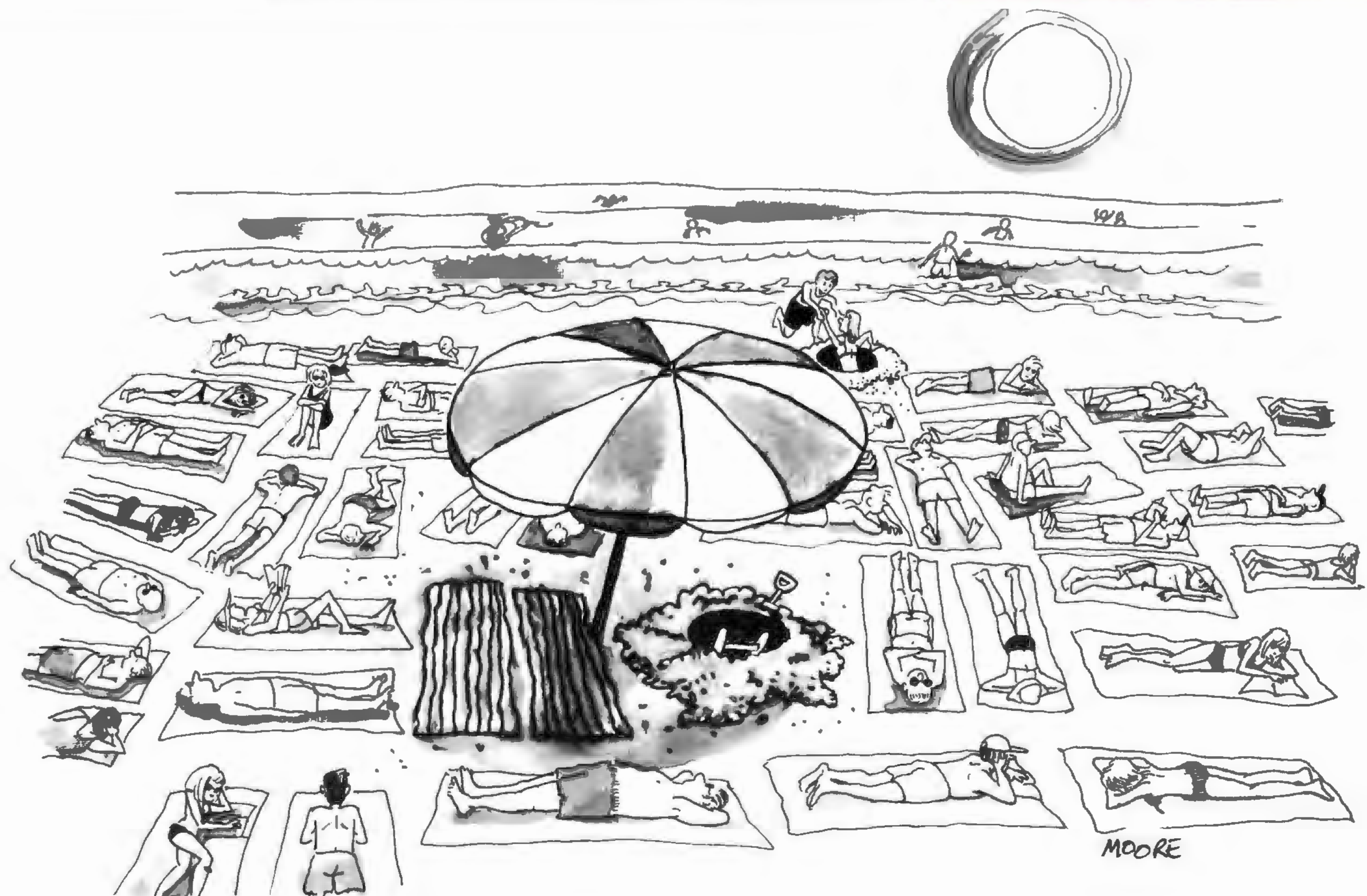


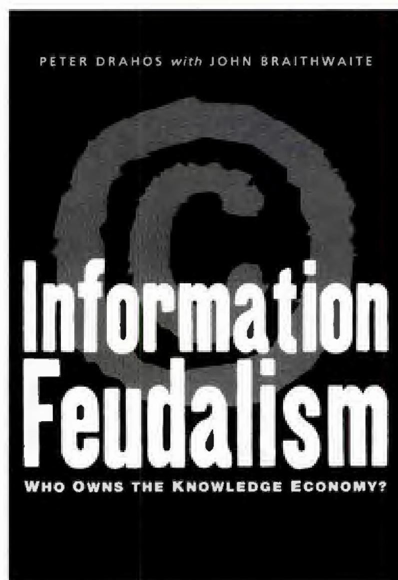
David Ferris

Information serfing

Information Feudalism: Who Owns the Knowledge Economy?, Peter Drahos with John Braithwaite. Earthscan, 2002. ISBN 1 85383 917 5, RRP $39.95

WHENEVER YOU RENT a video, there is always that bit at the beginning which you fast forward, the have-you-got-what-you-paid-for? copyright and piracy warning. Most people would support the idea that artists and authors deserve reward for their work, and similarly scientists and technology innovators should be encouraged to pursue worthy goals with the prospect of financial recompense for patentable inventions. According to the original theory, the protection of intellectual property by patents and copyright ensures that the public benefits from the continued invention and creation of useful works and innovations.

However, we now live in the information age, and with the strengthening of copyright and intellectual property protection across the globe, information and knowledge is no longer a public good but patentable private property. Peter Drahos and John Braithwaite argue that we have gone too far in recognising and protecting intellectual property rights. The nadir was the 2001 South African court case that saw 39 pharmaceutical companies suing the South African government in an attempt to prevent the parallel importation of cheap, generic, anti-retroviral AIDS drugs. That case represented the culmination of decades of increasing intellectual property protection which has created a world in which abstract property rights are in direct conflict with human rights and public health needs.



Drahos and Braithwaite have called their book *Information Feudalism* to draw an analogy with the inequitable distribution of property rights in medieval systems, where lords held ownership over land, and hence the power to control and exploit serfs and vassals. In the modern world, copyright and patent systems have become global in scope. Through the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPs) agreement of the Uruguay Round of GATT, multinational companies can gain ownership over information and abstract objects, and thus control and exploit consumers, the developing world and potential competitors.

