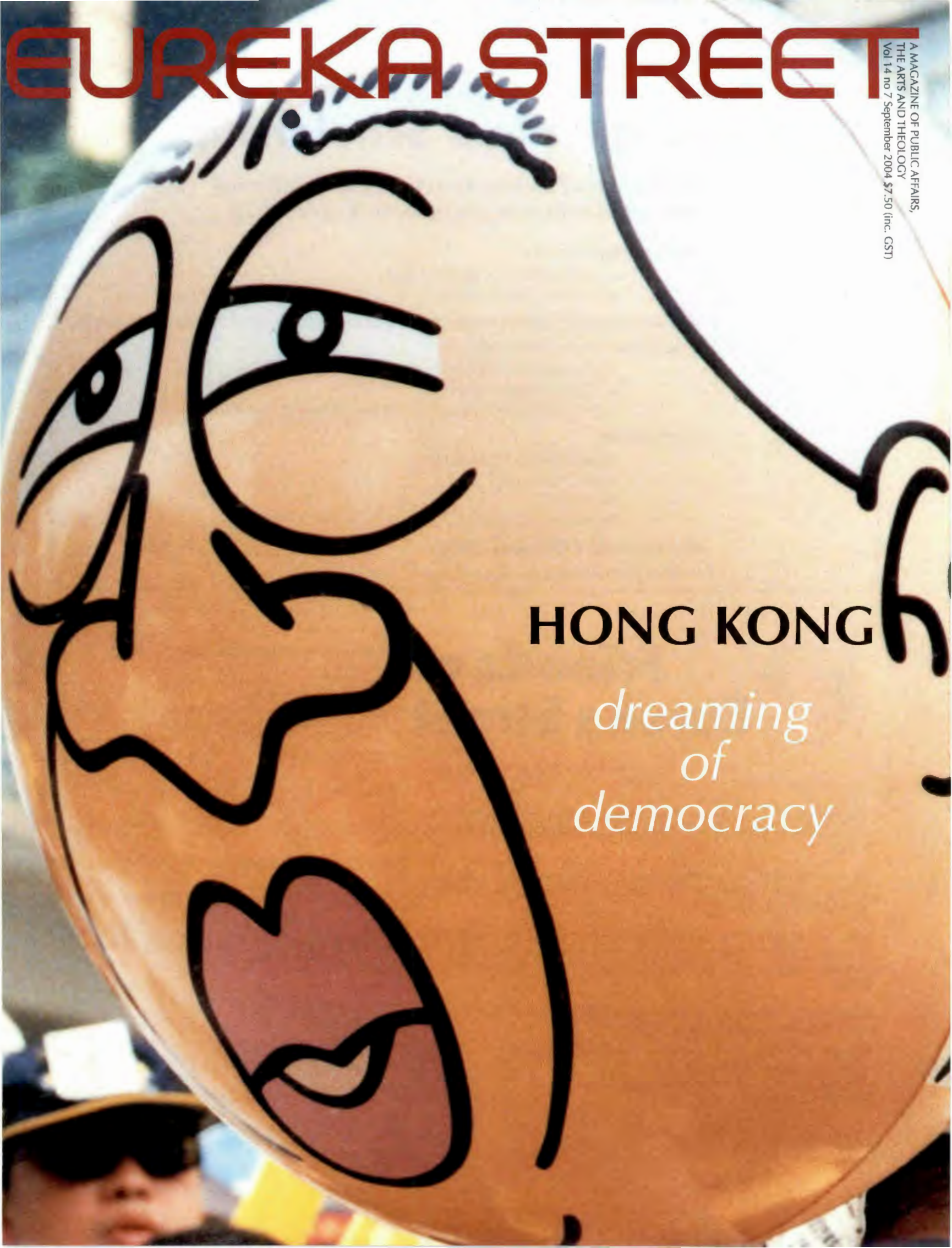


EUREKA STREET

A MAGAZINE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS,
THE ARTS AND THEOLOGY
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HONG KONG

*dreaming
of
democracy*





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This month
Cover: Pro-democracy march, Hong Kong, 1 July, 2004. Photo by Madeleine Byrne.
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Cartoons: Dean Moore p20
Photos: Mark Raper sj pp16-17, Madeleine Byrne pp18-20, Dawn Delaney pp22-24



On record

In view of an association with your journal since its first issue, I found the hostile review of my book, *John Wren: A Life Reconsidered* (*Eureka Street*, April 2004) disturbing. Most of Jane Carolan's statements are based on misunderstanding, or are irrelevant. Three times she complains of my 'microscopic detail' and the length of my book but laments that 'only in 25 instances' (certainly adequate) do I quote Wren and that I 'lean heavily' on the relatively short compilation of Hugh Buggy's undocumented journalism in his *The Real John Wren*. Of slightly less than 1,000 endnotes in my book less than four per cent cite Buggy, as a courtesy as much as a source and he needs no more. Needless to say, Buggy lacks 'microscopic detail'.

Carolan says that I have not produced a 'clearer picture' of Wren when the generally accepted charges against him as a gangster-homicide are specifically refuted; his family life and major business interests, his activities during World War I and after, his newspaper interest, relations with H.V. Evatt, Tom Ryan, Ted Theodore and Albert Jacka VC, to take just a few notables, are portrayed as never before. Reputable reviewers elsewhere have expressed surprise at the amount of research done. What I do say is, of course, that the research cannot be exhaustive.

Where others call Wren 'short' in a context suggesting that he was a runt, I am somehow at fault in calling him 'short, but not inordinately so'. It seemed necessary to say that he had passed army requirements by a good inch. I am supposed to have 'perpetuated furphies', notably in the case of W.L. Baillieu's infamous swindle of 1892-3. The swindle was fact not furphy, as the opinion of (Sir) Isaac Isaacs shows (see M. Cannon, *The Land Boomers*, 1986, p140). Somehow I should not say this because in World War I Baillieu did good work in war munitions! Carolan misreads the irony with which I contrasted Wren's determined plebeianism with his children's 'posh' manners and Mary Wren's style with that of her proletarian mates.

Carolan is incorrect in her assertion that the authoritative Richard Stremski (*Kill for Collingwood*, 1986) was wrong in ascribing

to Wren the lucrative transfer of the Tivoli Club's liquor licence to the Collingwood Football Club in 1941. As well as writing the definitive Club history, Stremski has been a director and general manager of the Club. He has now rechecked the social club's membership of the 1940s to find that Carolan's alternative 'fixer', R.H. Macintyre, was not then on the books, although Macintyre had installed a bar in the Ryder Stand in the 1930s. Carolan gives no source for her claim.

James Griffin
Spence, ACT

Teach your children

Luke Fraser's 'The Threat to Empire' (*Eureka Street*, July-August 2004) reads as a diffuse apologia for the Howard Government's belief that the only people of value are those who are paid for what they do.

There is a consistent message that everyone who reaches retirement is immediately a burden on tax payers. This is untrue. Many older people contribute taxes through continuing employment or investment. They also contribute hours in voluntary activity.

The growing industry in residential and community care provides opportunities for employment as well as employment for those who provide training, accreditation and services.

Fraser, with the government, laments

that there will not be enough people in the paid workforce to pay the taxes needed to support more dependent people. This overlooks the fact that a smaller workforce means less unemployment, and fewer younger people reliant on the public purse.

Older people are the very same ones who supported and nurtured the younger generation. Through paid employment and taxes they funded schools. Through family involvement and volunteering they supported the communities in which young people were raised.

Fraser's article also rehashes the unverifiable figures about the costs of raising a child. The value, again, is alleged as only monetary. Families in the African countries which Fraser mentions actually regard their children as wealth in themselves. Living comfortably is good, but what good is it if you have no children to carry on your hopes and dreams, and to support you when you are older, as you supported them when they were young?

These are people who value children, who know that there are far more fundamental values in life than the selfish consumerism which is stifling our country.

Elizabeth Bleby
Unley, SA

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

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Life, choice and morality

A RECENT SHOWING of the documentary, *My Foetus*, stirred discussion both of the morality of abortion, and also of the propriety of showing an abortion on television.

My Foetus, was made by Julia Black. After an abortion, she came to regret that she and others were ill informed about what happens in an abortion. She later bore another child. In the program, the different fates of the two pregnancies represent the choices that are set before women. Julia Black continues to believe that women should have the right to make that choice.

There are good arguments for and against showing films of an abortion. The argument used by Julia Black, which I find compelling, is that if in our society we engage in practices which raise serious moral issues, then those involved in these practices and in public conversation about them should be pressed to imagine in realistic ways what the practice involves. This is as true of abortion as it is of capital punishment, torture, corporal punishment, going to war, detaining children or restricting asylum seekers to Temporary Protection Visas. The fact that we may turn our eyes away from what is involved in these practices does not prove automatically that they are morally unjustifiable. But arguments used to justify them must confront the reality of what happens in war, detention, abortion and judicial killing. They cannot rest on euphemisms like supporting alliances, border protection, or surgical procedures.

In the case of abortion, the images of the documentary make us recognise that the potential life of the foetus cannot be described like that of a plant seed or of a collection of cells. It must be imagined as the life of a foetus who resembles us in uncanny ways. The image offers imaginative support to the argument against abortion for those who, like myself, insist on the continuity of human life from conception to death. It invites the question whether, in treating living beings—even dependent ones—as means to an end, we risk diminishing respect for life at all its stages. It also asks how questions of choice should be related to questions of morality.

There is also good argument against showing such scenes. They may, for example, make people insensitive to the reality depicted. Many argue on these grounds against showing actual scenes of violence on television, and against depicting violent and

brutal actions realistically in films. Instead of being repugnant, the violent action becomes ordinary and unnoticed. This argument is strong, and is supported by the anecdotal evidence of people who have lived in societies where daily violent death becomes normal and unnoticed. The argument, however, loses its force when a society tolerates the practices depicted on film. If insensitivity is at issue, it is not so as a risk. It is at issue because it already exists.

Another reason against showing scenes of an abortion is that they will occasion shame, distress and feelings of guilt to vulnerable people who have had abortions. This argument must be given due weight. In the discussion of Julia Black's documentary, however, some participants claim to have suffered grief, distress and feelings of guilt without knowing the physical reality of abortion. Furthermore, seeing what it involves can be a step in their healing. The argument therefore seems inconclusive.

BUT THE POTENTIAL DISTRESS caused by these images suggests, however, that the public conversation about abortion must have as its goal respect and healing. This is perhaps the great contribution made by Julia Black's documentary. She shows great intellectual generosity, in that she offers evidence that can be seized on by her opponents in order to discredit abortion. Her generosity should be met with equal generosity and with a care to make proper distinctions. It would be an abuse of debate to use her pictures in order to claim, for example, that abortion is murder or to belabour the wickedness of women who have had abortions.

At the heart of the documentary are two lives: the potentially independent life of the foetus, and the life of the often perplexed, confused, torn and depressed young woman confronting a lonely decision. Both lives merit the sympathy and empathy that form the basis for all moral decisions. The realistic portrayal of abortion encourages empathy. Those of us who are punctilious in our respect for the foetus and its claim to life should respect equally highly the life and humanity of those bearing the foetus and of those with whom we disagree. ■

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



Alice sprung

Eureka Street, of course, is always blameless. But the media sometimes do get it wrong. Consider, for example, a recent Channel Nine extravaganza, 'The Alice.' An unimpressed Alician wrote to us to set the record right.

1. We do not drive semi-trailers into pubs. Alice residents would simply never do this. There is also more than one pub in town.

2. If such an incident were to occur, you can be sure that more than just one police officer would turn up. (On a recent Saturday night five policemen were arrested by their peers after starting three separate brawls. A total of 15 police were involved—fighting amongst themselves—at Bo's Saloon, KFC and the hospital respectively. Good work team!)

3. If you are on your way to the Alice from Adelaide and you decide to jump off the Ghan to pick some flowers (!) and are then picked up by a tourist guide, who drives you past a sign *on a hill* that says 'Welcome to Alice Springs' be afraid ... be very afraid. Your tourist guide has circumnavigated the town and approached it from the north.

4. If you are driving into Alice from the west and are passing green grassy bushland, get out your map! You should be on a road called the Tanami which is not situated alongside rolling green hills.

5. If you are on your way to Uluru and a park ranger meets you on a dirt road and tells you that 'you can't climb the rock today': *run away very fast*. First, you shouldn't be on a dirt road in your Britz tourist van and second, no park ranger stands around on the side of the road in the middle of nowhere waiting for tourists who shouldn't be there.

6. If (having been told by the park ranger to 'turn around'), you then do so and casually take in the beautiful vista of Rainbow Valley you should apply to the Guinness Book of Records—they are about 300kms apart.

7. You cannot buy a sheep in the Todd Mall.

Hope that clears a few things up.



Common ground

US animators Gregg and Evan Spiridellis' amusing satire of Woody Guthrie's 'This Land is Your Land', featuring George W. Bush and John Kerry (www.jibjab.com), has hit a raw nerve. As Jesse Walker from Reason Online (www.reason.com) writes, the owners of the rights to Guthrie's song can't see the funny side.

The Richmond Organization's lawsuit claims the animation '... threatens to corrupt Guthrie's classic—an icon of Americana ...'. This in spite of Guthrie's own proviso '... anybody caught singing it without our permission, will be mighty good friends of ours, cause we don't give a darn. Publish it. Write it. Sing it. Swing to it. Yodel it. We wrote it, that's all we wanted to do.'

Anyone still in doubt about Guthrie's enthusiasm for freedom of speech ought revisit one of two verses from the original often omitted in performance:

In the squares of the city, in the shadow of the steeple/Near the relief office, I see my people/And some were stumbling and some were wondering/If this land was made for you and me.



Unsporting

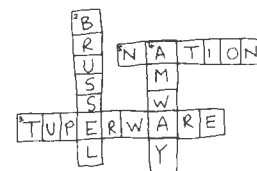
It is reported that Indonesian television will not show the Olympic Games. No one is interested. No one wants to advertise. Said a miffed television executive, 'If Indonesia wins a gold medal, they will have to watch it on cable!'

Just imagine, though, if apathy spread. What if no one was interested in watching houses holding captive groups, restorers, gardeners, castaways, families and reporters from hell? What appalling consequences might follow if the lack of interest spread to grass fields occupied by strangely dressed people kicking, hitting, heading, chucking and avoiding things? Mr Rumsfeld must surely warn Indonesians to mend their ways.



Patrons

We recently came across a 7-Eleven registered to St Mina and St Mary Pty Ltd. Nothing unusual about entrusting business fortunes to saints. St Vincent's Hospital and St Mary's College come instantly to mind. Others are unexpected: St Mary's Fossick and Find Opportunity Shop, St Mary's Engine Services, St Mary's and St Philip's Combined Rodeo Association, St Mary Meade Stud Farm, St Mary's Hog's Breath Café, and St Mina Massage Therapy. But St Mina is an unlikely patron for capitalist enterprises. He came from the Egyptian moneyed classes, but 'left the army to live in the desert and be filled with the blessings of the heavens.' He went on to declare his faith in Christ and was martyred. Not a promising business strategy, one might think.



Cross words

As on all the just, imprecations as well as benediction are poured on *Eureka Street*. We bear with them bravely. But recently even we trembled to the core of our collective being to read this curse.

I will never forgive you. For the rest of my life I will make it my personal mission to pester you, your family, and friends with horrors heaped upon horrors: invitations to Tupperware parties, telling Amway you ARE interested in a business opportunity, letting slip at the local real estate agent that you are thinking of selling your home, sending anchovy-pineapple-fennel-brussel-sprout pizzas to your workplace, and sending out 2500 invitations which give your home address as the venue for the next meeting of both One Nation and the Sporting Shooters Association.



Long odds

JOHN HOWARD HAS DONE MORE THAN ENOUGH to deserve to lose the next election by a wide margin. The polls indicate that he probably will. Yet he remains a slight favourite in the betting. Quite a few seasoned commentators think it more likely than not that he will win, and no one is prepared to write him off. Mark Latham and Labor have not by any means done enough to deserve to win. And John Howard is not only lucky, but makes his own luck. Even if Latham has amazed his detractors by his self-discipline over nine months, people still wonder if he can hold it together through a campaign.

This is, or ought to be, a classic election which a government loses. It's been in long enough, and if it has presided over a good economy (and can claim some credit for keeping it that way) all the signs are that it has pretty much run its course. Howard has achieved almost all of his personal agenda in politics, but this is an agenda set 30 years ago and there's not much that's new. The Treasurer, Peter Costello, may be set to step into his shoes but seems unable either to imbue the government with new energy or ideas, or to excite anyone about his succession. Indeed most Liberal voters would rather that Howard remained indefinitely than Costello replace him.

The Liberals are floundering because they lack direction and drive. The utter shabbiness of Howard's refugee policies has deeply sapped the moral authority of the government. A parade of deceits, cunning tricks, dissemblings, prevarications, misleadings, and outright lies has deprived it not only of credibility but the capacity to inspire faith or hope. So too with casual abuses of the defence forces and the public service, the unspeakable greed and ethical apathy of many ex-ministers, the deceptions over Iraq, the propensity of the Prime Minister to play to some of the darkest instincts in the Australian soul, and his refusal to admit or accept any responsibility for any misbehaviours. Oh, and, of course, the sheer national humiliation of having a buffoon such as Alexander Downer purporting to speak for us, to tell others who we are, or to invite judgment of our character by his utterances.

All these were but lightly touched on by the 'Gang of 43'—the group of retired diplomats, spooks and military people who remonstrated the government over its declining regard for truth in politics, and the way in which our national interests have been subsumed in blind obedience to the United States. The paper was, of course, directed at both parties, but no one could have doubted at whom the finger was pointed. John Howard fended it as best he could, without personal attacks on his accusers, though his back benchers probably aggravated the injuries with their jibes at the 'old farts.' And one of his old Liberal allies and patrons, John Valder, has established an 'anybody-but-Howard' movement in the Prime Minister's own

electorate of Bennelong. John Valder, an old Tory rather than an old liberal, is morally disgusted with Howard over refugees and Iraq.

The cynicism that this inspires does not merely erode credibility and hope. It also undermines the impact of tax cuts or any apparent improvements in government services. Just as critically, it weakens faith in all politicians. This comes not only from a fairly standard, and accurate enough government defence—'they did it too when they were in office'—but from the seeming incapacity of opposition politicians to set and defend moral standards, or to represent ideals which might encourage people to vote for them.