In addition to consumer welfare and competition concerns, 'the globalization of intellectual property rights will rob much knowledge of its public good qualities. When knowledge becomes a private good to be traded in markets the demands of many, paradoxically, go unmet. Patent-based R&D is not responsive to demand, but to ability to pay.' This phenomenon explains why billions are spent on the production and marketing of drugs such as Viagra and Prozac for the West, while tropical diseases are largely ignored. Indeed, anti-malarial drugs are predominantly developed for Western tourists and military personnel, not the nationals of disease-affected countries.

Information Feudalism is a fascinating tour through intellectual property history, and analyses how business and the United States government lobbied and bullied the world to adopt the intellectual property standards of the TRIPs agreement as part of the Uruguay Round of GATT.

The historical journey includes a comparison of today's CD and DVD pirates with the maritime piracy of Sir Francis Drake, which at the time was an endorsed state policy. England, a relatively poorer state than Spain, commissioned privateers like Drake to take Spanish profits for the benefit of England. It's not such an imaginative leap to consider CD pirates as Robin Hoods, stealing from the rich American recording industry to give to the consumer poor.

The development of copyright through the Stationers' guild and the creation of 'letters patent' is traced from medieval times through to the 20th century—charting the competition between German and American chemical industries, the impact of the two world wars, and the later move from chemistry to biochemistry and genetics as the intellectual property perimeter. Today even DNA sequences can be patented.

Much of the book involves a detailed account of the motivations and machinations of securing global agreement to TRIPs. Initial US policy was to pursue bilateral agreements, in a carrot-and-stick approach involving the threat of trade sanctions under the 'Special 301' provision of the US *Trade Act*. US negotiators then presented TRIPs as a non-negotiable part of the Uruguay round. As a quid pro quo they offered vague promises to liberalise agricultural trade, which were never carried into effect.

This book should not be mistaken as an anti-American polemic. Drahos and Braithwaite recognise the US national security aim of 'securing intellectual property protection, for the knowledge industries that gave the US its technological superiority.' However, they argue that this motivation has driven the US government too far into negotiating excessively strong intellectual property protection which now serves only to create supra-normal profits for multinational businesses, reducing competition and allowing a new and legal method for the formation of 'cartels' and monopolies. As a consequence,

international public goods are neglected: human rights (including access to medicines) are held hostage to the commercial considerations of patent law; indigenous knowledge, often the source of commercially successful patents, is not rewarded; while under TRIPs the South will pay the North, in perpetuity, for intellectual property, further deepening the North-South divide.

Perhaps the most alarming consequence identified by Drahos and Braithwaite is the risk that the new 'information feudalism', by 'dismantling the publicness of knowledge, will eventually rob the knowledge economy of much of its productivity.' This would be a disaster for humankind, for as a perceptive scientific genius once said, 'I can only see as far as I do, by standing upon the shoulders of those who have gone before me.' ■

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

books:4

Frank O'Shea

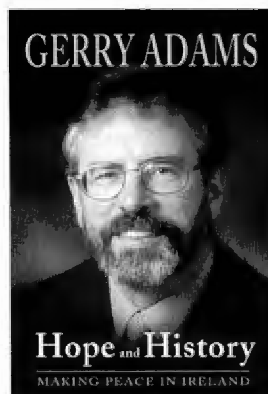
Writing history

Hope and History: Making peace in Ireland, Gerry Adams. Hardie Grant Books, 2003. ISBN 1 740 66120 6, RRP $45

In his 1996 autobiography *Before the Dawn*, Gerry Adams reveals that his parents completed the papers for assisted passage to Australia but were turned down when it was discovered that Gerry Senior had a prison record for teenage republican activities. It is intriguing to speculate on what might have happened to the eldest of the ten children in that family if they had been brought up in Sydney or Melbourne. It is not fanciful to imagine that, given his record in the cauldron of Northern Ireland politics, the young Gerry would have become involved in public affairs in this country and might have progressed to the highest level. What is certain is that he would have had more opportunity to develop his considerable talents as a writer and might now be one of Australia's most successful authors.

Hope and History is an account of the long, gruelling journey towards the uneasy peace in modern Ulster. It is the writing that strikes you first. This is the kind of book that is hard to put down. One wants to learn how this setback is dealt with; whether that sequence of tit-for-tat killings will derail the process; how in the aftermath of Enniskillen, Canary Wharf, Greysteel and a dozen other atrocities and in the face of condemnation from church, state and media, people still don't give up. This is endurance raised to a cardinal virtue, described in prose that mixes tension, humour, emotion and honesty.

In *Before the Dawn* Adams describes a time in the 1970s when there was bloody strife between the Official and the Provisional IRA. Father Alex Reid, a Redemptorist priest from the local Clonard monastery, was acting as a peacemaker and suggested at a particularly tense point that they should pray to the Holy Ghost. Fr Reid appears here again, older and a nervous breakdown later, but now a central figure, a go-between trusted by all sides and a loyal critic-friend of Adams.



It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of what Gerry Adams has achieved in Ulster. When one compares the story with similar ethno-religious feuds in other parts of the world—the Balkans, the Middle East, Sri Lanka, Kashmir, a dozen forgotten places in Africa—the miracle of six years of fragile peace between long-lasting enemies becomes a wonder. It is still not secure, of course. It is like the alcoholic who can only take one day at a time and must realise that there is only one slip between calm and chaos.

There are other heroes: Martin McGuinness, John Hume, Fr Reid, George Mitchell, Albert Reynolds, even some of the non-political leaders on the unionist side. But little happened that did not involve Gerry Adams. He admits that this is his version of events, 'my story, my truth, my reality', and that there may be other accounts, from a different angle, telling the story differently.

And as in any good story, there are villains too: the IRA, the Protestant paramilitaries, the securocrats who could never see past a military solution. Adams tries to identify with all sides. He admits that the opinion, common among nationalists, that unionists are misinformed and incorrigible is paternalistic and condescending. He distinguishes between the ordinary loyalists and their belligerent, Old-Testament-righteous leaders. And even here, he manages to find good things to say. Ken Maginnis 'eventually chilled out with us'; John Taylor 'never took himself too seriously anyway ... most of his jousting was tongue-in-cheek.' Adams refuses to criticise David Trimble although admits that they shook hands for the first time only in July this year.