MARK LATHAM'S PRIMARY SKILL has been tactical. He has been amazingly successful at shrugging off government attacks and in refusing to play to its agenda. He has created a number of agenda items—reading aloud to children, for example—coming entirely from left field but with some capacity to make Latham seem a politician of a new age, or a third way. Latham stumbled a bit in July, but, by August was back again, wrong-footing Howard on pharmaceuticals and the 'free' trade treaty with the United States. In bringing Kim Beazley back into the fold, he disabled much of the thrust of government claims that Labor is anti-American.

In the background, Bob McMullan and Simon Crean are struggling to develop budget numbers which will make Labor look fiscally conservative yet allow room to manoeuvre in areas such as health and education. Labor is, of course, more comfortable when quality-of-life matters are the political issue. Yet it is hard to envisage that Latham can comfortably win an argument fought on economics, even on social policy. That's not because the government has successfully defused such issues, but Labor has failed to develop or sell a broad economic agenda.

This scenario highlights Howard's continuing strength—the view that he is broadly sound on economics, even if a bore, untrustworthy, and a bit of a worry on other matters. This is compounded by the idea (never successfully repudiated thanks to high interest rates in the 1990s) that Labor is a party of profligates, wastrels and feckless gamblers, rather than the people who remade the economy precipitating the prosperity of the past 13 years. Mark Latham has not invented either a new story to tell, or a new ideal around which voters might unite. If he's lucky, John Howard might lose all by himself. If we want to be lucky, we would do more to pin Labor down to an agenda. ■

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



Writing

I'm fashioning

a poem

fastening
to the page

with bent buckle
of iron thoughts

and cold quartered
steel emotions

with racks of cloth
and freedom string

not in a glass bottle
on a desk but in

Hell's rhythm at sea.

Tim Collins

Zhuhai

over the wire and the water
big sister, da lu
China proper
more real than the past
(our privilege here)
though we, excused in law and language
have our part too
to brighten the day

Macao 2003

Christopher Kelen

physically fit but depressed

although performing exercises
of a ritual diet of care
i'm merely titular head
of a body possessed by forces
sending intimate armies
to win without me knowing
savage interior battles
and a mind subverted easily
by that sombre knowing rebel
who occupies my wit's end
and shadows me with sadness

geoff baker

Gravity

Who's got it
Who wants it
It's everywhere
While incredibly rare
It can be developed
But it's a big
Investment and once
You've got it, you
Might be past it

B.W. Shearer

Same Crow?

A long way from anywhere.
When I'm there. When I'm here.

The same crow flew ten thousand
miles? The same crow blocked

the songbirds' trills? It doesn't worry
me in itself: I love the crow's caw.

I do get lonely. But I eat and sleep.
I read other people's poems.

John Kinsella

Poem In Four Lines

All I wrought in reckless ceaseless deed or thought or
Love to work the damage and diminishment of love,
Ashen I with slakeless fevered longing would make
Not.

Garth Greenwell

the month's traffic



Future leaders

KENYAN STUDENT ELECTIONS

NAIROBI UNIVERSITY is one of the most prestigious in East Africa. The annual elections for the representative council are serious events. For an outsider the campaign posters seem standard electoral fare. Scratch the surface and it becomes clear that what happens in student halls echoes that which happens in East Africa's national halls of power.

At the peak of the campaign I found myself sitting in a dorm with two Nairobi University student friends. Without notice, a troupe of six men invited themselves in and took a seat on one of the beds.

The campaign team shook the hands of myself and my five local friends in silence. They sat on the bed so closely that their cheap suits became ruffled. Our conversation was quashed. Campaigning began.

The smallest member of the group made his opening statement with ceremony. 'Ladies ... and gentlemen, this is our presidential candidate.' The chap just beyond the end of the spokesman's finger sat in a silver tie—a 20-year-old trying to act like an older statesman.

'We are standing for the student elections because we represent the new Kenya. We represent the young Kenyans who want to overcome tribal divisions and to vote for a leader who will represent all tribes. Our vision is to make student politics at Nairobi University the model for the national assembly.'

My friends 'oohed' and gave approving nods to one another and the spokesperson at appropriate intervals. When the monologue was complete one of my friends spoke on behalf of the group.

'We think it is right that the elections be fought along lines of merit not tribe. This is a good thing to see in our potential representatives.'

After fielding some questions on the mute leader's behalf, the spokesman rallied his troops and thanked us for our time. 'We can count on your vote, right?' The room

was unanimous, their vote was won. The would-be council president shook our hands again and left.

The door had barely closed when my friends began their hysterical chatter.

'Beyond tribal lines? It will never work.'

'How can they say they will overcome such things? Everyone knows a Kikuyu will win.'

'It is so stupid that he comes in and says this. It is so obvious that they are Luo and who would vote in a Luo for council?'

As we walked out of the dorm room we passed the line of campaign posters. My host walked by each one and named the tribe of the candidates. He stopped briefly at the poster for the inevitable winner, a Kikuyu.

This pattern is not unique to students nor universities nor politics. In Tanzanian hotels and hostels, guests from all over the globe are asked to sign in with their name, passport number, postal address and tribe. This, in turn, leads to a list of non-Africans defining themselves either by Scottish heritage or sports fanaticism (I had no idea that Manchester United was a tribe).

So dominant is tribalism in East African life that eminent Kenyan orator, P.L.O. Lumumba recently noted, 'Kenyans need to start questioning themselves. Are we really Kenyan?' Who in Kenya affiliates with nation before tribe? The answer is, few. Ask a Kenyan about themselves and tribe will come soon after their name. For many, tribe defines your role. For most Kenyan voters too, tribe is ideology.

The issue of tribal labels would not be so important if each tribe was not associated with a stereotype, my Nairobi University friend explained to me.

Kikuyus run businesses and hold political power. Look no further than two of the three presidents of Kenya; current president Kibaki and founding president Kenyatta whose son currently leads in the polls for the 2007 election.

Kalenjin make the best runners and look after their own. The revelation last month that former president Moi was receiving half of all profits from the largest financial scandal in Kenyan history, known as 'Goldenburg', confirmed this.

Luo want power but should never have it. They are said to be arrogant and articulate. Akamba are rumoured to be promiscuous and the world-famous Masai should be left to tend their nomadic herds and pull in the tourist dollars.

So established are these stereotypes that I have had conversations with colleagues about non-African counterparts who, according to locals, 'would be' a Kikuyu or Luo or Turkana or any of the other 42 Kenyan tribes, 'if he/she were a Kenyan.'

From a distance, this may seem undemocratic but harmless. However, pick up any African paper and you will see the consequence of the divisions. Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda or Burundi. Fur and Arabs in Sudan. Even in South Africa's KwaZulu Natal region, the most recent elections demonstrated that Zulu and Xhosa vote, in part, along tribal lines.

With this backdrop, one can only admire the silver-tied aspirant at Nairobi University. If only he was Kikuyu.

—Matthew Albert

Country races

LAST PAST THE POST

TRAVELLING FROM CAIRNS for perhaps the last race meeting at the country town of Mingela, we detoured at Innisfail and paused at Mena Creek. On one side of the stream was the folly cum tourist resort Paronella Park, where a Spaniard built a castle in the 1890s. On the other is the Mena Creek Hotel, on the eve of its red letter weekend. The publican sponsors an annual hunt for feral pigs; 'grunter hunters' flock to the chase.

We passed through Townsville and stayed the night at the splendid Imperial Hotel in Ravenswood. Built a century ago when the gold rush tide reached into these gullies, it then became a ghost town. Now that the extraction of gold has become payable again, Ravenswood has revived. There are corrugated iron cottages here from the 1860s, air so pure and dry that it is tonic. In the pub, beautiful wood is everywhere, in sideboards, cupboards, staircases, and in an imposing bar feature that looks like an altar piece.

On the Saturday morning, in no hurry to leave, we eventually set off for Mingela. It was a testing day for the Mingela Amateur Race Club. Last year it lost all funding from the reconstructed Queensland racing authority. Along with numerous other country race clubs and meetings,

Mingela seemed to have met its doom. Club president Dick Pugh decided to spend its reserves to stage what sadly may be the last meeting: 'We're just trying to keep the bush atmosphere going'. Seven jockeys turned up, including one who rode in a Lone Ranger mask and some seasoned hoops from Townsville.

Main feature of the day was the Mingela Cup. Forty years ago a running of this event provoked that quintessential Australian racing scandal: the ring-in. The principals were a butcher from Giru (south of Townsville) called Robert Burry and his employee Joy Joyce. The horse in question, running as Hello There, but of dubious lineage, not only won the Mingela Cup but an earlier event on the same card. Unlike scamsters of more recent years, this pair was acquitted. The racecourse was trimmed out with marquees, but held on to the past by its old wooden buildings and corrugated iron toilets. Kids and P&F members from a St Columba Charters Towers catered. There were four bookies, all offering prices predictably and atrociously under the odds. When the horses at last got on the track, 15 minutes late for the first, they raised a dirt storm on the turn.

Racing superstition has it that you should always back the first jockey whom you see when you get to the track. The one we spied, saddle under his arm, was Graham Kliese, who kissed his partner, a lady in red, and went to work. He rode a treble. She was successful too. Parking her XXXX can in its stubby holder on a table otherwise covered in hats she entered the mounting yard and was soon acclaimed winner of Fashions on the Field. In conversation she revealed herself to be the granddaughter of a Townsville trainer and an acerbic judge of some of the jockeys who saddled up at Mingela.

The first horse goes on to the later races in the spring, the second to the stud. For Mingela the future is unclear, notwithstanding the dedication of all who worked for this meeting, and the vignette of an embattled rural solidarity that poignantly it gave.

—Peter Pierce

This month's contributors: **Matthew Albert** lives and works in Kenya, and is co-founder of the SAIL program (SAILProgram.cjb.net); **Peter Pierce** is Professor of Australian Literature at James Cook University, Cairns.



Melt down

ONE JOY OF FOLLOWING SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS is seeing it connect threads of knowledge into a tapestry revealing a picture of a previously unknown scene.

In recent years, evidence has emerged from researchers in South Africa that when we exercise, our brain makes us feel tired, not our muscles. Clearly, muscles are limited in their ability to keep running or cycling. But apparently we have a mechanism in the brain which prevents us reaching the point where we might do damage.

The latest is the unmasking of a protein, Interleukin-six—the messenger which spreads the news that we're tired. When runners in a 10 kilometre race were injected with Interleukin-six before running, they felt tired and their times were slowed by about a minute, compared with runners injected with a placebo. This provides an explanation for the phenomenon of the 'second wind'. If the brain recognises that the end of a race is near, it may well ease up on the tiredness message, allowing a dash for the line.

There are also potential clinical applications of this work. This work may provide us with a handle on that most slippery of conditions, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). It opens up the possibility that CFS may not be due to lack of energy at all, but perhaps to a misfiring of the system in the brain. We might even be able to treat it using drugs which block the messenger. The dark side? Shooting the messenger might enhance athletic performance, but at a risk of severe muscular damage.

The best example these days of scientific connections can be traced to global warming. One issue is the spread of infectious diseases. French researchers recently studied over 300 diseases, and found their distribution was mostly linked to climate. As the climate warms, pathogens previously restricted to the tropics are now moving into temperate parts of the world. In the past five years, North America has been invaded by the potentially deadly West Nile virus, while mosquito-borne diseases such as Dengue Fever and Ross River virus are spreading in Australia. It's the same for diseases affecting our crops and herds.

More unusually, as reported in *New Scientist* magazine, this last northern summer has been one of the worst ever for rockfalls in the European Alps. Fifty people have died. Nearly 100 climbers were rescued from the Matterhorn in Switzerland when part of the normal climbing route collapsed. Massive rock formations in the Italian Dolomites have come crashing down. One suggestion, supported by computer modelling and experimentation, is that global warming is thawing the permafrost in temperate zone mountains and destabilising the rock faces—the mountains are literally melting.

The average temperature rise of 0.7 degrees Celsius over the past 25 years has caused a decrease in rice yields of about ten per cent. The reason seems to be that the warming is uneven—the rise in night temperatures being about three times that of day temperatures. This means that rice plants expend more energy at night, leaving less for photosynthesis during the day. Plummeting yields of the world's most widely-eaten crop is not good news.

One impact of climate change is its ability to paralyse the conservative federal governments of the US and Australia. They seem to think that any move away from profligate use of fossil fuels will destroy their economies. Archimedes believes that curbing greenhouse gas emissions is the only way to retain some control of our own destiny, as opposed to becoming mere observers of the planet's most extensive experiment. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.



Oil change

IN THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE, priests and prophets are more chalk and cheese than birds of a feather. Priests are members of the establishment structure. They tend the flock, defend tradition, sustain the life of the community, sort out disputes, punish offenders, and maintain law and order.

Prophets are loners. Or better, they give voice to the alternative imagination of a sub-community within the mainstream. Prophetic speech is critical of the official language of power. Prophetic actions are deliberately out of step with the dominant political and religious arrangements. Both are designed to provoke.

In word and deed, prophets give 'human utterance to holy word', to use a phrase of Walter Brueggemann's. By holy word Brueggemann means a word from God. The prophet's speech does not arise from the endless easy-speak of the palace or temple or marketplace. Its source lies 'beyond' this world. Yet it has a knack of being directed into the heart of the political and economic life of the community. It makes imaginable an alternative social reality against the taken-for-granted world of dominant rule.

For this reason prophets don't make old bones. Or if they do, it is often in uncomfortable circumstances. Those who call the shots are never happy with a voice that presumes to speak a truth beyond their control and against their interests. So the prophet's 'letters and papers' often bear the post mark of prison or exile. Jeremiah and Paul in the ancient world, Bonhoeffer and Mandela in the modern.

Occasionally, prophets move to become priests, and priests move to become prophets. Moses the vagabond prophet became Moses the priest/leader of a nation. Saul the establishment Pharisee went the other way. After his Damascus road encounter, he became Paul the prophetic herald of a breakaway faith. Both actions had radical consequences.

The move of Peter Garrett (no relation) from radical activist to star Labor candidate for the up-and-coming election has the feel of a 'prophet to priest' transformation. For years, Garrett's voice in word and song has come from the edge. He gave powerful utterance to the aspirations of a sub-group within the Australian community—a diverse, scattered, yet identifiable group—concerned with weapons of mass destruction and American bases on Australian soil; with ecological damage and organised greed on a global scale which makes it possible; with the logging of old growth for-

ests and the anguish of refugees. His has been a prophetic vision.

So what does it mean that this outsider's voice now speaks from within mainstream political life? To idealists (Bob Brown for example) it is 'a horrendous disappointment', little short of a sell-out to the enemy. Certainly the taming of a radical and much needed alternative. To realists (now including Garrett himself) it is the sensible way forward. Brilliant lyrics from the sidelines can fire the imagination and stir the heart. But in the long run do they change the world in any lasting way? Struggling for an alternative vision within the confines of the Labor Caucus will no doubt mean compromise for the one-time prophet, and even defeat of long-held beliefs. But it may also mean mainstream Australian politics will be nudged a step or two towards a more just, open and compassionate society. To cynics, the move is nothing but a bare-faced effort to woo the one per cent of swinging left-wing voters in crucial marginal seats for a defeat of the present government. Once this is done, if it is done, it will be back to business as usual. Perhaps there is a grain of truth in all these judgments.

WHATEVER LINE WE TAKE, the Garrett move confronts us with an urgent question: how best can we work for needed social transformation in the present Australian circumstances? Must we choose between Midnight Oil and Caucus Oiler? Yes and no. I think our community has lost something in the Garrett choice. But I acknowledge his move is not without reason.

In the end each of us has to choose whether the prophetic or priestly role is the more important at this moment. For average citizens, at the very least it comes down to our vote when the election finally arrives. Is it better to go for the 'prophetic' Greens or a radical independent, or even vote informal, rather than support the dubious compromises of the major 'priestly' parties? Or following the Garrett move, do we take a calculated risk and throw our lot in with one of the groups that *can* become government in the hope that incremental improvement is better than no improvement at all?

One thing seems clear—to me at least—Australia needs a political oil change. The Garrett move poses a genuine challenge. ■

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Lost in Atlantis



‘COULD YOU TELL ME how to get to Cudgegong, mate?’
He crinkles his already generously lined face and pushes his thick woollen beanie so that it comes down over his forehead almost to his eyes. Behind him, down the embankment, a mob of sheep circles in the yard where he has just penned them. His dog—a scruffy, black and white, bright-eyed bitzer—is sitting at the closed gate of the yard observing our discussion. He looks as if he’s concentrating.

‘Cudgegong?’

I show him ‘Cudgegong’ on the map. I don’t tell him that for the past ten uncertain kilometres, my wife had been wondering with growing conviction whether it wasn’t Rylstone we should be heading for.

‘Yeah, well—if you go a mile or so up the hill here, on your left you’ll see a sort of caravan park. Lotta flowers, painted rails, fancy name—all that sort of shit. Well, a bit further on, you’ll be able to look down on the lake.’ He points to the blue spot on my map. ‘That’s it’, he says. ‘That’s Cudgegong.’

‘But I’m looking for the town, not the lake.’

‘Mate’, he says with a huge and tolerant sigh, ‘the town’s under the lake. Has been these 30 years past. I was born and bred there. But I haven’t got bloody gills, have I? The whole outfit went under the water in—let’s see.’ He’s searching the cold, cloud scuffed sky for the date, but I laugh and thank him. I’ve obviously got the wrong town in my head.

‘I can see it’, I say, ‘couple of pubs, post office, store, even a restaurant—I think.’

‘Cudgegong only ever had one pub’, he says. ‘I oughta know. Bloody nearly had shares in the bastard. I reckon you must mean Rylstone, though I haven’t heard of any bloody restaurants in this part of the world.’ He says this as if ‘restaurant’ is a synonym for a serial killer or an exotic, deadly disease. But anyway, he’s right—and so is my wife. I *did* mean Rylstone and when, following his directions, we finally arrive there, it’s just as I remembered it, with the Cudgegong River flowing through it.