One expects politicians to be dense and obtuse; Adams is not. One expects people discriminated against and harassed by officialdom to be bitter and vengeful; Adams is not. One expects those in the spotlight, whether loved or hated, to write self-serving accounts of their activities; Adams does not. What he has written is an enthralling account of a process which still teeters between historic success and murderous failure. It deserves to be read for its insights into Northern Ireland and can also be read as a fine piece of writing. ■

Frank O'Shea teaches at Marist College, Canberra.

books:5

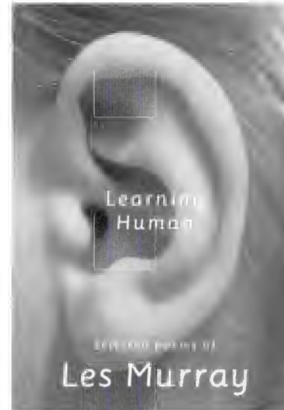
Grant Fraser

Sensitive listening

Learning Human: Selected poems of Les Murray, Les Murray. Duffy and Snellgrove, 2003. ISBN 1 876631 78 3, RRP $22

THIS SELECTION IS described as a collection of those poems that Les Murray considers his most successfully realised. The accumulated sense of the poems is of a grand rumination in which not only the poet speaks, but also the voices of family, friends, neighbours, yarning farmers and blokes at the pub are heard, finding their own eloquence.

It is fitting that the cover photograph is of a delicate ear—a child's ear—it is Murray's aural sensitivity that evokes geography, history and myth: a dialect of time and place. That voice is heard intimately in 'The last helloes', a poem about his father's death in which pared down language takes on a cadence of parting, the son watchful and silent until he utters the beautiful valediction, 'I wish you God'. The voice is also present in 'The hearing impairment', a poem about the misunderstandings and funny accidents of words, and in the wry delight of 'Letters to a winner', in which a lottery winner pores over a stack of begging letters before committing them to the fire. The letters are by turn pathetic and hilarious, enthusiastic not accurate, full of craft and hot deals.

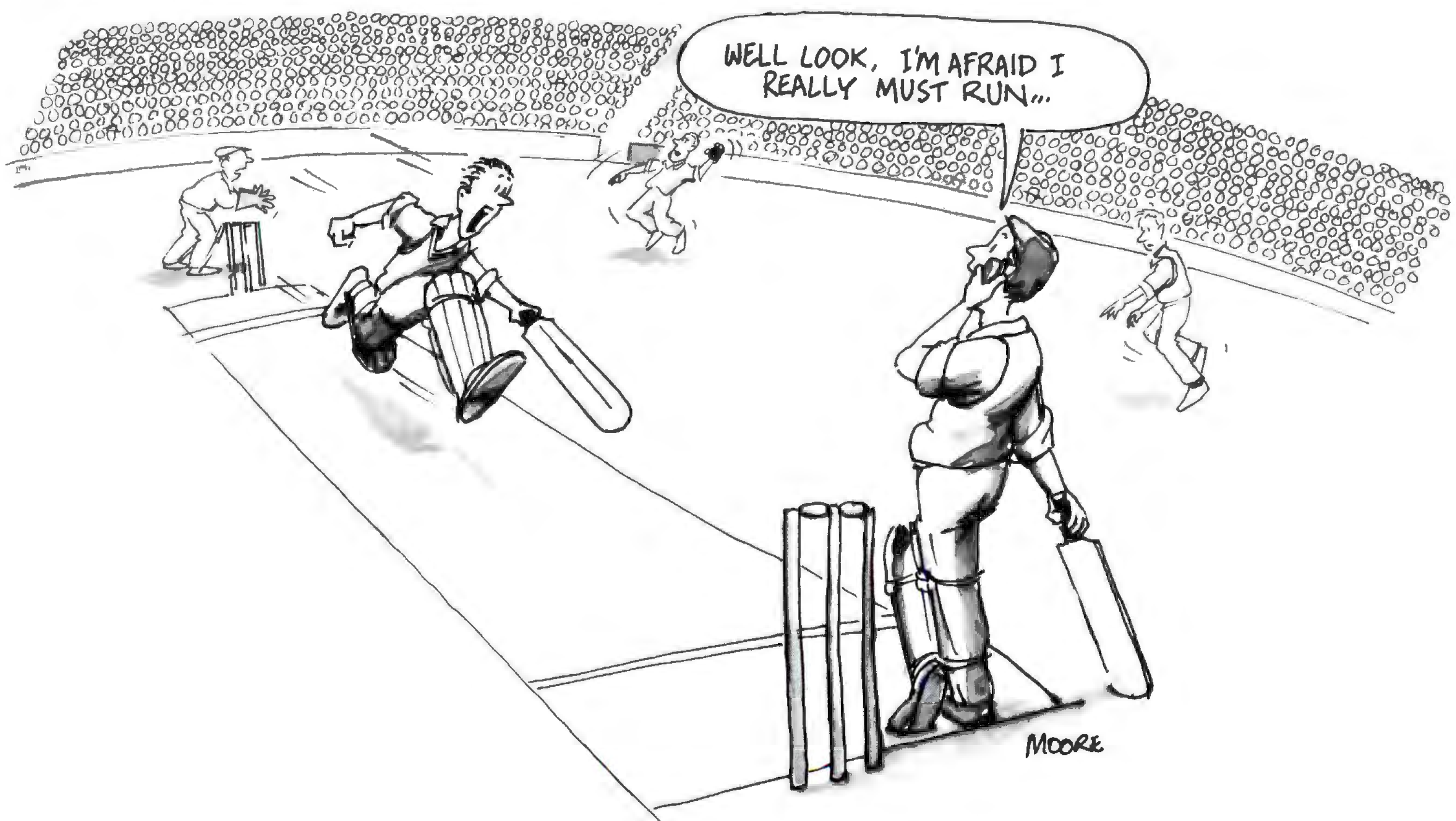


> I'm wearing my birthday suit/With the right man I could share this infallible system.

Many of Murray's most telling poems are about those who are hurt or disenfranchised. Some might suggest that Murray leaves nothing out but restraint. Of the 200 poems here, many of which are of considerable girth, the reader encounters the vitality of discourse, elaboration, mythic cattle, dead voices given life and a brilliant, indefatigable nag who is keen to secure, and enliven in words, just about everything. And there are moments of simple beauty:

> Streaming, a hippo surfaces
> like the head of someone
> lifting, with still entranced eyes from a lake of stanza. *Dreambabwe.* ■

Grant Fraser is a lawyer and poet. His book *Some conclusion in the heart* is published by Black Willow Press.



poetry

Philip Harvey

Moving images

Freud's Back-Yard, Isobel Robin. Five Islands Press, 2002. ISBN 0 86418 751 3, RRP $16.95
Gatekeepers to The Way: Collected Poems, Penelope Alexander. Grey Thrush, 2002. ISBN 0 9580016 1 8, RRP $16.95
What the Body Remembers, Lorraine McGuigan. Five Islands Press, 2003. ISBN 0 86418 748 3, RRP $16.95

STAIRCASE WIT BEFALLS us all. Three women with first collections published later in life present very different positions on their lives. Isobel Robin has taken the measure of personal experience, laying it out with neither declamation nor anger. Dilemmas of the adults in her youth—spinster teachers, honourable secretaries—grant new meaning to Robin's own life as she retells their stories. The past can be 'an old cicatrice long healed'. While 'Retirement Road' amusingly observes the present:

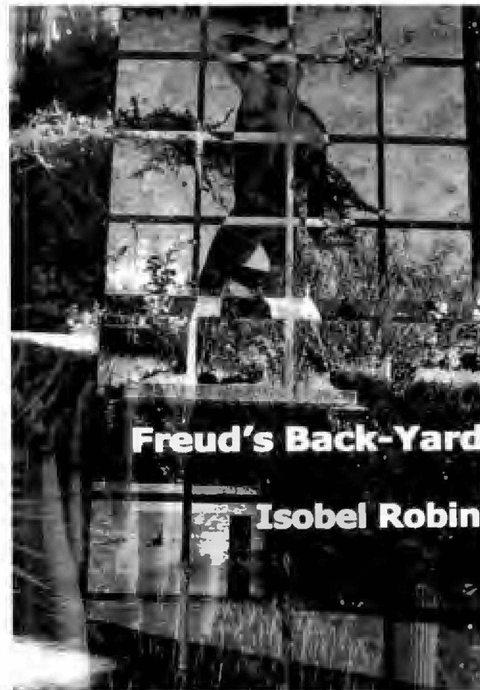
Stout wives and husbands,
blindingly white, bend to bowl
intense as virgins

The poet also reports more grimly:

Garrulous widow!
She chatters to a mute shade
in another room.

Robin possesses the perceptiveness of Fanthorpe, the stoicism of Witting. Like them, she can say that 'we who have passed through youth/should write poems/only to each other' ('Dreams and Visions'), as though poetry is an adult conversation, serious even when it is light. And how else can that conversation be held than through reflection on youth and experience?

Her steady control of forms is typical of a generation educated in this extra layer of complexity. Poetry's age-long challenge of combining the emotional with the rational is met here with a calm, controlled voice. Like poems, 'Ferries are for short journeys,/here to there/on the drifting difference of water.' In her poem 'Ferries', Robin recounts with deceptive ease different boat trips. We learn quickly that the Antiron ferry 'joins the road to Delphi/which is a place the same as nowhere else.' We are told, 'don't expect all ferries to oblige with cliches', a saying that is equally true of the poet herself, especially in her masterful conclusion where she wonders about 'the last, mysterious ferry ... at Styx Wharf' and hopes it will be like the Manly ferry: 'An accolade of pines, and Mother/with picnic lunch and everybody's swimming togs.'



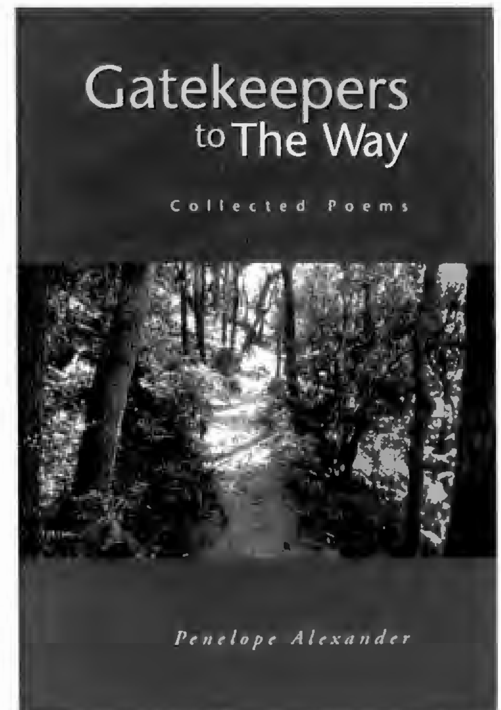
How we reached such a conclusion is a journey in itself, best taken by reading the book. With wit, Robin comes to terms with the romantic nexus, the golden moon of her teens become 'blotched' and old. If she danced beneath the moon now, 'what would the neighbours think?'

THE COLOUR AND SWEEP of the seven seasons of the South-East are prime motivation for Penelope Alexander. Words imitate the small inflections of the natural world, as when 'the dotterel runs in fleeting spurts' and a dog charging down the beach has 'the sun just in front of his nose'. Blake disliked Wordsworth en masse, but confessed delight in single images, lines of transience that we call haiku. Sometimes private experience should stay that way. But on occasion Alexander's small notices get to a common depth:

Shaking shrimp nets,
spraying sun
in salty splashes,
morning young.

Unconscious morning,
unknown noon;
never evening.
Gone, too soon. ('Morning Young')

An idealised nature is resigned to a



little realism. Enthusiasm, especially for the glories of the bush, prompts Alexander everywhere, though one is sometimes left wondering if enthusiasm is enough. It must not only be transmitted, it must be made to be felt. Overdependence on adjectives, so many clamouring, cluttering adjectives, can slow the pace and blow the meaning.

The human world is virtually absent from this poetry and one can interpret nature as consolation. One poem is even titled 'My Friend, Acacia Melanoxylon'. A counterpoint is struck, though, in 'As a Wave Moves':

It's going on, all the time
all year, and we
are only here
for a few days.

The shock—
that here it is
as it always was,
the waves coming in
sometimes spray wild
with churned sand grit;
other days, slow rolls,
thin pencils down-beach,
moving in line one after the other;
in, swing to the beach.

RESIGNED TO TRANSITION and the inexorable patterns of the universe, the poet relishes brief time.

Lorraine McGuigan, on the other hand, knows she must face up to hard encounter with others. She delineates the transgressions experienced through growing up. Her brutal honesty in expressing anger, conflict and hurt is balanced by the need to understand. When McGuigan says 'I would practice the art of forgetting/but there are no lessons, no guides' she lays out the cause for her poetry. The painful, the haunting and the unavoidable force her into descriptive drama of her past; somewhere in the lines she slowly assembles the guides that were not there to help her at the time. It is a long exercise of retrieval.

The poet assembles a composite portrait of her mother and their traumatic relationship, fraught with confused loyalties, mistreatment and misunderstandings. Louise, the mother, is someone who 'never looked lovelier' and 'could have been/a film star: rouge, lippy, mascara, high heels/ & silky dresses made on her Singer treadle.' Young Lorraine must comprehend the neglect of her own father, the abuse meted out by her mother's lovers, and a life pushed to the limit. Such writing can be treacherous, because of its taboo breaking, but even more so because of the high risk of not succeeding, of betraying the past by poor expression. McGuigan unwinds the clock; she succeeds at linking trauma with residual memories. Her skills are controlled contrast and hearing the heated language of confrontation.