How I came to make this mistake is curious. I knew Rylstone. It wasn’t as if I was struggling to summon up memories of it. I concluded that a lifelong interest in Henry Lawson must have somehow hijacked my imagination. Because, of course, Cudgegong was central to that long ago land of paddocks scarified by drought or pocked and ravaged by hopeful prospectors—among whom Lawson’s father, Peter, was one of the more obsessed—that became Lawson’s imaginative territory.

The merest glance at the map brought up names surrounding the drowned Cudgegong that some of Lawson’s greatest stories and poems have endowed with a special resonance—Wallerawang, Gulgong, Eurunderie, Sofala, Hillend ...

For me, cold, hard map facts, a reasonably good memory and, most surprising of all, the protestations of my wife, had

all been vanquished by the persuasive pressure of the Lawson country unfolding around us. And so we went to Cudgegong. Or rather, we didn’t.

It’s always hard to know what emphasis to place on the past glories, luminaries or tragedies that might endow an otherwise unexceptional place with an aura, with romance or intrigue. In many small Italian and French villages, streets and squares bear some mighty names or memorialise massive events; and sometimes the powerful nomenclature seems to sit awkwardly in a sleepy, dusty rural square or a narrow lane strung with washing. Still, the impulse seems right even if time and context have somewhat diminished the result.

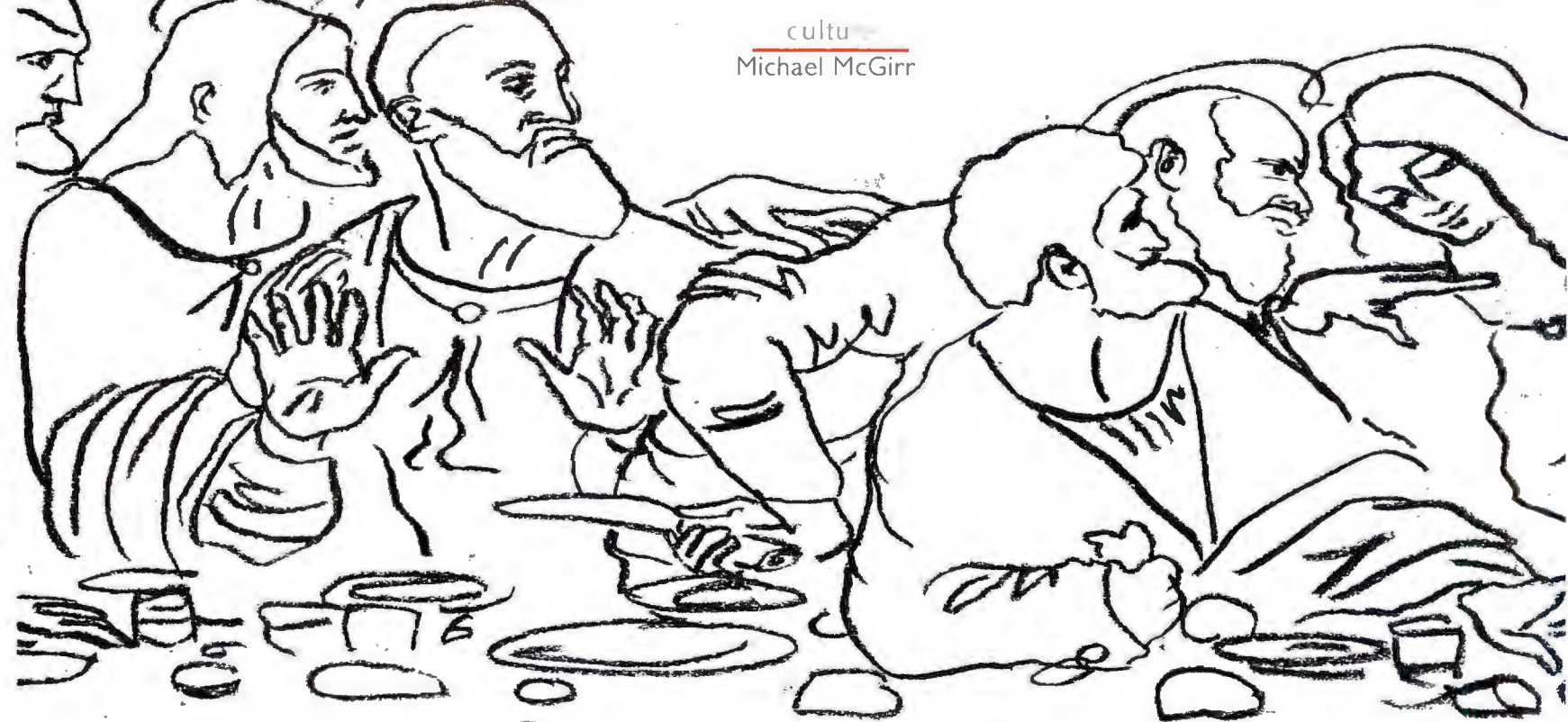
Mudgee has its Lawson Park and Lawson Street and other salutes to the famous writer and his family. And in the Southern Flinders Ranges the beautiful township of Melrose has many streets named after pioneers and explorers. In general, though, most imaginative energy in the Australian inland seems to go into establishing the Big Pineapple or the Big Carp or Big Brahman Bull Testicle (I made that up, but give it time). Or an attractive little town greets you with South Terrace and farewells you with North Terrace and First, Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Streets in between.

WHAT IS INTERESTING about the ‘big’ titles is that they are self-deprecating; it is as if no-one is game to be serious about a small town’s modest but important attributes, history and pioneers. The recourse to compass directions and consecutive numbering is another version of the same denial. It’s a pity, because so many of Australia’s remote towns and settlements are endlessly absorbing, often attractive in some way or other, sometimes breathtaking in their placement, architecture or individuality.

‘Draw a wire fence and a few ragged gums, and add some scattered sheep running away from the train. Then you’ll have the bush all along the New South Wales western line from Bathurst on’, wrote Lawson. He meant this to convey a sense of monotony, and it does. But because it is such a brilliant description, it also captures a kind of essence. It is so right that it makes the hairs stand up on the back of your neck. A bit of imaginative naming, drawing on Aboriginal and white history and stories, would perhaps similarly dramatise, better identify and culturally animate many unpretentious townships strung out across Lawson’s ‘mighty bush’.

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Congratulations to **Brian Matthews** for winning the Best Humorous Article category in the ARPA Awards for ‘Floating flock’ (November, 2003). *ES* also received gongs from the ACPA for Best Feature Story, Front Cover and Layout and Design. Salute!



While Dan Brown and Mel Gibson can draw a crowd, **DAN**
Michael McGirr finds their stories still miss the mark.

IT'S A RARE YEAR when popular culture gets two booster shots of religion. The jabs this year have come from Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ* and Dan Brown's book *The Da Vinci Code*, soon to be a movie directed by Ron Howard. Both works have had the kind of success which is spoken of in millions: copies, viewers, readers and, most of all, dollars.

At first glance, *The Passion of the Christ* and *The Da Vinci Code* are chalk and cheese. Gibson's movie is a work of piety whereas Brown seems to believe that the entire Christian tradition is a fabrication orchestrated to conceal the truth about Jesus. Gibson engages with the story of Jesus from within a conservative part of the church community. Brown, on the other hand, has nothing to prove. Indeed, he has a lot to disprove. Yet for all their differences in terms of church politics, *The Passion of the Christ* and *The Da Vinci Code* are similar in at least one important regard.

There are odd things about Mel's movie. In a scene where Jesus, as a young man, is flirting with his mother, it suggests that Jesus invented the bar stool. The film is also stupidly violent. The most any one of the four gospels gives to the scourging of Jesus is six words. They want you to know that the crucifixion was not a pretty story but they also understand that the most powerful way to depict violence, as to depict sex,

is by showing less rather than more. Mel, however, can't get enough blood. The effect is deadening. Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ*, which so appalled some of the very people who flocked to the Gibson movie that they forced its removal from the National Gallery of Victoria in 1997, was a more poignant and effective portrayal of Christ's degradation.

Yet *The Passion of the Christ* is moving, especially in its portrayal of Jesus' disciples. It is, if anything, less anti-Semitic than scripture. Part of the baggage that Christianity carries is that one of its most beautiful and central texts is also one of its most embarrassing. John's Gospel does not speak disparagingly of 'the Jews in the crowd' or 'some of the Jews'. The villains are 'the Jews'.

Gibson avoids a kind of chardonnay fundamentalism common among articulate Christians. This is the belief that each of the four gospels is a distinct literary work which needs to be kept in solemn isolation from the others. Isolation is the hallmark of fundamentalism as, indeed, it is of post-modernism. Scriptural fundamentalism is a blunt form of post-modernism. At the heart of both is the belief that you can understand a text apart from the historical circumstances which created it and which, in turn, it has shaped. Proponents believe a text does not belong to a human community.

The four gospels may well have originated in different corners of an early Christian community, although those parts related to each other, even if awkwardly. But throughout the development of its understanding of Jesus, the Christian community has read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John together. These four gospels have always been part of one Gospel. They aren't isolates. To complain that Mel Gibson includes in his movie part of Luke's Gospel (such as Jesus' dialogue with the thieves on the cross) along with parts of John's Gospel (such as Jesus entrusting his mother to the disciple he loved) is nuts.

OF COURSE, GIBSON had to make choices. Of the two accounts of the death of Judas (suicide in Matthew and probable murder in Luke, Acts), Gibson chooses the one which, for obvious reasons, is more traditional. Judas' suicide in Matthew, a pre-resurrection story, is a tale of tragedy. Whereas, Luke's implication that Judas was stabbed (Acts 1.18) raises the spectre of a post-resurrection vendetta which would have been hard to accommodate within a tradition which came to embody ideals of healing and forgiveness. Gibson also chooses to include non-scriptural parts of the Christian tradition, such as Veronica wiping the face of Jesus. But all in all, *The Passion of the Christ* reflects the Christian



AND MEL GET RELIGION

belief that Jesus died once, not four times.

Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* also provides food for thought. It is a little difficult to account for the runaway success of this rather ham-fisted thriller. *The Da Vinci Code* uses stock characters, such as a stereotypical eccentric Englishman, Leigh Teabing, and many of the narrative devices of pulp fiction. Much of the plot rests on the fact that a sassy young Frenchwoman would be so horrified by the sight of her grandfather engaging in group sex in the privacy of his own sect that she would refuse to talk to him ever after. An old man having costume sex with his buddies is hardly enough to take western civilisation to the brink.

The Da Vinci Code is based mainly around the idea, by no means new, that Mary Magdalene was married to Jesus, that they had children and that their bloodline has continued in secret unto today. One of the phrases that recurs throughout the book is 'the sacred feminine'. It is this which has drawn people to the book and for good reason.

Brown's readers include many refugees from a male-dominated church which has undermined its own integrity by the way it has written women into the lesser parts of its tradition. Mary Magdalene, disguised as a man, is said to be the 13th disciple in Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. It is her need to disguise as a man which encapsulates the book's real concern. *The Da Vinci Code* is a polemic against boys' own Christianity.

It is around the figure of Mary Magdalene that *The Da Vinci Code* shares ground with *The Passion of the Christ*. In Brown's book, Magdalene is presented as the wife of Jesus, for which there is no evidence in scripture.

In Gibson's movie, she is presented as the woman caught in adultery. There is no evidence for this either. In both cases, Mary Magdalene is identified in terms of her sexual identity. She comes into the story because of who she is sleeping with. This does her little justice.

One of the most unfortunate tendencies in Christianity has been to diminish the significance of those women in the Gospel who are presented as leaders. Take Mary of Bethany who, in Luke's Gospel, is shown sitting at the feet of Jesus, while her sister, Martha, is busy in the kitchen. At one level, the story is about the need for stillness. But to sit at the feet of a teacher is the position of a disciple, of one set to continue the teaching of a master or mistress.

In the story of Lazarus in John's Gospel, Martha proclaims one of the early core statements of the Christian Community: 'I believe that you are the messiah, the son of God ...' (John 11.27). In other words, she is remembered as a teacher and a leader. She has been buried as the woman who knew when to be quiet. In

fact, she was one who knew when to speak.

This is even more true of Mary Magdalene. In the Gospel, she is among the last to witness the death of Jesus and the first to witness the resurrection. Indeed, she is the one who breaks the news about Jesus rising from the dead. In other words, Mary Magdalene is the first to celebrate what Christians now call the paschal mystery.

IN THE CATHOLIC TRADITION, the ongoing celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus is called the Eucharist. In the boys' own version, the Eucharist was instituted in the presence of the 'twelve' at the Last Supper. But this overlooks the obvious consideration that, had Jesus not then died on the cross, we would not have the Eucharist. The paschal mystery was first celebrated by a woman, Mary Magdalene.

When the church disallows women to lead the celebration of the Eucharist, it is at odds with scripture. You won't find that in either *The Passion of the Christ* or *The Da Vinci Code*.

Both Gibson and Brown have other agendas. Unfortunately, so does the Catholic Church. ■

Michael McGirr's *Bypass: The story of a road* is published this month by Picador.

Life in transit

Margaret Coffey looks at the experiences of South Sudanese refugees arriving in Australia

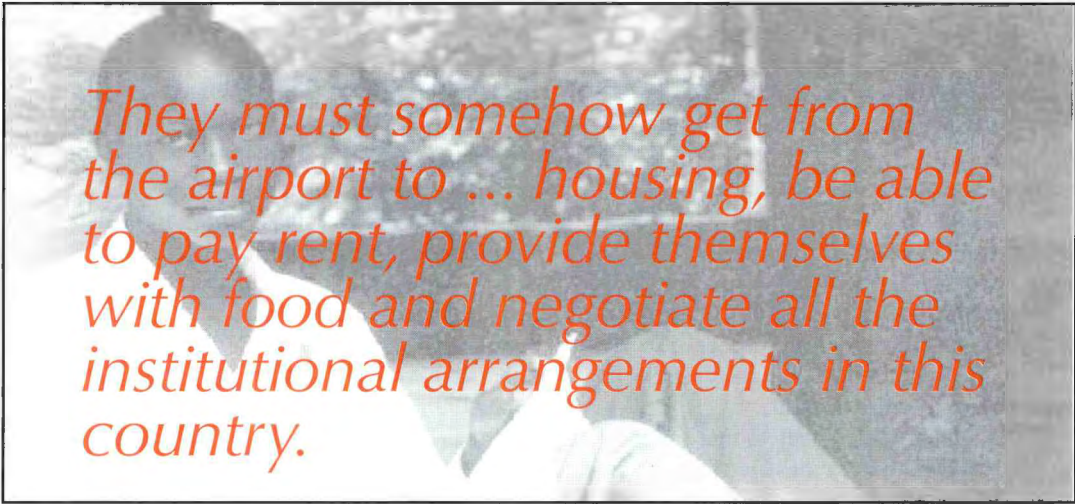
A FEW WEEKS AGO I spent a few early morning hours in Singapore Airport, watching, between nods, a group of African people waiting to board the same flight to Melbourne. There were about 20 of them, including some very small children, a few women, but mostly men, and they were all dressed as if for a formal occasion. They were a striking sight as they waited, standing and silent, before the gate lounge door was unlocked. When I cleared customs in

16 adults and children. Some of the welcoming party were experienced enough to arrive well after the flight had landed, turning up in their borrowed mini-vans just in time to shake hands, hug and kiss children and be part of the video opportunity.

This is a regular scene in a drama invisible to most Australians. The new arrivals are South Sudanese, fleeing not Darfur and the Khartoum-sponsored Janjaweed, but earlier episodes of civil war in the cen-

the delivery of humanitarian aid, the sharing of wealth and power and territory, and freedom of religious and cultural identity, is yet to be signed. If it is, it will deliver six years of an interim peace, before a referendum will decide South Sudan's political future—self-government for the South or some devolved form of incorporation into Sudan. Meanwhile, in refugee camps in Kenya and Uganda, in the cities of Cairo and Nairobi, hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese await some kind of liberation. This year, building on the pattern of the previous year, some 7000 of them will be offered that freedom via an Australian visa and up to 80 per cent of those people will make their way to Melbourne.

At the airport, the welcoming party soon overwhelmed the number of new arrivals. The smaller group of women and children were joining a man who had been in Australia for two months already. He was there, compulsively hugging his small son and tossing him high, in the company of a modest welcoming party who had travelled from the far distant eastern suburbs. These people were Nuer, members of the second largest tribal group in Southern Sudan: a curious fact about the settlement pattern already established is that, in Melbourne, Nuer have gravitated to eastern and southern suburbs such as Dandenong and Noble Park while Dinka tend to move out west, settling predominantly in and around Footscray. The conventional pattern of chain migration to Australia is at work, translated from the Greek island or Italian village template to tribal groupings. The Dinka is the largest black tribe in Sudan, related to the Nuer and to another tribe called the Shilluk, in a group defined as the Nilotic tribes. There are Shilluk too in Melbourne, a long way from the River Nile. There are also representatives of tribes from the far south of Sudan, and from the west.



They must somehow get from the airport to ... housing, be able to pay rent, provide themselves with food and negotiate all the institutional arrangements in this country.

Melbourne, they were still in the immigration queue, but in the arrivals terminal there was a small knot of fellow Africans waiting to meet them.

A week or so later I was back at the airport, and again there were those familiar Africans, all waiting for the same Singapore Airlines flight number. The arrivals terminal has its own rhythm: the early desultory pulses of the automatic door, then the great disgorge, and finally, as the crowd wilts away, the trickle of presumably more complicated arrivals. This evening, the latter were the people the Africans were there to meet: one small group of six or so women and children, one larger group of

trials and eastern parts of southern Sudan. Along with barrels of oil, Sudan has been producing refugees more or less continuously since independence in 1956. We hear now that war has displaced a million people in Darfur; but further to the east, in the 20 years prior to Darfur erupting into our consciousness, at least two million people died and more than four million were made homeless. There is an uneasy peace in this region, reached through talks that began in June 2002 and which have continued in stages until the present. These current months are a crucial moment in the difficult negotiation process. A comprehensive peace agreement guaranteeing security,

The smaller the tribal group, the more difficult it is to replicate the tribal structures and relationships that custom would expect to govern community life. The Dinka welcoming party reflected the extraordinary communal achievement represented in the arrival of these 16 people.