McGuigan is good at showing how poems often start at the final line. One about killing chickens ends, 'They feel nothing, she told me,/wringing her hands again and again.' This is not a collection of unrelieved angst though. She is brilliant with the objective correlative, so that in 'Digging In', an echidna

... digs deeper, nuzzles sand
like a creature searching blindly for the nipple.

But fear not hunger drives this self-contained
fortress even deeper into the dunes

And the place where her mother tried to write a thesis later in life ('Dissertation') is

This room a topic in itself
a rented space replete with text
footnotes and bibliography.

Philip Harvey is Technical Services Librarian at the Joint Theological Library, Melbourne.

The Melbourne Anglican

In St John's Gospel it says 'God so loved the world', not 'God so loved the Church'.

Njongonkulu Ndungane, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town

How can we call the Bible 'the Word of God' and yet use it to reinforce terrible prejudices... and to bring hurt, pain and ignorance to countless people?

Retired Episcopal Bishop and author John Spong

The Melbourne Anglican

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the shortlist

Bamboo Palace, Christopher Kremmer. HarperCollins, 2003. ISBN 0 7322 7756 6, RRP $29.95

An investigative journey through the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Christopher Kremmer attempts to find out what happened to the Lao royal family, deposed after the Vietnam war.

Kremmer spends three months travelling through Laos, asking questions. The only replies, however, are whispers—contradictory whispers. What he hears speaks not only of the fragility of life, but of the fragility of a people and their culture.

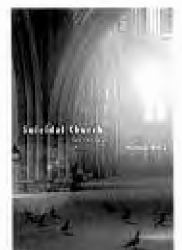
The author tells the story of the Lao royal puppets, locked away and languishing. Yet for one performance, the puppeteer painstakingly unwraps each one, and ceremoniously brings them to life. Kremmer's description is exquisite. Here he has found the metaphor for the royal family. We glimpse another world, another time—destroyed by the post-1975 Lao revolution.

Kremmer—journalist and author of *The Carpet Wars*—has been in many hot spots around the globe, yet he believes it's in 'cold spots' (places no longer making news) that some of the best stories can be found.

In *Bamboo Palace*, Kremmer searches for the universal voice, 'one of thousands lost in the abyss of war and revolution: a voice of resilience and survival and faith.' He finds it, in the testimony of Khamphan Thammakhanty, a salt trader's son—the last known survivor of the royal death camp.

It is Khamphan's testimony—worthy of a book in its own right—which is gripping. The author's travelogue serves simply as a device to hold the more powerful story.

—Michele M. Gierck



The Suicidal Church: Can the Anglican Church be Saved?, Caroline Miley. Pluto Press, 2002. ISBN 1 86403 182 4, RRP $29.95

Kierkegaard railed against the passionless Christianity of his culture and in his last years launched an impassioned critique of the institutional church in Denmark. As can often be the case, his passionate arguments received a passionate response—of denial.

Caroline Miley, an academic art historian, has launched her own vehement attack on the church in *The Suicidal Church*.

Kierkegaard found that society and the church were too integrated in his time. Miley has found that the Anglican church of modern Australia instead is becoming peripheral to most people and losing the trust of society. Her language protects her from any charge of passionless Christianity: Miley writes as a person betrayed. She has sought an expression of Christ in the church and instead found an expression of human Christians.

As the church is an organisation of human beings this will always be the case. As the church is an organisation called to be the demonstration of Christ it will always be challenged to be more than this.

While you might disagree with Miley's proposed solutions to the challenges faced by the Anglican church, her summary of its problems is impossible to ignore.

Her passionate writing naturally evokes a passionate response, and hopefully also radical change. It would be wrong if her book led instead to a passionate denial of the need for such a critique or for investigating radical solutions.

—Daniel Marti

The Lowest Rung: Voices of Australian Poverty, Mark Peel. Cambridge University Press, 2003. ISBN 0 521 83062 1, RRP $99

In doing away with analyses of income and poverty lines, Mark Peel restores the story of poverty to the people who wake up to it everyday. By listening to them relate their anger and despair, and even their hopes, he highlights the truth behind lived experiences and places his trust in that truth.

Through conversations with nearly 300 people living and working in Inala (Qld), Mount Druitt (NSW) and Broadmeadows (Vic), Peel works away at the image of the poor person as welfare cheat. He looks closely at media reports and the inaccuracies that have created the image, and further exposes a mistrustful welfare system that has become preoccupied with the politics of 'deserving'.

On the whole, the book seeks to demystify the poor by letting them speak for themselves. Sections of transcript are liberally scattered throughout its pages. It makes for compelling reading, because people are presented as they are; their words raw and undiluted. It can be unnerving as well, when one considers that this is not a work of fiction.

—Fatima Measham

FLESH AND GLORY

SYMBOLISM, GENDER AND THEOLOGY IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Flesh and Glory: symbol, gender, and theology in the Gospel of John, Dorothy Lee. Crossroad, 2002. ISBN 0 8245 1981 7, RRP $27.50

That prepotent document, the Fourth Gospel, is a challenge to the imagination and a conundrum to literal-mindedness. In the evolution of scriptural history, its confidence in its own terms of reference is a defining point for centuries of interpretation. As a refinement of the Gospel form it can be baffling as well as inspirational. John is packed with statements of finality ('I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life') that simultaneously open up a poetics of existence. Dorothy Lee delves into this symbolic language, founding her search in the belief that 'because the Fourth Gospel is clear that the being of God is beyond human categories and imagery, symbol becomes the most appropriate language for revelation. It does not attempt to exhaust or imprison the divine being.'

Inside every big book of theology is a thin book of spirituality struggling to get out. Lee restores an interpretative tradition that reads the text 'symbolically, theologically, prayerfully, and communally'. She shows how John's literary technique pushes us into identification with his characters and images, bringing us face-to-face with Jesus, the central subject. 'The struggle to move through misunderstanding to understanding becomes the reader's own faith story', and though Lee never personalises her writing, it is this kind of reading that propels the book.

It can be read purely as an exposition of the symbols, such as the living water, the vine and most confronting of all, Jesus' flesh, but Lee is interested in the reality enabled by the symbols. The Gospel provokes reactions and Lee's words come out of communal discussion of those reactions, meanwhile avoiding a specialist approach and its companion language as much as possible. Paul Ricoeur has the dangerous saying 'The symbol gives rise to thought', a pivotal clue to this creative book, and its creative challenge.

—Philip Harvey

Hands on the wheel

Ten, dir. Abbas Kiarostami. The celebrated Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami has a long-standing preoccupation with the car as existential metaphor. His latest film, *Ten*, could be taking place in many cities, even yours. It is made up of ten conversations, filmed entirely with two dashboard-mounted cameras inside a car, driven by a woman over a period of what appears to be a couple of weeks. She is smart, well off and attractive, and has a strangely opaque personality. Three of the trips are with her son, who is about 12. The film pivots around their conversations. She has divorced his father some time ago and is now in a new marriage.

She wants him to understand and accept her version of events, and he is utterly determined not to. Their dialogues are gruelling to witness. He displays a certain amount of misogyny, but his amazingly convincing performance transcends simple analysis. She tells him that she was a 'stagnant pond' when married to his father and that she is now 'a flowing river'. It doesn't wash with her son, or with us. What is uncomfortable, and *Ten* is a supremely uncomfortable film, is that you are placed somehow at a remove from empathy, without the sense of its reality being diminished. The sovereignty she exercises as the driver is the obvious yet dynamic metaphor for her life's trajectory in its shifts and uncertainties. She is in control of the car and yet she is always being told where to go and how to drive by those she ferries around: her son, her sister, a jilted friend, a religious old woman and a prostitute. The intimacy of the car's interior becomes a sort of trap for her passengers, who all seem to be dying to get out as soon as they can.

She asks the prostitute the usual questions, but doesn't like the answers. Our driver still sees her own maverick status as capable of resolution on her terms. The kinds of compromise and defeat represented by her other female passengers are certainly not what she is seeking. Anna Karenina in a motor, she maintains her forward motion by driving in circles. Petrol is very cheap in Iran.

—Lucille Hughes

Ode to film

Kill Bill Vol. 1, dir. Quentin Tarantino. Quentin Tarantino describes his latest film as a 'duck press' of the cinematic and musical influences that he's absorbed over the past 35 years. Samurai serials, spaghetti westerns, Shaw Brothers Hong Kong martial arts films of the '70s, blaxploitation films, *The Green Hornet* and Japanese anime all explicitly and self-consciously appear on the screen—not as references or allusions, but overtly and directly. It's not as if Tarantino is paying homage to his masters. He wants to be them, all of them, all at once.

Kill Bill is not only broken into two 'volumes' (the second film will appear some time next year), it's broken into chapters as well. Each gives Tarantino his chance to play with a new toy—not just in genre terms, but also in terms of the cast and crew. For the 'samurai' sequences Tarantino shot in Japan. For the Chinese martial arts sequences (which apparently come to the fore in Volume 2) he shot in China. He cast the very actors who appeared in the films that influenced him, sometimes as the same character. For example, Sony Chiba's character Hattori Hanzo from *Shadow Warriors*. The anime sequence was produced by Japanese company Production IG of *Ghost in the Shell* fame.

While paying his respects, he also juxtaposes a samurai sword fight with flamenco, combines a spaghetti western score from 1972 with anime, and has a Japanese girl-band version of surf guitar. He includes fragments of Bernard Herman, Nancy Sinatra doing a Sony Bono song, Isaac Hays, rockabilly and German neo-lounge music. This is one of the things I like most about Tarantino. He loves to pick up the abandoned and unwanted pieces of popular culture—actors, music, styles, genres—and places them, just so, in ways that make us fall in love with them again. Just ask John Travolta.

And, of course, the film is violent. The duck press metaphor, with its images of crushed bones, mangled flesh and dripping blood, is all too appropriate in some ways. As with everything else in the film, the violence swings from deadly earnest to Monty Python absurd. For all that, there's a curious stillness to the film. This is partly to do with the feeling that each line, each shot, each scene is a pose being struck. It's as if the 'action' of the film takes place not on screen, but between the references, allusions and appropriations that swarm throughout the film. More than that, however, the film is oddly formalist: it's 'about' colour and framing and composition more than anything to do with story and action. I've seen the film twice—I'm still not sure if I actually enjoyed it—and I'm thinking about seeing it a third time. And that's a lot more than I can say for most of the films I've seen recently.

—Allan James Thomas

Too cruel

Intolerable Cruelty, dir. Joel Coen. This is an attempt by the Coen Brothers to make an unashamedly mainstream Hollywood flick, a romantic comedy, and one is left wondering: Oh Brother, why did they bother?

The film opens promisingly. In a scene reminiscent—in its unsettling humour—of the abduction scene in the Coens' masterpiece *Fargo*, Donovan Donaly (Geoffrey Rush) arrives home to discover his wife in company with the pool cleaner. The Donalys don't have a pool. The situation turns nasty—but it's nothing a handgun, a spiky TV award and a Polaroid camera can't fix. Sadly, these are not the main protagonists —just pre-title sequence titbits.

Miles Massey (George Clooney) is a hot-shot marital lawyer, and author of the impenetrable 'Massey Pre-nup'. The story charts his infatuation with opponent-turned-client Marylin Rexroth (Catherine Zeta-Jones), who is trying to engineer the perfect snare for a rich and stupid husband. Their relationship is a pretty tame rollercoaster ride, with some excruciating throwaway lines along the way, and unfortunately the ride has well and truly petered out before the film does.

Successful Hollywood films of this genre rely on the audience identifying with and investing sympathy in the characters in a well practiced, conventional way.

Where your sympathies lie in Coen films has been one of their most unconventional and rewarding mysteries. Sadly, *Intolerable Cruelty* is far too light and cheaply written to carry the weight of the Coen Brothers' style.

The film reads like it was made in a great hurry, with an undeveloped script and badly rehearsed actors. It's a sloppy piece of craft—something light for everyone to do between other projects. Zeta-Jones seems bored by the whole exercise, and the cinematography of Roger Deakins is in turns insipid and treacly, a surprise considering the stunning work he has done with the Coens on recent outings.

Not intolerably cruel, just an intolerable disappointment.

—Tim Metherall

Human odyssey

In This World, dir. Michael Winterbottom. *In This World* is an unusually important film. Winterbottom has made a road movie for a time in history that has forgotten something essential about the human condition.

Jamal (Jamal Udin Torabi) and his cousin Enayat (Enyatullah Jumaudin) are displaced Afghan men living in Pakistan. They are not in any immediate fear for their lives—they are not in an unusually precarious political position (relatively speaking). Jamal and Enayat are what most people in comfortable circumstances would call 'economic refugees'. They search less for liberty than for a roof and a means to feed their families. And it is this very fact that makes Winterbottom's film so politically tough and revealing. He explores with real acumen the differences as well as the similarities between economic and political freedom.