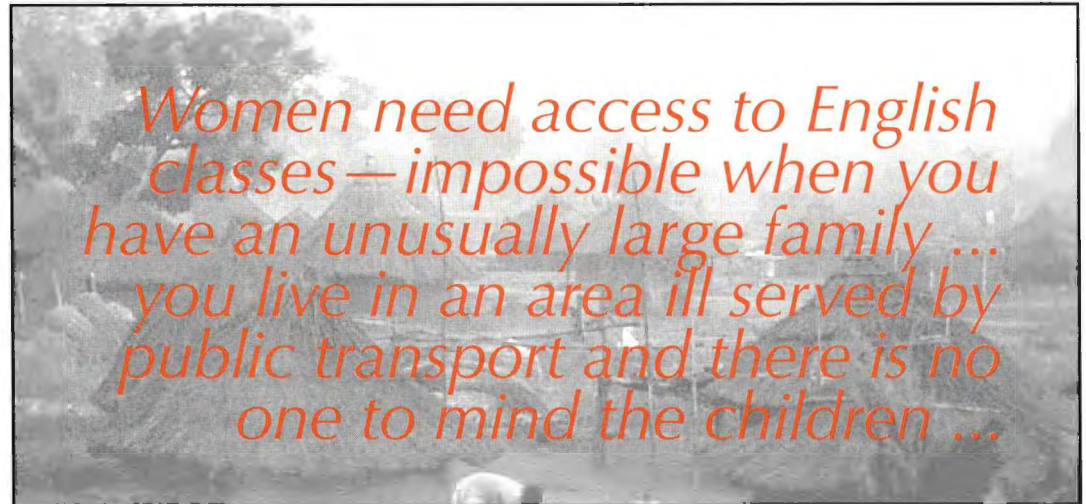
THEY HAD BORROWED a mini bus from a Catholic parish, another bus from the local Council, and they added an assortment of station wagons and cars. In convoy they carried the 16 'urban refugees' from Cairo back to a small house in the inner west. Under a shelter out the back 50 or so men sat around long tables. The women gathered inside, around a heater, or prepared food. The children lodged in a front room or played outside in the dark. This was the Dinka Jieng Council and the Catholic president made the first welcoming speech. A woman came out of main part of the house: she was a preacher, a mother of eight children, and in her two months in Australia was already recognised as a leader by the community and inserted actively in the local Anglican parish. She sang a prayer with the men accompanying her, before she joined the men at the table. Another man, a clergyman in the Uniting Church, took over. He spoke in his own language and in English, exhorting the gathering to unity and to mutual aid. A male from each of the three families among the 16 arrivals was invited to speak and was proudly applauded. It was important, the president and the clergyman said, that they hear from a representative woman. An older woman came out: she was the first Dinka in Melbourne, she said. She spoke in her language, echoing the words of the clergyman. Then the preacher woman led them in hymn again. Drinks were handed around and the food was brought out. The party went on until two o'clock in the morning.

The South Sudanese are coming to Australia under this country's refugee and humanitarian visa program. Almost all of them come in the Special Humanitarian 202 Visa category, which provides them with a visa but until now has obliged them to meet all the costs of taking it up. They may be languishing in a refugee camp, or be unemployed urban refugees in Cairo, but they have had to somehow pay the costs of a compulsory medical examination. They must pay airfares, equip themselves for travel, and anticipate housing on their

arrival in Australia. They must somehow get from the airport to this housing, be able to pay rent, provide themselves with food and negotiate all the institutional arrangements in this country. These include applying for a tax file number so that a month after their arrival they can become eligible for Centrelink payments.

This is an impossible burden of course and in practice the sponsor or proposer required before a 202 Visa can be issued has

stopped with the granting of the visa. However, the Minister for Immigration, Senator Amanda Vanstone, announced in June that there would be budget provision for the payment of medical examination costs for all Humanitarian Visa recipients and for the funding of an interest free loan scheme to cover travel costs. The South Sudanese are looking forward to seeing the fruit of this promise. Meanwhile, they are also trying to address problems of set-



assumed most of it. Or tried to. The Federal Department of Immigration's Africa Newsletter warned earlier this year that some proposers were 'failing to fulfil their financial responsibilities' and that as a result people who were hoping to find a better life in Australia would be affected 'in a very dramatic way'. Not only must a proposer find the appropriate money, but also he or she must provide it within a strict time limit. If the money is not forthcoming within the relevant time frame, the visa is cancelled.

CHAIN MIGRATION South Sudanese style is building a community of proposers who are trying to organise themselves to meet the demand. The pressure is enormous. Most adults in this community are unemployed, few have been here more than mere months, a privileged minority speak English, they have emerged from catastrophic conditions and all of them face complex and challenging cultural issues. Ask any of the South Sudanese and they will explain their energy against these odds by saying that they know what it is like in the camps.

Until now, the Government's engagement in the fate of its 202 Visa recipients

tlement. They are working out how to translate and adapt tribal identities and relationships to an Australian environment. It is an extraordinarily difficult task. Women need access to English classes—impossible when you have an unusually large family by Australian standards, you live in an area ill served by public transport and there is no one to mind the children. Children with little or no experience of school need one-to-one support while they negotiate the English language and the classroom, adolescents need support—and so do their families—while they try to balance the traditional ways with the freedom proffered to them in Australia. Men and women need work, urgently.

The airport scene will be repeated many times over during the next year and more. Sometimes there will be several trips to and fro because no one could lend a minivan. Slowly, Melbourne and Australia will awake to this new chapter in our history of immigration. ■

Margaret Coffey makes programs for Encounter, ABC Radio National. There will be a program on the South Sudanese community in November.

Irreconcilable differences?

'Hong Kong's people need no bird cage designed by the central authorities. We are masters of our own fate.'

—Letter from the Hong Kong Christian Institute.

HONG KONG'S VICTORIA PARK separates the city's busiest shopping district from North Point, a suburb of decaying apartment blocks, rapidly constructed to house refugees fleeing the mainland post-war. Here, open-air markets—illuminated by red lanterns—sell shoes alongside racks of seafood and pyramids of vegetables. On Sundays, the birdsong chatter of 'domestic helpers' fills the air. Women crouch on the ground, not unlike me, as I wait inside the park for this year's pro-democracy march to begin.

According to *The New York Times*, Hong Kong is riding out a 'politically turbulent summer'. Half a million people took to the streets on 1 July, demanding democracy in Hong Kong and, for the first time, on the mainland. Less than a month earlier, a record number commemorated the 15th anniversary of the massacre at Tiananmen Square. More than 80,000 people, carrying black banners and a coffin, called on Beijing to 'vindi-

would have its own democratic government.

But according to writer Kwok Nai-wang, things are now worse than when under the colonial system. 'Over the past 50 years, but especially after the riots in Hong Kong in 1967, the British style and substance of government was extended to Hong Kong.' Now, Beijing's authoritarian style, paired with the untrammelled sway of local tycoons, is putting all that at risk.

Hong Kong's political system is far from democratic. An 800-member committee of prominent citizens—many with mainland economic ties—chooses the territory's leader, the Chief Executive. Only half of Hong Kong's parliamentary representatives are directly elected. Conservative trade groups, pro-Beijing bankers and property barons select the rest. But, as Time reports, even this quasi-democratic system of government has become 'sidelined by Beijing, on everything from residency rights to political reform'.



cate' the memory of the students who died.

Later that afternoon, I stopped to talk to some teenage marshals, distributing fans to the people slowly making their way towards parliament. One of the marshals said, with unrestrained glee, that the crowd already numbered 250,000. 'Thanks for being here', he said. 'This is part of Hong Kong history today.'

What these protests will mean in terms of Hong Kong's future is unclear, but there is a definite buzz in the territory that reflects the emergence of a new, more politicised, civic culture. 'For decades the conventional wisdom was that Hong Kong was almost a commercial city—the politics could be left to Taiwan, thanks', says *Newsweek*. In today's Hong Kong, such stereotypes are under attack as a new breed of activists fight to make their demands heard.

When the last British governor, Chris Patten sailed off into the sunset with Prince Charles after 150 years of colonial rule, it was generally understood that within a decade Hong Kong

Such interference has not escaped international criticism. In June, two US reports slammed Beijing's 'intrusive interventions with regard to universal suffrage and direct elections'. And the British Foreign Office recently accused Beijing's central government of interfering in Hong Kong's domestic politics, in a way that undermined self-governance guarantees.

Three days before the march, the rally's organisers—a coalition of more than 50 non-government organisations, called the Civil Human Rights Front—held a press conference. Fronting the media was Rose Wu. Highly articulate, with a greying bob, and a slight American accent gleaned from her time spent studying theology in Boston, Wu is one of the Front's best-known faces.

'**A**S A STUDENT I was quite narrow-minded', Wu says later in her small office at the Hong Kong Christian Institute. Wu's political education mirrors Hong Kong's own. It was work in one of Hong Kong's poorest areas, Shek Kip Mei, she says that

triggered her awareness.

'Through pre-school education, I did a lot of home visits and they', she pauses, 'opened up my eyes, to how people lived and I was touched, and moved by my minister, who was dedicated to changing society and thinking about what it meant to serve God. That was my first encounter with what politics means.'

In the 1980s, Wu joined the People's Patriotic Movement, but found the dissident movement an overwhelmingly male affair. 'I was actively involved in two things; the women's movement, especially feminist theology, and the democratic movement in Hong Kong. But I found the two did not reconcile very well. The democratic movement at that time was led by males and their understanding of democracy is very narrow. For them democracy means "one person, one vote"—universal suffrage—they don't touch on issues relating to poverty, or discrimination.'

It is for this reason, she says that the Civil Human Rights Front includes Hong Kong's most marginalised residents: sex workers, immigrants, the elderly and disabled. 'We have to have a social dialogue, a platform, so people can strengthen the civil society, by entering a genuine dialogue and people can become active together', says Wu.

'In the past, the democratic movement was like a slogan, but for us it's a platform. The Civil Human Rights Front is a platform where we invite the people of Hong Kong to come together to talk about the future.

'It's not just about the Chinese and this, to me, is deliberate', Rose Wu says emphatically. 'We want to create a move-

trade unionists suggested using 'positive' slogans like 'We love Hong Kong' instead. Even the pre-eminent campaigner, Martin Lee said that despite Hong Kong wanting democracy, it did not mean 'we and Beijing should be like fire and water'.

Hong Kong's new reliance on the mainland's economic largesse also motivated the debate. Between 1991–1997, Hong Kong's economy grew at an annual rate of 5.1 per cent, but has recently struggled to manage half that. This means Hong Kong's previously impervious citizens feel jittery, especially when mainland centres across the border are booming.

However, the irony of the purportedly free Hong Kong bending to accommodate Beijing sensitivities was not lost on Amnesty International's Bella Luk Po-chu. 'People have the right to express themselves. If that's what they want to ask for, they can freely do so', she said. But in a climate of increasing media self-censorship, Luk says human rights, such a freedom of expression, appear to be increasingly under threat.

AT THE JULY RALLY, protesters wore a T-shirt with the faces of two prominent radio shock-jocks, Albert Cheng King-hon and Raymond Wong Yuk-man, with the words: 'Please come back.' The men resigned, after what they say was a campaign of intimidation. Their successor, Allen Lee Pang-fei also quit after three weeks. 'As long as I keep my mouth shut and don't talk to you, I'm safe', Cheng

What these protests will mean in terms of Hong Kong's future is unclear, but there is a definite buzz in the territory that reflects the emergence of a new, more politicised, civic culture.



ment that reflects an idea of inclusiveness.'

In the weeks leading up to the July demonstration, six words were on everybody's lips. The complex diplomatic ballet over this slogan deemed 'sensitive' to Beijing, illustrates Hong Kong's relationship with the mainland. The slogan, 'Return the power to the people.'

When some of Hong Kong's pro-democracy campaigners supported dropping the slogan, I approached the Shiu Sin-por executive director of the pro-Beijing think tank, the One Country, Two Systems Institute to find out why. 'The Central Government is sensitive about this because in the cultural revolution the slogan was used by leftists trying to seize control of the government', Shiu says, before adding as an aside. 'Ultimately, some marchers will use it, some won't.'

Prior to the rally, much TV time was devoted to slogan-related debates. In one program, the pro-Beijing politician, Tsang Yok-sing asked: 'Why not respect their (the mainland authorities') feelings?' A few pro-democracy politicians and

told *The New York Times*.

According to Lee, a former mainland official rang him asking to talk about his show. During the late-night conversation, the caller said that Lee's wife was very virtuous and his daughter beautiful—comments Lee interpreted as threats.

The leader of pro-democracy group, The Frontier, Emily Lau describes the mood in Hong Kong at present as 'quite tense'. Over the past year, Lau's office has been attacked. Days before the rally, seven posters outside her office calling on people to join the rally were burned, while 'Chinese traitors must die' was scrawled on the walls.

Amnesty International's Bella Luk says the departure of the radio talk-back hosts has been a massive blow: 'We aren't just talking about the person himself talking freely. These programs also give the opportunity to the public to phone in and

use the atmosphere to share opinions. If these hosts are gone, this public opinion also has nowhere to go.'

By day's end at the rally, more than 600 people will have been treated for heat exhaustion. Sometimes I, too, have to escape into the parallel universe of shoppers' paradises, filled with luxury brands that line the route.

It is inside the air-conditioned comfort, that you



find representatives of another Hong Kong. Couples, families, old people enjoying their holiday—a day that marks the return to China seven years ago, but also the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party decades earlier. Venturing outside again, as the humidity closes in, I recall a conversation I had with some young people a few nights ago.

SITTING IN AN OPEN-AIR BAR, it is after midnight but still hot and humid and this group of friends in their early 30s describe last year's July rally as a 'miracle'. Not only did it force the resignation of inept politicians, but also the shelving of a Beijing-sponsored anti-secession law that many feared would destroy basic human rights, such as freedom of speech and assembly, in the territory.

Soon after the rally, the group set up a street-

theatre troupe called A-generation. Pong Yat-ming explains its rationale: 'We do "play-back" interactive theatre, spontaneous theatre. It's a people's theatre. We invite the audience to tell us their personal stories and we enact them.' The group performs on the street, in offices, in prisons.

During this year's rally, the group altered Cantopop love songs and acted out kids' games, while urg-

ing the crowd to join in. Their crazy antics and high-energy performance had a dramatic effect on the passing crowd; people laughed, clapped, or stared in disbelief at something that had rarely been seen on the streets of conformist Hong Kong. According to Pong Yat-ming this is the very point of their performance.

'In Hong Kong, people are notorious for being passive. We don't say anything. It's because of our schools and their enormous class sizes. We just listen and the teachers also do not encourage us to speak, because they cannot control us. We are trained to be passive, so this theatre is a way of encouraging people to speak, so that next time an injustice happens they will say something; they will stand up.'

Madeleine Byrne is a former SBS journalist whose work has been published locally and overseas.



One cat, burned also

HER NAME WAS VIKKI. She was 54-years-old. She lived alone in a little place three houses down. Her house was so reticent and mossy and shouldered by brooding fir and cedar trees that you never noticed it from the street. She had two cats. She never married. Had no children. One brother who lived far away. Parents deceased. Was a bookkeeper in a factory but when the factory closed she lost her job and never got another and never really came out of her house again.

We neighbours were discreet or cold or ignorant or distracted or busy or shy or polite or whatever word fits the naked fact that we didn't know her or talk to her or particularly care or notice anything more than the fact her recycling bin was filled every week with wine bottles. Kids in the neighbourhood skipped her house when they went door-to-door for Halloween candy or selling cookies or magazines to raise money for school.

Then a week ago her house burned to the ground with her inside. The flames rose 20 feet high and the long fingers of the brooding trees caught fire too. Fire fighters sprinted and shouted and ambulances and fire engines and cop cars roared up and down the street and children wept and the adjacent houses were evacuated. The young woman in the house next to ours ran by me weeping with her two chil-

dren cradled in her arms like footballs. A young police officer came to my door and I woke my children and they packed their backpacks and I packed a box of photographs and passports and important papers ... but then, the young police officer came by again and said the fire was under control though the house was a total loss.

The young woman next door and her two children called and said they would stay the night at her mother's and could I feed the dog?

The next day, I talked to the fire marshal who said they found Vikki's body in her bed.

She had a real good chance to get out but she didn't move, he said. One cat burned to death also. The fire probably started from a cigarette butt in the trash. We found a lot of cigarette butts in and around the house.

The roof fell in finally. I can't figure

out why the cat didn't leave. Or why Vikki didn't leave. Her bedroom was between the front door and the back door and there would have been so much smoke she must have awakened and had a good chance to get out. But she didn't move. The cat was in the bed also.

I told him the other cat had come by our house that morning and my youngest son gave it a cup of milk. He used my favourite coffee cup, which I was ready to roar at him for. But he washed the cup out carefully himself, and the way he looked at me when he handed me the cup was the coolest, wildest prayer I have heard in a year, so I didn't say anything, for once, which was a good prayer too. ■

Brian Doyle is the editor of *Portland* magazine at the University of Portland in Oregon, and the author of *Leaping*, a collection of essays.





the region:2
Dawn Delaney

Echoes of war

Dawn Delaney examines the unwelcome legacy of violence against women following the conflict in East Timor.

SOFIA FERNANDES, 19, Eva Quintao, 22, and Umbelina Soares are the new faces of law and order in Timor Leste. All are graduates from the National Police Academy in Dili and are among the first policewomen to walk the beat in a nation whose collective memory of the Indonesian military is painful and prolonged.

In the past, sexual violence against women was endemic so these new recruits are keen to change the perception of the police as corrupt and brutal. Sofia and Eva want to work in the Vulnerable Persons Unit, a special section of the police force established by the UNTAET administration (United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor) to deal with crimes of violence against women and the particular needs of children and the mentally ill.

The sexual abuses perpetrated during the long, dark years of occupation have been well documented by human rights organisations. Women had a saying 'you might violate my body but you can never touch my mind'. By 'dividing' themselves in two, between heart and mind, they were able to survive unspeakable cruelties. What has been less discussed in mainstream media since independence is the pattern of increased gender-based violence that blights many post-war transitional societies. In this respect, East Timor has much in common with other recovering conflict zones including Kosovo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and in the past Eritrea, Cambodia and Vietnam.

The danger from militia may have passed but women are still dealing with violence from within their own communities.