In This World follows the perilous attempt of Jamal and Enayat to get 'illegally' from Peshawar to London. Travelling across country through Pakistan, Iran and Turkey (the old silk route), the film's protagonists are never in control of their journey. They are shot at while crossing freezing mountain passes, threatened at border crossings in languages they don't speak, knocked about endlessly in the backs of trucks and forced into shipping containers to cross huge stretches of water. Jamal and Enayat are exploited by strangers, cared for by strangers, and misunderstood by most they come into contact with. Their journey is absolutely brutalising.

Winterbottom employed non-actors and shot *In This World* with hand-held digital cameras in available light. It has the look and feel of a documentary, and in many ways feels closer to an historical document than to a narrative fiction. Compounding that feeling is the fact that Jamal Udin Torabi, the actor, snuck into the UK on the wrap of filming—but was not granted refugee status and must leave Britain before he turns 18. The characters are beautifully drawn, presumably by a combination of the writer, Tony Grisoni, Winterbottom and the actors themselves. They are not heroic martyrs. They are real young men, full of petty angers, silly jokes, a desire for new sneakers and a love for their families.

In This World will not reach a huge audience. It is too politically risky and formally brave for that. But thank goodness there are directors willing to travel the road so rarely seen by those of us already living in the comfort so many seek.

—Siobhan Jackson

Fast forward

I SCREAMED, BRINGING THE relatives running, and setting the dogs off howling in sympathy.

'She's blown a circuit, man,' I heard my computer-wrangling nephew whisper. 'Maybe the complete hard drive.'

'Nah, she's just seen something she didn't like on the telly,' said my son, keeping his wits about him, wresting the remote from my rigid fingers and, with a practised motion, switching channels. 'Tea and Tim Tams should fix it.'

Later I was able to report that I'd seen the scariest thing on TV, something that summed up the whole damn Area 51-ing, X-filing, grassy-knolling, crop-circling shebang. Little did Rupert's illuminati pals know that a clue for the masses had slipped under their Echelon monitors when a hardly-known and less-watched craft program on the Odyssey channel let slip part of the Big Plot, the one where we all forget how to read anything but self-help books and the phone bill.

The program was *Treasure Makers*, and they were teaching you how to use a book for its proper purpose, which was not reading but, according to a 'craftsman', as domestic knick-knackery. The genial hostess advised all us housewives to go to second-hand bookshops and ask for the pretty, old ones, with the hard backs. 'Most of them can't give them away,' she beamed. Then you take them home and by divers evil arts turn them into lamp bases, photo frames and, oh, irony—bookends. Craftsman grinned as he drilled through *Fowler's Modern English Usage*, placing it at the top of the book corpses. Some books you want to keep, of course: I couldn't see the bookend choices, but I imagined *Anna Karenina* and *Ulysses*, drilled, glued and gelded to provide a support for *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, *The Liver-Cleansing Diet*, *The Celestine Prophecy* and *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*. It was the worst viewing moment in 2003 and it had plenty of competition.

Whatever else the record-keepers tell you about 2003, the hottest, the direst, etc. (I meant to type 'driest', but let it stand, let it stand), this year has been the shortest on record. My records, that is. You know how you find yourself in the supermarket scowling at those damn Easter eggs that pop up straight after the January sales, only to be reminded by a pitying checkout chick that it's March already? Well, the whole year has been like that. My biorhythms must be slowing down (just to use that term tells you how old I am, doesn't it?) and my internal relativities are telling me that right now it ought to be about, well, August. The whole year has gone whoosh.

But there's a paradox to this internal time shift which means that, although it feels like last Christmas was only about four months back, it also seems like a year since Reggie Bird walked out of the *Big Brother* house, and an absolute aeon since *Kath & Kim* finished. And another aeon since the golden age of *Buffy* vanished, leaving a void that *Angel*, the spin-off, can't ever fill.

But enough of my temporally challenged flimflammery: suffice it to tell you that the only new word I learned this year was bling and its variant bling-bling. It means flashy clothes and jewellery that recall Dolly Parton's quip that it costs a whole lotta cash to look this cheap.

I've found this out by watching MTV with my son, who has been educating me. Under his usually benign dictatorship I have come to embody that line of Pope's about first condemning, then tolerating, then finally embracing, because I am now a big fan of Queens of the Stone Age, Justin Timberlake, Christina Aguilera and The Black Eyed Peas. I have come to think that music videos are groundbreaking art that shame pallid academic conceptual artyfarts, and I can't stop singing 'Thanks for making me a fighter' during the washing up—a lot of learning in a very short year.

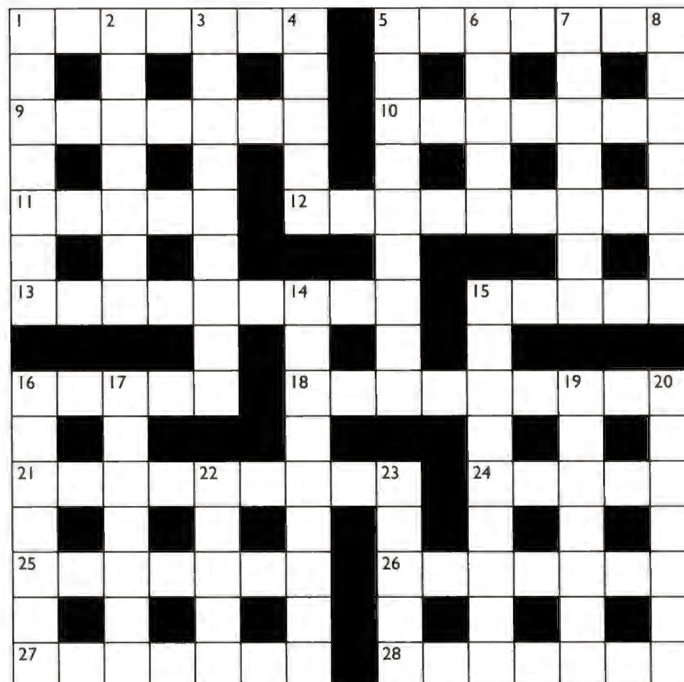
THE WATCHING HAS been a bit different, then, from my usual fare of news, current affairs, docos and comedy. What did I like? John Doyle's *Marking Time*, *Buffy* and *Kath & Kim*, of course, because they were brilliant. *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, National Geographic Channel, *Jamie's Kitchen*, *Roy & HG*, *Media Watch*, John Clarke and Brian Doyle, and *Inspector Rex* and the *Movie Show*. But I didn't like the stupid ignoramus-pomposity of *Survivor*, the boring-to-distraction real estate shows, or the cruel ill will of whoever at the ABC decided to screen the James Hewitt documentary at the precise time that young Prince Harry was visiting here.