The United Nations states that 'violence against women is the most pervasive yet least recognised human rights violation in the world'. According to many Timorese women's advocacy groups and United Nations bodies operating in the country, the alarming increase in domestic violence, rape and sexual assault against women since 1999 is a major impediment to the rebuilding and healing process.

Around 47 per cent of all reported crimes across the nation are gender-based and over half of all cases before the Dili District Court are related to domestic violence. Aid agencies say that another 15 per cent go unreported through ignorance of the law, the fear of alienation from family, friends and the local community, and the fear of further violence.

These are sensitive, difficult topics to broach in any community but in Timor Leste, discussion of such issues is hampered by cultural taboos around sexuality, religion, and patriarchal beliefs about women's roles in Timorese society.

POST-WAR GENDER-RELATED violence occurs for many reasons. Contributing factors include: post-traumatic stress disorders and untreated mental health problems within families and communities, and a reluctance by men to admit to psychological distress.

Many women are also unaware of their legal rights. Socially, there is high unemployment and many relationships have been disrupted through the loss of loved ones, homes and possessions, all of which impacts community, church and family relationships.

The negative influence on men and boys living in an oppressive militaristic environment for 24 years combined with patriarchal attitudes and a tolerance of wife beating have fostered a 'normalisation' of violence.

The true figures for the number of women violated during the occupation will never be known but the impact of such assaults on women is evident in ongoing health problems including HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and recurring reproductive problems—not to mention the emotional and psychological effects of such corrosive experiences.

Rape carries a terrible stigma in Timorese society. Rape not only brings shame upon the victim but also upon her family. Women who were violated during the militia campaigns of terror in 1999 and who subsequently gave birth to 'rape babies' were often shunned by their communities. This is devastating in a culture in which families are bound together through complex marriage ties and compounds the despair and isolation of already traumatised women. Many rape victims believe that not only have they transgressed against God but they will no longer attract a husband because their honour and reputation has been ruined.

FOKUPERS, (a Bahasa word meaning communication forum for women) is a leading women's advocacy group and has done much towards dispelling the myths around sexual crimes and domestic violence. They offer counselling services to women and undertake education and awareness raising using community radio, theatre and group mediation workshops across the country. Programs are designed around the fact that 64 per cent of women and 57 per cent of men are illiterate, so written material is only appropriate to a small section of the community. Fokupers work in conjunction with several foreign and local NGOs to teach women about their rights and the legal avenues available to them. It also liaises with the Vulnerable Person's Unit.

Manuela Perreira, Fokupers Executive Director says, 'Before, we didn't give attention to this matter. During occupation people just concentrated on getting independence. They think domestic violence is a private individual problem but it's a public problem. Awareness by women about their rights is very low so we try to educate through radio. It takes time, especially the girl whose parents don't want other people to know about the rape. They don't see the importance [of heal[ing] the daughter only that they don't feel shame.'

The Alola Foundation, started by First Lady Kirsty Sword Gusmão, has expanded since its inception in 2001 when it focused on the issue of sexual violence against Timorese women in the West Timor refugee camps. It now encompasses domestic violence education, mother and baby health, a scholarship program for girls, tais weaving and other micro credit initiatives and Timor Leste's first Women's Resource Centre in Dili. It works directly with Fokupers and Rede Feto, an umbrella organisation of diverse women's groups to implement positive changes for women and their families.

Young Timorese men have been active in changing entrenched patriarchal attitudes. In 2003 a group of young

activists started the first Association of Men Against Violence, which has now expanded into three such collectives. They are the only male group members of Rede Feto and collaborate with women to develop culturally appropriate strategies. Local tradition dictates that only men may act as the heads of hamlets and villages and dispense justice. And customary law dictates that women cannot own or inherit property. It is believed at least 45 per cent of women are widowed as a consequence of the long years of armed struggle and are particularly vulnerable to sexual and economic exploitation. Changing the attitudes of men about the rights of women is therefore a vital part of the justice process.

Attempts have been made to strengthen women's legal entitlements through Domestic Violence Draft Legislation but many feel it is simply symbolic, as tolerance of wife beating is just as endemic within the judicial system as it is amongst the educated elite. Sentences for domestic violence can range from two to six months and have a limited deterrent effect. When a husband, convicted of wife beating, returns to the community, the wife is often left to face the consequences. Women are par-

Many rape victims believe that not only have they transgressed against God but they will no longer attract a husband because their honour and reputation has been ruined.





"When I was a child I was taught about Jesus, and I asked where He lived. 'Above the clouds,' was the reply. 'Well, I wish He'd stick His hand through and wave to me sometimes,' I said. You see, I was asking questions even then!"

*Singer and children's entertainer
Franciscus Henri*

"As the only Anglican bishop to have publicly endorsed the Australian Government's case for war, I now concede that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction (WMD)."

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ticularly vulnerable when it comes to the resolution of gender specific crimes using local customary laws called 'adat'. The common way to resolve criminal and civil disputes is for the Lian Nain (family mediator), Chef de Aldeia (hamlet head) or Chef du Suco (village head) to call the families of both the victim and perpetrator together to discuss the transgression. A common 'fine' for rape is for the perpetrator to pay with buffalo and perhaps a cash sum agreed by both parties. No consideration is given to the physical, emotional or psychological trauma of the victim and her public shame. Provision is rarely made for the upkeep of a child if she gives birth as a result of the violation.

MANY WOMEN DO GO TO THE LOCAL POLICE but are often dealt with in a less than sensitive way. The members of Timor's police are subject to their own upbringing and cultural beliefs regarding the carefully prescribed roles of males and females. The law demands such crimes be dealt with by the already overloaded court system in Dili. Women who report abuse are often caught in a cycle of deferred responsibility as local police send them back and forth through traditional channels.

For those persistent enough to lay charges it often means seeking refuge in one of only a handful of safe houses in the country. Dili has just one and it has been struggling to survive through lack of funds.

It is the strong voice of women bound by the bitter experiences of oppression and struggle who are determined that their newly-won freedom should benefit everyone. The optimism of Sofia, Eva and Umbelina is encouraging, but gaining overdue recognition for women's role in the clandestine movement and being accorded their full rights as contributing citizens to the world's newest democracy is still a battle they must fight.

Dawn Delaney is a freelance photojournalist. She has published a photo documentary *Surviving the Occupation—Stories of East Timorese Women*.



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A long way to go

Jane Carolan speaks with doyen feminist and political activist Anne Summers.

VETERAN POLLSTER Rod Cameron recently claimed that he hadn't heard of 'women's policies' or 'women's issues' for years. It's irrelevant now. Cameron contends that there is such a convergence going on that there are no 'women's issues'. Anne Summers takes a less sanguine view. For 30 years she has made women's issues her issues and shows no signs of flagging. She first came to prominence in 1975 with her history of women in Australia, *Damned Whores and God's Police*. In the preface to the 2002 edition she wrote that the collective story of women was still not sufficiently integrated into the national story to be assured of being automatically passed on. The issues are becoming submerged rather than converged. In her recent work *End of Equality* she outlines unequivocally how women are still battling for recognition, for equal pay, for promotion in the workplace and for the right to return to work after they have children. Her study is an extraordinary synthesis, bringing together a critical analysis of the impact of legislation and funding on the quality of women's lives over the last two decades.

A reading of her 1975 autobiography *Ducks on the Pond* underscores Summers' disturbingly honest approach and her readiness to confront personal issues. Almost 30 years later her responses, although gentle, are no less biting. Helen Garner's novel *The First Stone* and the controversy surrounding it revealed that all was not well for women's rights during the mid 90s. Summers observes that few are prepared to write in a similar vein. Although formal discrimination is a thing of the past (the Sex Discrimination Act is now 20 years old) and it is taken for granted that women can do anything—enter the armed forces, work in stevedoring or become motor mechanics—complacency has crept in. Politically, women's claims are treated as another interest group; funding is piecemeal and sectional.

Women make up 52 per cent of the population, yet are underrepresented in senior management, are clustered in the caring professions and frequently work in the lower paid or casual industries. There no longer exists a federal women's office to oversee all Cabinet papers—only those which are gender specific. Yet Summers argues that every Cabinet paper should have a woman's perspective. But the malaise is deeper

than this. For the last three elections women's issues have not been highlighted by either party. Beazley released a paper on women's policy just two days before the last election. He promised, *inter alia*, to remove the GST on tampons. The resulting discussion belittled rather than enhanced the debate.

Summers says she is pleasantly surprised and heartened at the recent announcement by Mark Latham of a new women's policy. *Choice and Opportunity: Labor's better deal for Australian women* represents a landmark in ALP policy. Latham's five pillars addressed women's disadvantages but brought men into the solutions. Summers considers the inclu-



... it is taken for granted that women can do anything—enter the armed forces, work in stevedoring or become motor mechanics ...

sion of men in this policy as unprecedented in an Australian political leader. Here is a genuine political will to effect change for women. But she feels that there are still a great many 'ifs'. Launching a policy before the election campaign is a risky strategy unless it is revisited often and the message communicated to those women in marginal seats. And then, of course, there are the speculative aspects; 'if' Labor wins and 'if' they follow through on their promises.

THE VITAL ISSUES FOR WOMEN remain unresolved for Anne Summers. At the top of her list are the statutory provision of paid maternity leave, the availability of affordable childcare and the prevalence of violence against women. She cites Aus-

tralia as one of the only countries in the world where women in the paid workforce do not automatically receive paid maternity leave. Why has this issue fallen from the agendas of both political parties? Those in government positions already receive paid leave and about a third of those in permanent employment in larger corporations are similarly benefited. But the casual, part-time, lower-income earners—the most vulnerable group—do not. Summers considers that paid leave would reinforce a woman's attachment to the workforce as well as economically enhance her position. The setting of a target date to re-enter the workforce would lower the attrition rate of women in the workforce and ensure that their vital skills are not lost.

But for Summers the question of the provision of adequate childcare is more complex. She is attracted to the idea of tax

For Summers the recent Federal Government campaign against domestic violence has missed the mark. The tag line 'Violence against women: Australia says no' is hollow. Where are the preventative measures? The campaign appears to focus on a female's crisis response to physical and sexual violence, areas that the community already understands. This is a narrow view of violence against women. Abuse can manifest itself in emotional, psychological, financial and spiritual terms and these can be equally damaging. Television and magazine advertising, a booklet and a helpline are not enough. Welfare agencies need to be resourced to help those who come forward. The campaign is heavy on glossy images and light on actual help. Without additional funding for service providers, sadly, in many cases, saying 'no' might be a women's only response.



Abuse can manifest itself in emotional, psychological, financial and spiritual terms and these can be equally damaging. Television and magazine advertising, a booklet and a helpline are not enough.

cuts for those paying for nannies, currently being trialled in Great Britain. Yet Summers admits that those of her acquaintance who employ nannies are in the higher income bracket. Howard's Work and Family Taskforce came up with the 'baby bonus', a lump sum to help defray the cost of childbirth, and Labor has upped the ante. Presumably these payments are to enable women to cover the costs of extra vaccines not on the free list, such as chicken pox, or just being able to keep up with the nappies. Since the inception of the 'baby bonus' Harvey Norman has reported an increase in sales of flat screen televisions. Perhaps these lump sums could be converted into coupons for play groups or crèche places?

The paucity of crèche places and their prohibitive cost has made a mockery of the reality of women's ability to return to work. Yet economic pressures for women often make that return a necessity, not a luxury. Childcarers, predominantly females, have become the new underclass. I suggested that families are passing childcare down to another poorly-paid group of women in home care and crèches. One in five pre-schoolers is looked after by grandparents, mostly unpaid. These are older women who often have less investment in superannuation due to their own interrupted working lives. Should this group be eligible for tax relief? Summers replied that while travel, uniforms, sunscreen and conferences are tax deductible childcare is not. Childcare should be seen as a direct provision of services rather than a welfare issue.

In *The End of Equality* Summers wrote 'Women's refuges have now become an accepted part of the social landscape. This is something of a mixed blessing. It is obviously necessary and desirable that women have somewhere to go to escape violence but this should only ever be a short-term, emergency response'.

There is some light at the end of the tunnel. Summers has long been an admirer of Victoria's Chief Police Commissioner, Christine Nixon, for her courage in making workplace reforms. Nixon first became involved with violence against women as a young constable in Sydney where, like most police, she attended far too many reports of violence. Some of the policewomen with whom she worked were themselves victims of violence and that realisation had a major impact on her. During Nixon's first year in the Victoria police force there were over 20,000 cases of violence against women reported in the Melbourne metropolitan area alone. She perceived that her staff needed to become 'social leaders' by joining into partnerships with welfare agencies and local practitioners so that victims could be confident that their reports would be acted upon.

CHRISTINE NIXON APPOINTED a task force to review all matters relating to violence against women and to suggest future directions in policing. Their report *Violence Against Women, A Way Forward* defined the issues and provided a base from which tasks could be tackled, mechanisms established and relationships built to improve the attitudes and policies of the police. Summers recognises there is still much work to be done but feels that the additional training, improved data collection and increased accountability of the Victorian police working in this area is a model that other states could emulate. That there are only a handful of women in comparable positions to Christine Nixon does not indicate that only a few are capable, rather that the achievements and capabilities of so many others in this field are not widely known or properly considered. ■

Jane Mayo Carolan is a Melbourne historian.

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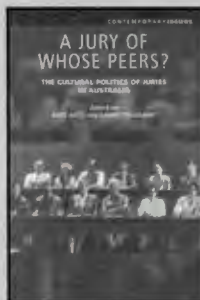
By Richard Lunn

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poetry:2
John Kinsella

Johnny Winter Love Poem
for Tracy

A bit of there is stuck in me here:
a jag of wire, hopping mice plunging
into the grass swirl about the base
of an acacia: the t-bar where gravel

meets bitumen and takes us anywhere.
It's a lever for dust days out of summer
and a night folding between house
and mountain. Don't worry if it's

called a hill by the citizens
of semi-distant towns: its field
of influence is to do with more
than the marrow-altering charge

of antennae and dishes, the airforce
getting their shotgun-alley thrills,
white gums prayers gripping with fright.
It's more than this, it's you there

between the fences, and the aloneness
of birds among the stresses: those little
Johnny Winters, filling space outside
the windows: particle accelerators,

this air that'll support their weight.

John Kinsella



Afghanistan's scars

Dr Nouria Salehi's hands are scarred with multiple burn marks. They were not inflicted through torture, but acquired while working in the kitchen of the Afghan Gallery restaurant in Fitzroy, Melbourne.

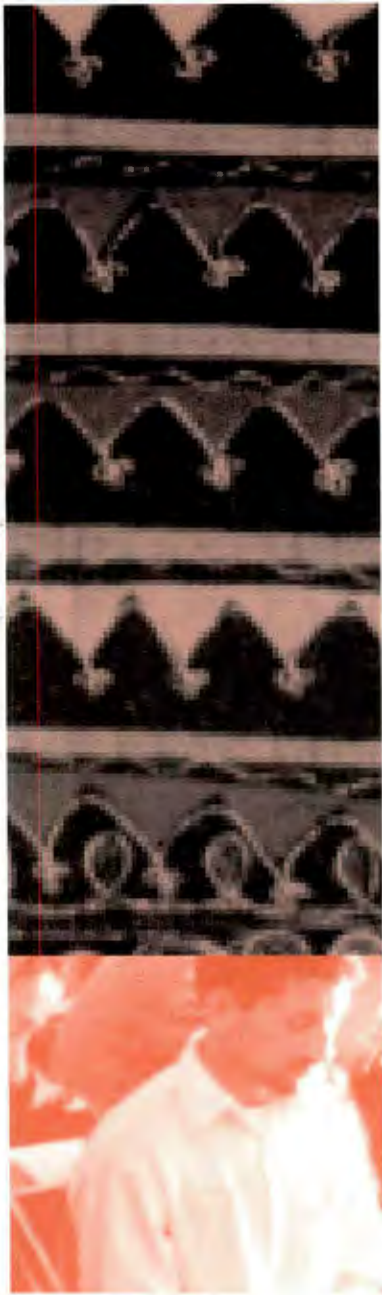
WORKING FULL TIME as a nuclear physicist in Australia, Dr Salehi did not expect to find herself working a second job in the restaurant kitchen. Nevertheless, the scars serve as an ironic reminder that many Afghan women live out their suffering in the domestic setting, struggling to have their human rights recognised.

The restaurant was established to provide work for Afghan refugees. It was nearly ten years before the restaurant was stable enough for Salehi to move on to other work, a far cry from the originally estimated three. Yet over 20 years later Dr Salehi's attention is still directed at women in the domestic sphere in Afghanistan. Salehi plans to build a women's health and vocation centre in Shamoli, north of Kabul. The centre will address some of the main issues that effect women—health and education.

Afghan women will vote for the first time since the fall of the Taliban in the upcoming October presidential elections. Their participation has been shadowed by intimidation and violence, the most horrific example of which was a bomb planted on a bus carrying female election workers. Two women were killed and others were critically injured.

That such incidences have occurred in outlying areas is an indication of the influence of neighbouring countries, Dr Salehi explains. She says that people who commit these crimes are often paid by foreigners. That is why she credits employment, together with health and education, as key issues in the minds of female voters.

'Poverty brings war', Dr Salehi says. 'Working is an escape from war. If a man is unemployed and the Taliban offers to feed his children if he goes to war, what choice does he have?'



Without employment many women feel as though they lack honour. A woman begging on the street explained that though she is permitted to remove the burka she would rather wear it than be recognised and shamed. 'When I have a job I will remove it', she told Dr Salehi.

Afghan women may feel a lack of honour, but in the eyes of Dr Salehi, they do not lack courage. She sees honour in their courage, in caring for their children and in maintaining the struggle for life.

'The women don't speak much, but when they do ...' Dr Salehi pauses, shakes her head. 'We accept death. We don't own our bodies, we have them for a while. God created us and God will take us one day.'

This cultural acceptance of death sits too easily beside the country's claim to the highest maternal mortality rate in the world, together with high infant and child mortality rates.

Salehi sees that the role of women following Russia's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 as a critical factor in the subsequent rise to power of the Taliban.

'Everybody said that Afghanistan's future was in the hands of its women because so many of the men had died', she explains. 'The best way for foreigners to stop Afghanistan's progress was to stall its education. At

that time around 69 per cent of teachers were women—therefore the attacks on women, and the emergence of the Taliban.'

Similarly, Dr Salehi suspects some foreign interests of a desire to keep Afghanistan poor, expressed in ways such as pressure on aid agencies to provide food and medical support rather than education. She notes with frustration that skilled workers from neighbouring states such as Iran and Pakistan refuse to teach the Afghans any skills.

'Why would they?' she says. 'It takes away their work.'

That is why her Australian Afghan Volunteer Organisation supports projects that focus on education, in particular literacy and vocational training. Afghans who had skills prior to the war are already back to work. It is the unskilled and largely illiterate younger generation who need help.

'We need to train people to be carpenters, dressmakers, aid workers, road workers. People who are educated become open-minded.'

The final key election issue, according to Dr Salehi, is equality. Though interim President Karzai signed a declaration of equality for the women of Afghanistan, and included two women in his Cabinet, outside Kabul the fall of the Taliban has made little difference in the lives of Afghan women. Even within Kabul, where there are some opportunities for women

to attend school, work and receive health care, attacks directed towards women mean that many remain indoors.

SALEHI FIRST RETURNED TO AFGHANISTAN in March 2002, after an absence of over 30 years. Apart from the shock of the altered landscape, the human suffering she witnessed has unsettled her. She recalls one woman and her three children who huddled in a makeshift house made of two car doors stacked against a wall. On a minus ten degree night they had two worn blankets to share between them.

Salehi also carries the memory of a chance encounter at the women's market in Kabul, where she was stopped by a merchant she did not recognise.

'Don't you know me?' the woman asked, taking Dr Salehi's hand. 'I did the dressmaking course.'

The stall behind her displayed a colourful array of clothing, made with skills learned at the dressmaking course funded by Dr Salehi's Australian Afghan Volunteer Association.

Encounters such as these motivate Dr Salehi to continue her humanitarian work. The women's community and health centre will be built on land donated by Dr Salehi's mother, who asked her daughter to build something for Afghanistan's women on her family's traditional land.

'Every day she asks me how far it is to Afghanistan, how long the flight will be (she forgets by the next day). Every time I tell her [of] new developments she gets very happy, her face lights up with a big smile. I have promised I will take her there when the project is done.'

Until Afghan women have the freedom to dream for themselves, maybe Dr Salehi can dream for them. And the restaurant?

'It's a part of me now', Dr Salehi smiles, and pours another cup of tea. ■

Jessica Gadd is the editor of Jesuit Publications' *Australian Catholics*.

Jesuit Publications Raffle

Congratulations to our winners!

Congratulations to the winners of the 2004 Jesuit Publications raffle. First prize goes to Sr Mary Una Leamon RSM, Marshall, VIC. Sr Una has retired from her nursing work at Melbourne's Mercy Hospital, and has been a *Madonna* subscriber for the past seven years. Second prize, also to a *Madonna* subscriber: J. McKechnie of Shenton Park, WA. Third prize: Patrick Coughlan, Cudal, NSW, also a *Madonna* subscriber. Fourth prize: Trish Smith, Mt Waverley, VIC. Trish subscribes to both *Madonna* and *Eureka Street*—as does our fifth prize-winner: J. Travers, Dulwich, SA. Congratulations to all the winners, and many thanks to everyone who participated in the raffle.

LITTLE BOY LOST

The stories of those who disappear hold a macabre fascination for Australians. **Kerrie O'Brien** spoke with Michael Gleeson, journalist and observer of the disappearance and death of Jaidyn Leskie.

IN AN AWFUL WAY, the whole scenario was the perfect media story. The plot involved a missing toddler, a pig's head, bizarre family relationships and characters galore who were only too happy to talk on the record, to whoever would listen. What followed was one of the biggest searches for a missing person in Australia's history.

The media frenzy that accompanied Jaidyn Leskie's disappearance was not a new phenomenon in this country. Its most famous predecessor, the Azaria Chamberlain case, has returned to the headlines, with a man emerging who claims to have shot a dingo carrying a baby in its mouth in 1980.

The public imagination is captured by such stories. Our interest is fuelled on many levels: the element of fear, that it could have been your baby; the voyeur in us all, intrigued to get an up-close and personal view of other people's lives; the hope that maybe the child will return safely; and again the fear, that a terrible end could be met by such a young child at the hand of another human being.

On Sunday, 15 June, 1997, Michael Gleeson was working as a crime reporter for the *Herald Sun*. He and a photographer were in Lakes Entrance on the trail of a rumoured drug raid, when he received a call from a contact with reports about a child missing in nearby Moe. It was the beginning of a big story—a nightmare for Jaidyn's mother Bilynda, his father Brett, and their families. It was also a major turning point in Gleeson's life. For the next few years, he would follow the case of 13-month-old Jaidyn Leskie, who went missing while in the care of his mother's

boyfriend, Greg Domaszewicz. The same night that Jaidyn went missing, a severed pig's head was thrown through the window of Domaszewicz's home. While that turned out to be an incredible coincidence, it proved to be just the first of many strange and unusual twists in the story.

In the ensuing months, the newspapers—along with the television and radio—were filled with the saga that surrounded Jaidyn's disappearance. Gleeson attributes some of the public frenzy that developed to those involved, '... in the whole story, you had people who were only too willing to make comment and that's sort of what fed it. That's what fed the whole intrigue.

'Yes, it started from the fact that there was a boy missing, and there were pleas for him to be found, and the public helped. But then the backdrop to that was you had the mixed family background ... his Dad married to his aunt, all those sorts of things ... then you had public brawling, everything that was said and done was all done through the media and there were deals with TV stations, was Bilynda for or against Greg, and ... it developed a momentum of its own in that way. It did, as a story, become bigger than a little boy missing.'

The media was roundly criticised for the way the Jaidyn Leskie case was reported. It was accused of being too judgmental. One of the most common complaints was that the people involved in the case were painted as 'white trash'. Gleeson admits that the way these people lived their lives was a major factor of interest in the story. 'It was a world I'd never been close to. I think one of the most compel-

ling things was partly because people in Melbourne and around Australia were opening their eyes to sub cultures and lives that day to day you don't see evidence of in such detail. You know that people have drugs, you know that there's high unemployment, you know that there are single mothers, you know that there are categories, but here was an illustration of a family that fell into all those categories, and how they dealt with it.'

THE MEDIA ALSO CAME UNDER fire for becoming too much of a player in the story. The issue of detachment became significant as the journalists covering the story were living in close quarters with those involved—the police, other media, the family members and the community in the small town.

For Michael Gleeson this was a real issue. In addition to the professional and ethical issues, he had to contend with the ultimate fact that the story was about a missing toddler, who with every passing day seemed less likely to be found alive. 'How do you deal with the death of a child? I don't really know. It's odd but I remember feeling sort of outside it. You can feel like that when you're a writer, reporting on it, you felt sort of detached.'

There were also times he couldn't remain separate to the action. He recalls being at Jaidyn's funeral, held six months after he had disappeared. 'Elizabeth Leskie [Jaidyn's grandmother] turned and said "Oh Michael" and started crying on my shoulder,' Gleeson says.

'How do you detach yourself when someone turns and cries on your shoulder

like that? You can't just turn around and say "Hands off, I'm a journalist and I'm here to be independent".'

As for the media and media involvement, Gleeson says nothing about the case was typical. 'There was always someone that was going to talk to you—not necessarily the police but different parties involved.

'You sound callous when you say this as a journalist but it was a great story to be involved in because it was high profile. When you're involved in a case like this there is excitement and adrenalin involved in trying to get a story, trying to get an angle and chasing it, being involved you feel like you're at the heart of it.'

The town of Moe was subject to a great deal of scrutiny as a result of the child's disappearance. Assumptions were made about the way people lived in that part of the world, stories about locals wandering around town in their moccasins, unemployed and down and out were the norm. 'The poor people of Moe suffered as a result—everyone has heard the jokes and the stories,' Gleeson says. 'I tried to say, to be fair, there is this one part of Moe [but] there are really nice parts. There are parts of Moe that are really poor, they're a product of a whole lot of circumstances, not least of which is the privatisation of the power industry down there, the redundancies of thousands of people. Housing is really cheap ... at the time you could buy a house for \$20,000. There was that social differentiation and social conflict I suppose.'

The search for Jaidyn was very public. According to Gleeson, 'The police were doing everything they could. And then it became clear that they were searching not for a boy, they were searching for a body.' Jaidyn's body was found on New Year's Day, 1998, in Blue Rock Dam.

Greg Domaszewicz was the major suspect in the case. In October 1998, he was put on trial for the murder of Jaidyn Raymond Leskie. He pleaded not guilty, and, in December, the jury returned with a verdict of not guilty.

HAVING REPORTED the story on a daily basis for the *Herald-Sun*, Gleeson had an overall knowledge of the case, a perspective he felt was unique. He says he felt he had 'a particular understanding of the case that put me in a position to be able to write the book.' He wanted 'to try

to pull together all the strands of information and to untangle a lot of the mess.

'I didn't want to write a book that just said look this is what's happened and this is what you must think and I'll make a judgment against these people. I probably tried to be a bit more open ... than perhaps they've been judged by the media generally.'

Gleeson's book is titled simply *The Jaidyn Leskie Murder*. It is not an easy read; it is disturbing, illuminating and compelling. At the same time it repels you. It taps into our fascination with crime, perhaps an underlying desire to know something about the darker side of human nature. 'It's a good read but you almost feel bad for thinking that it was a good read,' says Gleeson.

The coroner's inquest has been adjourned indefinitely because the defence team is questioning the coroner's jurisdiction over the case. The outcome of that protest will no doubt provide yet another chapter in what is an intriguing and disturbing saga.

Whether or not the inquest will provide closure for the Leskie family is not clear, but it might go some way towards determining what happened that night in June.

Michael Gleeson is planning to publish a revised version of the book once the decision about the coroner's inquest has been made. He says the new book will go into detail of what has come up at the inquest, the re-examination of evidence, the examination of the prisoner's statements. 'At the moment, we are also waiting to see Greg's evidence ... and then obviously tying in the coroner's findings.'

The working of Australia's justice system has been called into question by this case, according to Gleeson. He argues that just when public interest is waning, the need for public interest in the legal processes behind the case is at its greatest. 'There is a genuine wider criminal justice issue that is really important.

'It was very much of the mind that Greg Domaszewicz should be asked to present to a court and that there should be a coroner's inquest, a public inquest

to find out what happened to Jaidyn. I think that I've got a fairly strong view of what happened but it's an intriguing one because it's now gone to the Supreme Court to decide [if] should he be forced to give evidence.

IS IT A CASE OF THE CORONER second guessing justice [and] the criminal courts? What's to be gained? Is it acknowledging that they don't want a finding that points the finger at Greg when he is someone who's been cleared by the courts? Because [the coroner's and criminal courts] operate on a different standard of proof, you could end up with a system where Greg would be found not guilty by the criminal system and then have the coroner say, "Yes, but on this standard we think that he probably did it". Does that hold the system up to ridicule? Perhaps it does but I think the system would hold itself up for ridicule if the court at no stage ever asks the last person to see a baby boy alive to stand up in a court and explain what happened.'

In the preface to the book, Gleeson



says: 'This book chronicles the evidence against Greg, it puts the case against him and helps explain why he was charged and why he was acquitted. It does not, nor can it hope to, explain who was responsible for killing Jaidyn. That is for you to decide.'

The only problem is that the public—the reader—should not be left to decide. The truth, presumably, is out there. Someone committed a terrible act against a little boy, and should be called to account for their crime. Whether the truth will ultimately be revealed, and whether justice is served, remains to be seen. ■

Kerrie O'Brien is a Melbourne-based writer and editor.

Affordable

HOW WILL OUR CHILDREN ever be able to afford a house? Whatever the type of housing, one critical aspect is 'affordability'. Over the past ten years, average house prices (including land) have doubled relative to income. The Australian dream of owning a home is fast becoming a dream available only to some.

The emphasis on home ownership is one fostered by conservative politicians and the land development industry. As such, most public debate about affordability has focused on those people who are just able to secure a loan and eventually own their own home. Recent first home buyers are, on average, allocating nearly 40 per cent of their income towards home loan repayments, a third more than five years ago.

The market price of a house lot is determined by its location, the available supply of land and the size of the lot itself. Ultimately, the market sets the price based on these factors.

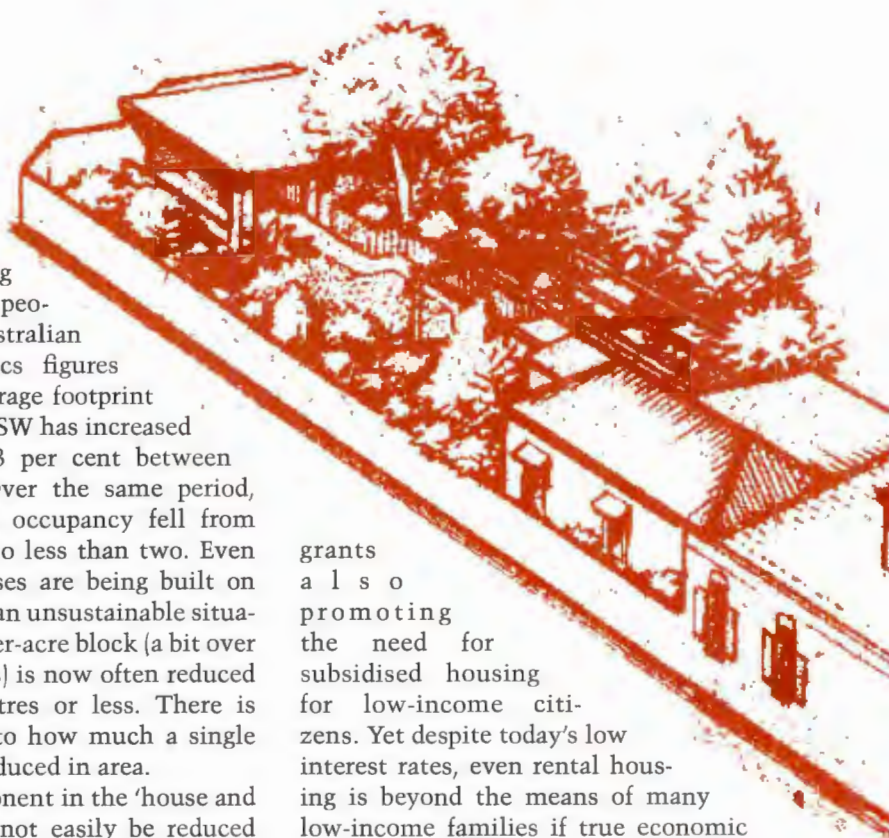
The availability of land for housing construction has thus become a critical factor in keeping private housing affordable. The Sydney basin, for example, has few remaining large areas of undeveloped land. There have been calls from land developers recently to use land 'locked up in open space and national parks' for housing. They agree (with their hands on their hearts) about the necessity of preserving national parks, yet argue that some parks and other designated open space should be subdivided. Even if this were a viable solution what happens when demand overtakes supply?

The problem of limited availability

of land is not helped by a trend towards larger houses being occupied by fewer people. Recent Australian Bureau of Statistics figures reveal that the average footprint of new homes in NSW has increased by a staggering 53 per cent between 1985 and 2003. Over the same period, average household occupancy fell from over three people to less than two. Even though larger houses are being built on smaller lots this is an unsustainable situation. The old quarter-acre block (a bit over 1000 square metres) is now often reduced to 450 square metres or less. There is clearly a limit as to how much a single house lot can be reduced in area.

The land component in the 'house and land' equation cannot easily be reduced unless normal suburban densities are increased by building more integrated, medium density attached housing, that is, more houses on less land. Similarly, there is little one can do to reduce building costs other than to refrain from building unnecessarily large houses. Whatever one may think of the appearance of its product, the project house building industry is very efficient and competitive. If there were economies to be made, the project house builders would already be making them. It then follows that there is no easy way that house and land prices can be made more affordable.

But what of those people on lower incomes? One rarely hears those who extol the virtues of first home buyer



grants also promoting the need for subsidised housing for low-income citizens. Yet despite today's low interest rates, even rental housing is beyond the means of many low-income families if true economic rents are charged.

Reductions in federal government grants to the states have greatly reduced the construction of public housing. Instead, the federal government prefers to pay rent subsidies to landlords. Further, much of the detached housing built for those on low-incomes over the last 50 years has been progressively sold to the tenants—a move intended both to win votes and to fund more housing. As such there are fewer houses available. Already there are an estimated 80,000 people on state public housing waiting lists.

It has been federal government policy to encourage private developers to construct low-cost rental accommodation. Private investors are allowed a tax break

for whom?

Don Gazzard wonders about the state of Australian real-estate pricing

on the difference between their borrowing costs and their rental income (negative gearing). In theory, a greater number of rental properties would lead to a competitive market and lower rents. The reality is that those in high tax brackets have reduced their tax not by building new rental properties, but buying existing ones. They have gained considerable tax relief

countenance changes. He maintains the current arrangements provide 'appropriate incentives for investment'. Disappointingly, the Leader of the Opposition, Mark Latham, also ruled out changes to the tax provisions if elected, remarking that anything that increased wealth was a good thing. Yet the Australian Council of Social Services has estimated that the legal but ineffective concession of negative gearing costs the Australian taxpayer \$2 billion in lost tax revenue each year.

In the interest of a more diverse and more equitable society, alternative strategies must be pursued if we want to provide for those on low incomes. Yet in view of low federal funding for social housing and consequent inactivity by state governments, solutions for affordable low-income housing must be found elsewhere. Local governments may provide the answer.