This short year has a long obituary list, however. To the angels went Gregory Peck, Katharine Hepburn, Johnny Cash, Bob Hope, Nina Simone, Elia Kazan, Donald O'Connor, Buddy Ebsen—all old and maybe ready, who knows? And think of poor Barry White, Maurice Gibb and Robert Palmer, taken too soon. But there were others who might find the company of angels uncomfortable: Edward Teller, Idi Amin, and perhaps Leni Riefenstahl. Peace to them all. And peace, please God, and goodwill to all of us left here. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer.

Devised by
Joan Nowotny IBVM

Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 119, December 2003



ACROSS

1. It can be dire to be in these narrow waters. (7)
5. Hires boy to sing falsetto first. (5,2)
9. Put forward by everyone, for example, as well as the chief journalist. (7)
10. The lake often has squally rain too. (7)
11. Pick up tragic king to the north. (5)
12. Possibly Ron'll cork the bottle, so we can start the music. (4'1,4)
13. Hose down the barrier to avoid political scandal. (9)
15. Analyse these attempts. (5)
16. Celt left agitatedly, seeking immunity from the virus. (1-4)
18. I set you apart as I seek data, anxious to speak confidentially. (4,5)
21. The incomparable one, with one lighter fewer. (9)
24. Old time performer of 12-across is lacking hesitation about the slippery youngster? (5)
25. 24-acrosses could be found in these show tanks. (7)
26. Using some rotary motor may disturb in early morning. (7)
27. Provisional measure for the meantime. (7)
28. Head off before the opening. (7)

DOWN

1. One of them is not enough for summer, they say. (7)
2. Depending on ratline, perhaps, for climbing aloft. (7)
3. Oriental learning complicated, for the most part. (2,7)
4. Include mostly suds or soap to deal with perspiration. (5)
5. Stain on the tartan pattern? Do a random inspection. (4,5)
6. Establish friendly relationship when you board the train, for instance. (3,2)
7. Long-faced at the grave? (7)
8. Familiar heads are fond of pasta! (7)
14. Shortened fete Martha unwillingly attended—where she obtained dairy produce, possibly. (2,3,4)
15. Where a university student's work is directed—somewhat! (2,1,6)
16. I'm in tap dance—to the beat of the drums! (7)
17. Authorise Sturt to take different directions in voyage of discovery. (7)
19. Bill is singing well by the sound of it. (7)
20. Oscar thinks it's important to be serious. (7)
22. He leases one for rest and recreation, perhaps. (5)
23. Manage to get someone accused, as prearranged. (3,2)

Solution to Crossword no. 118, November 2003

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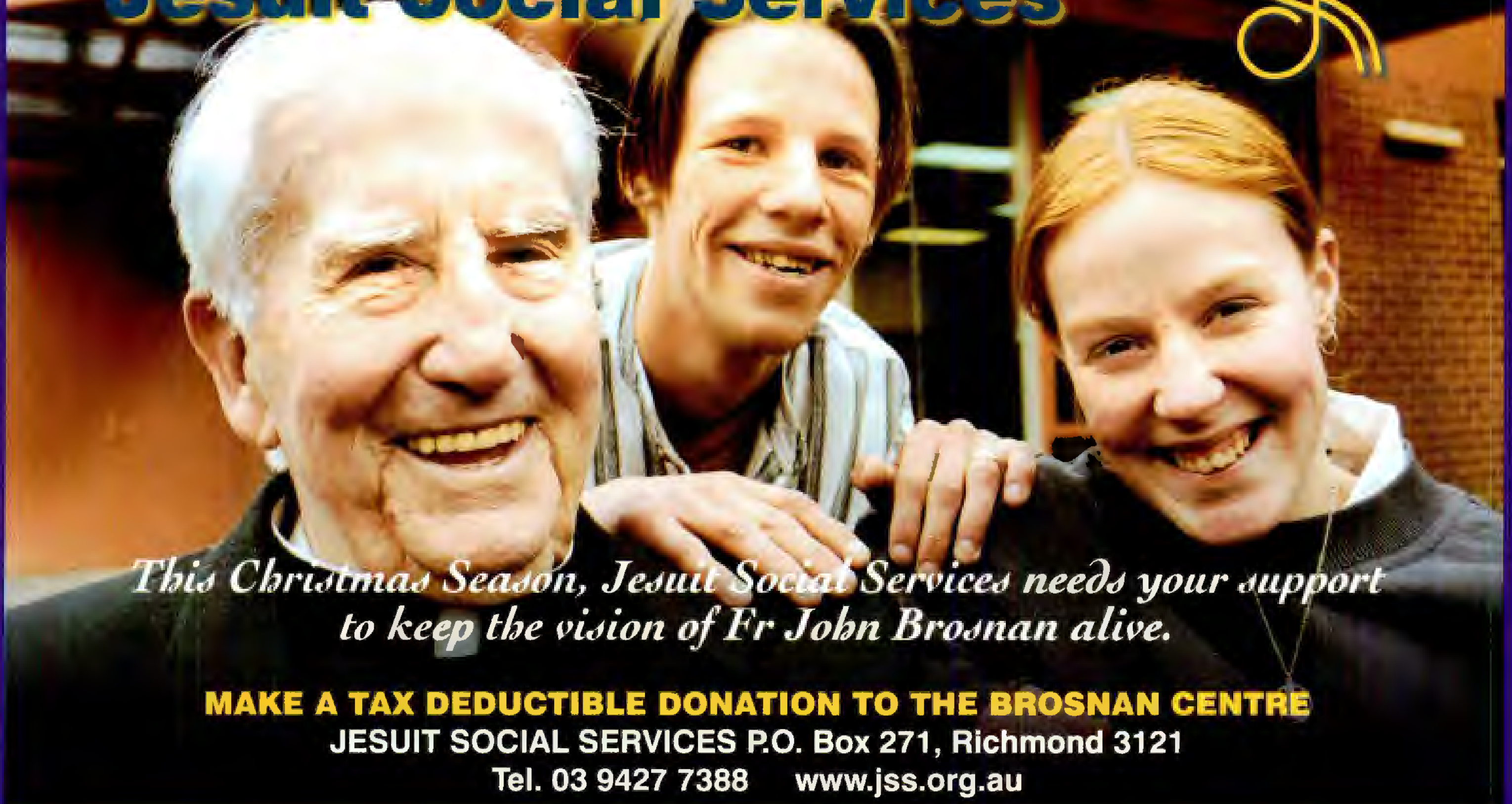

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