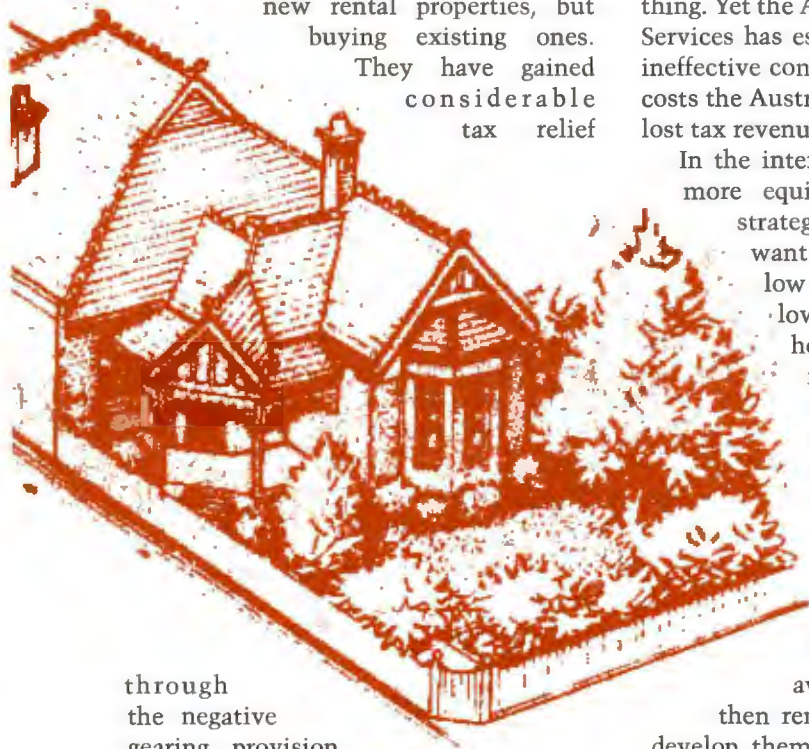
One immediate option open to local councils is to purchase older, lower cost houses as they become available. Councils could

then renovate them, perhaps even develop them as dual occupancy units. These units could then be leased to young families and those in need at affordable prices. By spreading vital rental housing throughout the community, local councils would avoid the isolation of poorer people in low-income ghettos. Whilst there may be little financial gain in this practice, the greater social gains are immeasurable.

Many local governments regard social housing as a state responsibility. There are some, however, that are more enterprising in the pursuit of diversity, who put their 'operating' land to good social purpose.

THE CITY OF PORT PHILLIP in Melbourne is an excellent example of one such enterprising council. The Council has overseen the recent redevelopment of the 'Inkerman oasis', a 1.223 hectare redundant waste depot at 33 Inkerman Street, St Kilda. The project consists of five, three to five level buildings (one of which has been recycled). In these, there are 237 residential units and three retail tenancies of high quality design. Of these, 19 community-housing units were provided for the council in exchange for the land. All this has been achieved with a long list of ecologically sustainable design features, the re-use of grey water being one of them. Most impressively, the 19 'social housing' units are scattered throughout the development and are indistinguishable externally from the private units.

The City of Port Phillip has provided 'an example of quadruple bottom line sustainability' (environmental, social, economic and cultural) with a high level of contemporary architecture and urban design in a commercially viable and highly marketable scheme which has won a number of awards' (their jargon). After a master plan and tender process, the Council entered into a contract of sale. Half the project is completed and occupied with the balance to be completed in 2005. The Council stage-managed the undertaking,



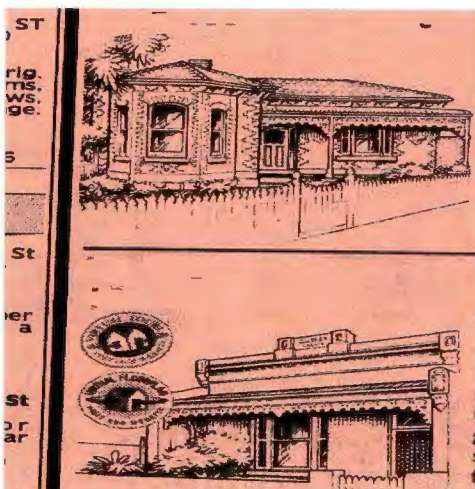
through the negative gearing provision while making sizeable financial gains once the property is sold.

In June 2004 an inquiry by the Productivity Commission suggested that the generous concessions of capital gains tax and negative gearing be reconsidered by the Federal Government. However, Treasurer Peter Costello has refused to

ensuring the desirable sustainable environmental features were included, that the design was attractive and the financial outcomes fair and acceptable.

The Council also recognised the limits of their own abilities leaving the complex detail design, construction and marketing—including the risk and potential profits—to development professionals. In exchange, they received the 19 housing units for the community. Over a three-year period their actions have resulted in the site value increasing from a \$5.2 million book asset to one valued at around \$7.5 million.

Most councils own parcels of land that



are classified as 'operational land' where smaller and lower density developments could be encouraged along the lines of the Inkerman Street development. Perhaps future federal governments should bypass the states and make housing grants directly to progressive local councils.

The housing situation in Australia has reached breaking point. This is not the time for carry-on about 'where will our children live'. If someone doesn't move into the breach we will be left with a crisis. We already know where the current and potential federal governments stand. What of local councils? ■

Don Gazzard is an architect who works in both Sydney and Melbourne.

ACU National
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Professor of Theology and Head of the Sub-Faculty of Philosophy and Theology

The appointee to this national role is expected to be a person of international academic standing in theology. The Professor of Theology, who will also be Head of the Sub-Faculty of Philosophy and Theology, may be based in Brisbane, Melbourne or Sydney.

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A well-established and internationally recognised Catholic scholar with a strong publication record, the appointee will contribute respected leadership in Australian intellectual life generally, and within the University. The appointee will also be expected to pursue personal scholarship and research of the highest quality; lead the development of, and teach courses in, theology; and attract high quality students to study and research in theology at ACU National in ways that are sensitive to, and which enhance the established values of the Catholic tradition.

As Head of the Sub-Faculty of Philosophy and Theology, the appointee must have vision, commitment, enthusiasm and the ability to articulate and promote the Mission and Strategic Plan of ACU National, and to keep the University sensitised to national and international needs and contemporary developments in theology and theological education. The appointee must have an unequivocal commitment to the Catholic ethos of the University, and to the development of an integrated institution across the University's widely separated campuses.

Full details of selection criteria are provided in the position information package obtainable by contacting Junne Kamis on telephone +61 (2) 9739 2909, facsimile +61 (2) 9739 2942, or by email: J.Kamis@vcy.acu.edu.au Applications, including full details of qualifications and experience, together with the names and contact details of three referees, should be received by **Friday, 1st October 2004**. Applications should be addressed to:

**Dr John Barclay, Director of Personnel Relations and Equal Opportunity
 ACU National, PO Box 968, North Sydney NSW 2059 Australia.**

The appointment will be for a period of five years, with scope for a further appointment considered in relation to performance. The University offers a comprehensive salary packaging service and appropriate remuneration will be negotiated.

Inquiries of a personal or confidential nature about the position can be directed to Professor Peter Sheehan AO, Vice-Chancellor on +61 (2) 9739 2910.

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Equal Opportunity and Privacy of personal information is University policy. For more details visit www.acu.edu.au

Mentoring Australia

Fatima Measham interviews David White, founder of Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia.

DAVID WHITE, Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia, is concerned that not enough men volunteer in the community. He finds it frustrating that only 20 per cent of volunteer inquiries received by the national mentoring program are males, when 90 per cent of young people waiting to be matched to a mentor are boys.

White, who started the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) program in Melbourne in 1982, struggles to understand why male volunteers do not come forward.

'I think they're fearful of commitment, or perhaps they feel that they can't contribute and don't have much to offer', he says. 'They need to reassess that because they can and they do. They don't have to be saints or be particularly insightful. They just have to be with the young person and be reliable and trustworthy.'

With the recent surge of interest in mentoring, White is hoping that men will finally meet the challenge. He welcomes increased media coverage spurred by the Labor Party's national mentoring policy and the Coalition Government's Mentor Marketplace program.

However, he quickly points out that growing attention to the idea of 'fatherless boys' or the lack of male role models should not be a judgment on single mothers.

He says, 'the greatest mistake that most people make about mentoring, especially for boys, is that a sole parent family headed by the mother is inadequate for the well-balanced development of a young boy. That's an absolute fallacy. There are many such families that are operating effectively.'

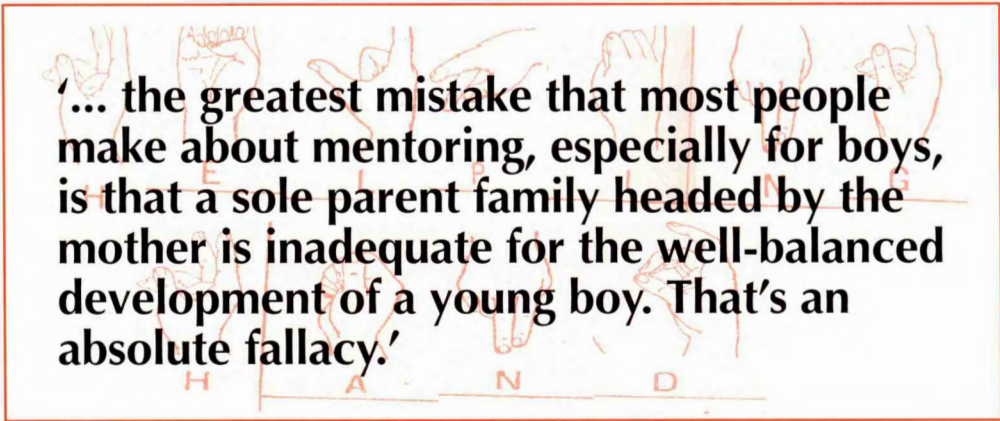
White explains that Big Brothers Big Sisters receives many referrals for boys

because some mothers recognise that their sons are suffering in some way from lack of contact with males. He suggests that this does not mean families require a male figure, and in some cases it is better for parents to separate than for the family to continue in an unstable situation.

'I probably get a skewed view of men, after more than 20 years of being involved in mentoring', White admits. 'I do feel

under the child protection system, the 'big brother' or 'big sister' may be the only adult in their lives who is not paid to be with them, yet is consistently accessible over a lengthy period of time.

'This is not insignificant', White says. 'Mentoring is far more than a feel-good, friendly little program. This is about major change, where a young person moves forward and is able to understand himself in



'... the greatest mistake that most people make about mentoring, especially for boys, is that a sole parent family headed by the mother is inadequate for the well-balanced development of a young boy. That's an absolute fallacy.'

that the male side of the species has let the family down on a regular basis. A lot of the women who come to us are sick of men—they have been used and abused too often.'

ACCORDING TO WHITE, these mothers realise that, without having to seek a relationship with a man, they could provide their children with a supportive adult who would fill the need for connection. He clarifies that the volunteer mentors are not replacement fathers or mothers, nor are they meant to take on the role of teachers, police officers or social workers. He argues that, in fact, for young people

a way that an army of professionals has never been able to.'

He observes that perceptions of mentoring have changed enormously in the last four years. Research overseas, mainly from Canada and the United States, has bolstered the long-held view that mentoring offers many benefits to individuals and communities. Similar research has yet to be conducted in Australia.

'It's expensive, longitudinal, and difficult to measure', says White, 'especially if we're looking at the community-based model.' While he considers research important, he says that he also feels 'impatient' about the issue.

'We live in a community that has to prove everything before we do anything', he explains. 'I'm not anti-intellectual or anti-research or anti-accountability. However, with something like this, I think we could put a lot of money into researching the bleeding obvious.'

White has instead spent his energy on developing a national strategy for mentoring. Together with the Smith Family and the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia commissioned a report which was released in May this year.

'We felt that as the debate was starting to become public, there was no focus to it,' White says. The group believed that mentoring needed to be presented in its own right, not as something that would merely enhance areas such as education or juvenile justice.

The resulting strategy builds the case for a separate government department—and budget—for mentoring. It has been criticised for its bureaucratic approach.

'Mentoring is long term; it's not focused on outcome. It requires a level of judgment on the suitability of mentors, involves volunteers who need to be sustained, and requires local knowledge and local links.'

'It probably does mean that we are seeking an increase in bureaucracy', White responds. 'But we're actually trying to build a bureaucracy that can focus services and allow mentoring to be recognised as an independent service to young people and families.'

HE EXPLAINS THAT because mentoring adapts to the needs of the young person and crosses a range of departments such as child protection, juvenile justice, and youth services, funding has been difficult to come by. 'Where does the mentoring program go to seek funds when it's not enough of any one part of the current bureaucracy?', he argues.

On the other hand, White also senses that governments are beginning to realise that they might be able to respond to

a range of different needs within a person if they focus on mentoring. It is not just about money for programs, though. White emphasises that government ought to encourage debate and assist in the development of strategies and models.

However, he cautions against governments actually running programs. White believes that it would be inappropriate for a number of reasons: 'Mentoring is long term; it's not focused on outcome. It requires a level of judgment on the suitability of mentors, involves volunteers who need to be sustained, and requires local knowledge and local links.' In other words, it is a job that is better suited to non-government organisations.

Beyond the policy debates, community based mentoring is about building the relationships that make it possible for young people in need to break the cycle of despair and poverty.

'It's about improving how a young person feels about himself', says White.

'A significant, trusting relationship can do that. It gives them a sense of identity and belonging when someone who is connected to the community is loyal to them and listens to them. They realise that the world around them is not quite so foreign as they first thought.'

Moreover, mentoring is not a one-way street. White constantly

hears volunteer mentors say that they get more out of the relationship than their little brothers or sisters do. 'It's a movement, if you like, of drawing communities together', he says. 'People who wouldn't normally be in touch with each other begin to break down judgments as a result.'

He recounts the story of a 'big brother' in Adelaide who used to feel apprehensive when walking past a group of young people at a shopping centre. 'After he was matched to a boy who came from the area, he felt a lot more confident. He was no longer fearful because he understood them better than he had before.' ■

Fatima Measham is student, youth worker, freelance writer and has previously worked for Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia.



THE REPUTATION OF Silicon Valley precedes itself in the manner of Manchester's mills during the birth of the industrial revolution or New York skyscrapers in the boom years after the end of World War I. The power and economic might of these epicentres of commerce should be manifest in an immense physical presence towards which would-be Horatio Algiers are drawn with their bright shiny dreams.

Perhaps a virtual world deserves only virtual wealth. Despite repeated assurances that visitors will rub shoulders with millionaires in the shopping districts of Silicon Valley, and that this stretch of uninspiring real estate is the engine room of the Californian economy (one of the world's largest), you still get the feeling that you are the victim of the world's biggest practical joke. Where is the ostentation of Monaco and the condescension dripping from the walls of family estates in England?

Exit the six-lane highway at any of the towns along Highway 101—Palo Alto lies to the north of Stanford University, or the strangely Orwellian district of Sunnyvale that is home to Google, Yahoo and the NASA research park—and there is little to break the monotony of blue skies, perma-smog and low slung glass buildings glinting in the Californian sunlight. It all looks as impermanent as a spaghetti-western film set. Given that this phenomenon has arisen in only the last two decades and has already had its booms and busts, it can be excused for creating the impression that it could all be packed up and trucked out the day after tomorrow.

The ready-to-go dynamism that makes this place the world capital of work and



Sunrise on Silicon Valley

The IT industry prepares for the next boom

commerce is underpinned by a nonchalance born of the knowledge that the denizens of digitalia have us just where they want us. We surf the websites they have built, and buy their software and the bits of stuff that go with them as acts of faith, pretending to know what it's all for. Our struggle to make sense of all the gigabytes of content our media stream at us is the revenge of the nerds we used to humiliate at school by selo-taping them to prominent landmarks. We're in their world now, flapping helplessly like upturned turtles.

The geniuses who have made all this possible are suitably smug coming to work at 10am in their Birkenstocks and checkered shirts and spending an allotted day a week on research projects of their own choosing. James, a senior software engineer with Yahoo, talks casually of running software development teams in Bangalore and capturing the Asian market for internet shopping. 'We aren't working the insane hours we used to during the bubble', he says as he separates guacamole and salsa into neat piles on his plate in a Tex-Mex restaurant in downtown Mountain View. 'But it seems as if we are coming into another period when everyone is getting excited again. We can't hire fast enough and we have two people to a cubicle.'

The stories from recent years of internet companies launching shares on the NASDAQ without turning a profit, or any clear indication as to when they might, have become legends. Remember Netscape, the search engine that was the market leader until the man who cannot be denied, Bill Gates, caught up and overtook it with Microsoft Explorer? In 1996 its shares debuted on NASDAQ and soared 167 per cent from the \$US28 issue

price within hours of going on sale, hitting \$US75 before settling down to \$US58 at the end of the trading day. After its Microsoft mauling, AOL picked up Netscape for a song in 1998 as part of its ill-fated strategy to turn searching the net into cash. Netscape only turned a modest profit for a couple of quarters in 1996-97.

Cautiously and without fanfare—so as not to disturb the still-skittish investors who lost their shirts in the first dot.com boom—venture capitalists have been looking at technology companies, most of them internet companies, that have good prospects. In turn the venture capitalists are coaxing reluctant banks to get interested in underwriting share offerings again. The hook is the upcoming initial public offering of Google, the quixotic search engine which has spawned a proprietorial verb in 'to Google' in the same mould as 'Hoover' and 'Xerox'. (I am particularly looking forward to 'google' working its way through a regular conjugation and we start reading phrases such as 'They will have been googled' and 'Methinks there is some googling afoot here').

STARTED IN A GARAGE in 1998, by Sergey Brin and Larry Page, two computer science graduates from Stanford, the search pioneer company has ridden to pre-eminence on the back of search technology that was superior long enough for them to surge ahead of competitors. Google attracted a cult-like following for its principles of no content and open and egalitarian access. In 2003 the company reported turnover of nearly \$US1 billion with a net profit of \$US105 million brought in exclusively by a strip of paid links that appear on the right

margin of every Google page.

The share-offer is being sold to the public through a convoluted bidding process that Google is promoting as another example of how the company eschews the big-end of town, delivering shares into the hands of average-Joe investors. It is expected to raise \$US2.7 billion and make its founders and executives—who bought into the company for a snip of the \$US100-\$US140 a share the market is expected to pay—extremely wealthy individuals.

The typical pattern of IT innovation is that somebody comes up with a good idea and starts selling it. Competitors copy what is now proven to be a good idea, but try to do it better. This is presently happening in Silicon Valley as Yahoo, Google and Microsoft compete to become the kings of search. What isn't clear is who has the initiative. Each company is jockeying for position, launching or preparing to launch new products. We mugs, with cash in hand, then subscribe to services offered by Google Mail or Yahoo Living Room. (Don't ask what that's all about because I haven't got a bloody clue).

In the meantime, Larry Choy, the head of careers at Stanford University does not have to set foot inside the computer science department because 'undergraduates are walking out of here into \$US75,000 jobs, so we spend our time worrying about the humanities majors'.

So shut the blinds on sunny days, put on a tape of rain and thunder and encourage your kids to get closer to the computer screen. There's a pot of gold at the end of the phone line. ■

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The art of philanthropy

A Tradition of Giving: Seventy-Five Years of Myer Family Philanthropy, Michael Liffman.
Melbourne University Press, 2004. ISBN 0 522 85062 6, RRP \$49.95

Mr Felton's Bequests, John Poynter. Melbourne University Press, 2003. ISBN 0 522 85079 0, RRP \$89.95

THE TRADITIONAL ENGLISH SENSE of 'charity' is made clear in that great definer of the language, the Authorised Version. 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.' 'And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity.' (1 Cor 13:1)

Charity thus is the love of one's fellow person(s). More recently, Roget makes it synonymous with philanthropy.

Yet common parlance, and the Oxford English Dictionary, make a useful distinction. Charity is gifts or benevolence, often unstructured, to the poor and unfortunate. Philanthropy suggests additional, wider, and more composite delineated purposes: the advance of arts, sciences or education, and missions on behalf of civilisation or culture. Of course the categories overlap. Curing the diseases of the unfortunate may advance science; education may benefit the poor and civilisation is supposedly a universal blessing. Motives and methods are equally complex; witness Alfred Felton and Sidney Myer, and the trusts they established.

The traditional critique of charity is that there is too little of it to meet needs,

and that often it is inefficiently distributed. The more subtle critique, that it may perpetuate the evils it seeks to alleviate, is also not new. The 19th century spoke of 'pauperisation', the late 20th of 'welfare dependency'.

Philanthropy attracts additional criticism. In moving beyond 'mere' charity it seeks to influence and alter societies, their beliefs, and their policies, as well as individual circumstances. Theorists of economics, class and culture speak of hegemony. More instinctive democrats simply resent the distinctions of wealth, and the power to make decisions that influence others.

The locus classicus of the critique of philanthropy is the great American foundations. The immense, untaxed fortunes of Gilded Age America were often dissipated in every sense of that word, but some became trusts in perpetuity, intended for the world's betterment.

Understandably, many doubted both the motives and capacity of 'robber bar-

ons' and their lieutenants, who claimed to know what was better and could pay for it. And pay on a scale that could significantly alter society.

In the early decades of modern foundations, and of the 20th century, the successful Rockefeller campaign against parasitic disease was largely uncontroversial. No one, after all, was in favour of hookworms. But the radical reform of medical education, accomplished through financial inducements arguably defined modern 'scientific' medicine as it is still practiced. This was after the devastating Rockefeller-commissioned Flexner Report (Abraham Flexner, *Medical Education in the United States and Canada*, 1910) closed many medical schools and made many enemies.

SUCH CAMPAIGNS foreshadowed the modern, much criticised practice of foundations: scientific and social scientific inquiry followed by social programs. To the left, this looks like social control by the wealthy and conservative; the right sees liberal interference with eternal values and verities, including the free market. And foundation support of 'high' culture or 'elite' education can unite the philistines and some friends of the poor in condemnation.

The awareness and the critique of philanthropy have been muted in Australia, mainly because there hasn't been much of



it. Unlike Britain and America, our great libraries, museums and universities are overwhelmingly public foundations. And the public fisc has been both first and last resort of Australians seeking social amelioration (or research funds) to an extent that surprises other Anglo-Saxon nations. In Australia a prescriptive and paternal state has existed since the foundation of the Gulag at the Antipodes; and private fortunes were, until recently, tiny compared to those of Europe and North America.

The Myer and Felton fortunes were founded in Victorian (both senses) and Edwardian Australia in retailing, manufacture and wholesaling; the eponymous Myer Emporium and Felton, Grimwade drugs. As in all eras, the hardy perennials of charity and philanthropy needed support. Universities were underfunded, high culture in a parlous state, the poor as always with us.

Felton and Myer weren't Carnegie and Rockefeller. They were far, far less wealthy. Their sins needing expiation were also venial by comparison; they had not shot down their workers (Carnegie at Homestead) or tried to monopolise a vital commodity (Rockefeller and Standard Oil). Indeed their primary motivation appears to have been benevolence. In their lifetimes both were largely charitable, only occasionally philanthropic. Myer famously combated the depression with a mass Christmas dinner in the Exhibition Building and also renovated premises to provide employment, and urged other businessmen to do likewise.

Myer's last thoughts and those of his heirs and first trustees were still largely charitable, as here defined. The Sidney Myer Trust (established 1935) supported the usual causes and institutions. It also, however, continued Myer's linked interests in music, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and The University of Melbourne, culminating in the building of the Myer Music Bowl in the 1960s—'high' culture in the service of the populace.

Younger Myers' became generous and

thoughtful philanthropists. Sidney's sons were particularly active, and by the late 1950s their interest in the Howard Florey Institute (medical research), in Asian Studies, as it became known, and in other philanthropic causes took them and their shares of the family fortune beyond the scope of the Trust. Their new Myer Foundation may be said to have introduced Australia to modern philanthropy as practiced elsewhere. Proactive where others had largely been reactive, and tightly focused programs addressing a wide variety of issues beyond traditional charitable causes, all distinguished the new organization and increasing numbers of others like it.

THE FOUNDATION HAS continued to be a leader in thinking and doing in Australian philanthropy. In line with international trends, it has moved from the academic investigation of, and prescription for, social ills to the empowerment of the beneficiaries of charity and philanthropy. It

has been firmly committed to strategic philanthropy, meeting the self-perceived and articulated needs of the disadvantaged with seed money for their choice of programs. In defining and furthering its aims it also led the way administratively, employing some of Australia's first philanthropy professionals (including Michael Liffman).

At his death in 1904, Alfred Felton's Will divided the bulk of his fortune between two bequests. 'Nearly half a million for Charity and Art', declared the Argus newspaper. The Felton Bequests Committee has allocated the 'Charity' income in accord with the changing times, taking similar directions to Myer, though seldom leading the way: widely benevolent, seldom very influential.

The 'Art' income was directed toward 'the purchase of works of art, ancient or modern, or antiquities ... [judged] ... to have an educational value and to be calculated to raise and improve public taste'. The Committee was to acquire these on

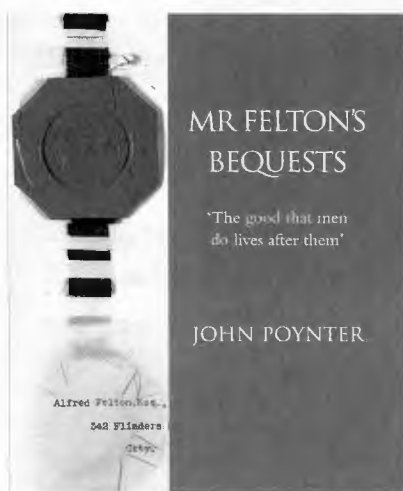
the recommendation or with the approval of the Trustees of the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), where they would be displayed. Disputes and agreements, revolutions and reactions, chronicled by Poynter over 400 pages, have continued for a century thus far.

Should artists be Australian and if so living or dead or at least suitably aged and established? Are artists the best judges of art? How much authority should be in the hands of an overseas expert? Might the expert be based elsewhere than London (no), a colonial (sometimes), a woman? (Surprisingly yes, and more than once.) What influence should the director of the NGV wield? If Old Master paintings were prohibitively expensive, what to do? (Buy prints and drawings, now amounting to a world-class collection.) As history of Australian taste, in social and political contexts, Poynter's work can bear comparison with Patrick McCaughey or Robert Hughes, or even Bernard Smith.

Certainly, the Felton history provides material for the critique of philanthropy. The interlocking directorates of the Bequest, the National Gallery itself, the Walter and Eliza Hall and Howard Florey Institutes, suggest a concentration, though not hegemony, of cultural and intellectual power, wielded for decades through meetings at the Melbourne Club. It also suggests philanthropy's peculiar benefits. McCaughey convincingly asserts that without the Bequest, Australia would have no 'encyclopedic' collection of Western Art. Like the great Mitchell and Dixson gifts to the State Library of New South Wales, Felton gave Australia cultural resources inaccessible today, and beyond the range of government thought and grasp in all but the best of eras. And galleries like libraries have been (at least until the recent trend to fees) the most democratic kind of high culture.

These are informative and interesting books. *Mr Felton's Bequests* is massive and subtle as well. The reader will be encouraged and equipped to make her own judgments of Australian charity and philanthropy. ■

David R. Jones was trained as an historian of universities, and is presently an apprentice second-hand bookseller in Daylesford, Victoria.



Reasons to believe

Paul Collins' latest book looks at why Catholics continue their relationship with the church

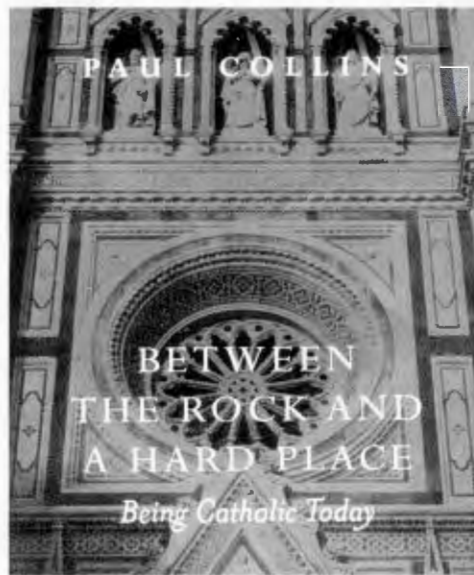
Between the Rock and a Hard Place: Being Catholic Today, Paul Collins. ABC Books, 2004. ISBN 0 733 31429 5, RRP \$29.95

PAUL COLLINS is an engaging writer. He engages with his audience, with the defects of his church, and with the public issues of his day. In this book, he stands back a little, asking why, in the face of so much that he finds to criticise, he remains Catholic.

He makes a persuasive, if not original, case for leaving the church behind. For Collins, sexual abuse and its cover-up, the harassment of faithful Catholics, intolerance, dishonesty and a repressive sexual ethos, have deep roots. They lie in an abuse of power that makes office holders unaccountable, infantilises local churches, and encourages vigilante groups. His is a deeply dysfunctional church, that alienates its members.

Caught in such a deep winter, one may well ask why not head for warmer climates. Collins replies that Catholicism is in the blood. A genuinely Catholic faith affirms the goodness and promise of the world that God has made. It shapes a community that encourages a confidently enquiring attitude to the world, and looks for God's footsteps among the people and the plight of the world. Collins values prayer and contemplation as ways of finding God's presence in the world. In more recent years, he has responded to God's presence in nature and has committed himself to the environmental movement.

He refers to this generous vision of the world as the Catholic imagination. If it sets him against a rationalist and fearfully dogmatic form of Catholicism, it also leads him to criticise the secular rationalism that finds no value in faith.



He finds both adversaries shallow.

The Catholicism which Collins describes represents the Catholic tradition at its best. It is informed, reflective, undemonstratively devout and confident. Collins has a good eye for its enemies and for its counterfeits. He is right to claim that an emphasis on control and on unthinking is alien to the Catholic tradition. His book will encourage those who espouse an inclusive style of Catholicism to hang in. If the Roman hobgoblins of his book seem to wear black hats of unnatural darkness, his readers will enjoy the more their decapitation.

The broad Catholic tradition, however, is not simply for celebrating. It is also for passing on. That the struggle to pass on the full Catholic tradition will be fought on an unfavourable terrain with few troops becomes evident if we reflect on the questions that will shape the Catholic Church of the future. Who will be regu-

larly involved in the church? Where will the young adults who pass on the tradition come from? How will they be led to find the humane Catholic tradition instead of a fashionably narrow version of it?

Let me guess at the shape of the church in 25 years time. The number of Catholics with a regular contact with the church will be much reduced by death and ill health, and by the failure to replace older with younger members. It will include few of Collins' (and my) generation.

The Catholic Church will include many children of immigrants, from ethnic communities. They will preserve the devotional emphasis they have inherited with their culture. Few of the children of the Vatican II generation will be much involved in the church, not least because they are more likely to be alienated by an authoritarian style of church. Groups with a strong and narrow sense of Catholic identity will be more significant, both because they are committed and because their relative numbers will be greater. In this smaller church, to pass on the Catholic tradition with its respect for intellect and its universal imagination, will be a great challenge.

THE CHALLENGE BECOMES EVEN MORE exigent if we ask where we shall find the young adults who will bear the tradition, either as ministers or as full-time church workers. They will be drawn largely from a relatively small number of young adults who are enthusiastic about their Catholicism. Current trends do not suggest that this group will naturally come

to a Catholic imagination, nor that they will have a passion for social justice. The majority will come from families with a strong Catholic identity, or will have had a conversion that associates them with a devout and cohesive group of their peers.

Because their commitment is so little shared by their peers, they will need encouragement from others who are enthusiastic and wholeheartedly affirming in their allegiance to the church. Hero worship of the Pope, attraction to World Youth Days and pilgrimages, interest in new Catholic groups, a desire for clear boundaries in Catholic life and faith, and a willingness to explore exposition and other traditional Catholic devotions are some of the things that offer firm structure to their identity.

Those who take on a new and distinctive Catholic identity are vulnerable to the temptation to define themselves in

opposition to a wicked world or to backsliding fellow Catholics. Certainly, they will never lack for older guides who are negative and waspish in their judgment of society or other Catholics. So, to encourage this group to enter the broad Catholic tradition will be done into the wind. It will certainly not be enough to decry the narrowness and superficiality of the attitudes they adopt. Nor will it do to wait until they are alienated by the narrowness of the world they have chosen.

The challenge to commend a liberality of spirit and a habit of looking beyond the adversarial and beyond slogans is not confined to the Catholic Church. It is evident also in public discourse, where it is hard to go beyond the dismissive and the shallow. Nor is this a condition unique to our own time. Civility, liberality, respect for the complexities of tradition, a respect for truth, faith and reason are highly devel-

oped things. They are always threatened. The ages always threaten to be dark; the barbarians are always at the gate.

DARK AGES ARE TIMES for lighting candles and polishing the silver, for preserving fruit, for conversation. In commending the full Catholic tradition, there is no substitute for engaging in conversation with those unfamiliar with it. In conversation, people are drawn by the splendour of the truth. Even those sheltered within the high walls of certainty find with experience that the broad fields of truth are more attractive places in which to play. These, after all, compose God's garden. ■

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On Loane

Marcus L. Loane: A biography, J.R. Reid. Acorn Press, 2004. ISBN 0 908 28447 0, RRP \$34.99

THERE IS AN AIR of adventure in this biography of the first Australian-born Archbishop of Sydney and Primate of the Anglican Church, Marcus L. Loane.

Loane is described by a contemporary as 'a very nice fellow indeed', and by his biographer as a man of 'rock-like character'. The supporting cast includes Loane's rector and father-in-law, Rev David Knox, an Irishman with 'the characteristic passions of the Celt', who once cracked two boys' heads together when they misbehaved in Sunday school. There is also Dr Broughton Knox, once Principal of Moore College, who did not get on with an English-born Archbishop of Sydney because Knox had been a chaplain in the Royal Navy and 'disliked any Englishman in a position of authority'.

Loane is described as an unwavering conservative evangelical. At Moore College, he would read during classes on doctrine to avoid listening to the lectures of the liberal Principal. As Archbishop of Sydney, he refused to attend either an ecumenical prayer service or a lunch held by the NSW Governor to celebrate the visit of Pope Paul VI. He was mistrustful of both the Australian Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches; and he refused to have anything to do with any Christian group that was not based on 'the substitutionary death of Christ'.

Reid is honest about Loane's weaknesses. Loane suffered from shyness; was neither a great innovator nor particularly prophetic. He did not keep his theological reading up to date; and did not always

grasp the changes in society that took place during his time as Archbishop.

It is hard to know why Loane's credentials as a conservative evangelical are not considered obvious. Is it because Loane saw one of the roles of the Sydney Cathedral to be the home of sacred music, while the current Dean of the Cathedral does not believe that music has a role in connecting people to God? Because of Loane's commitment to the *Book of Common Prayer*? Because he opposed evangelical individualism? Maybe members of the Sydney Archdiocese will know. ■

Avril Hannah-Jones is a student at the United Faculty of Theology

Road much travelled

Bypass: The story of a road, Michael McGirr. Picador, 2004. ISBN 0 330 36493 6, RRP \$30

THE ROAD IN QUESTION is the 873km of highway between Sydney and Melbourne known as the Hume. The story is about the road and the people who made it, whether as builders or travellers. It is a story of love and death, goodness and folly, and the uphill and downhill of the human journey.

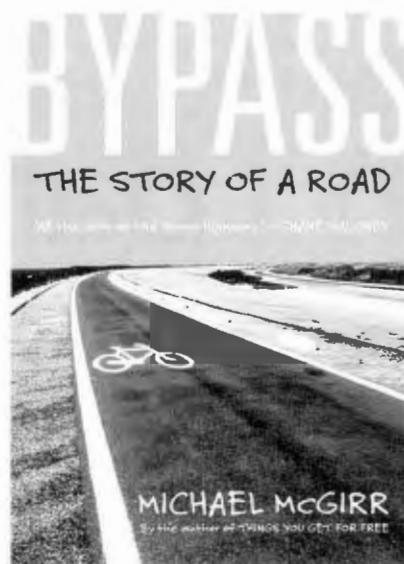
Bypass is in many ways a sequel to Michael's *Things You Get For Free*, which recounted his adventures on a long promised trip to Europe with his mother and, at the same time, poignantly reflected on the making and unmaking of his life as a Jesuit and a priest. In *Bypass* he rides an ordinary bicycle from Sydney to Melbourne. He wants to explore the Hume slowly. He encounters all kinds of people on the way, and he threads their story into the story of the road. In particular, he is joined by a dancer with a superior bike, and a more intimate journey in life begins.

The busiest highway in Australia may seem a very exposed location for such a private story, but the polarities of the public and the personal gives the book its direction. The public detail ranges from Hume and Hovell's pioneering overland journey to the proposals for the final bypass around Albury. The personal details include the confessions of truck drivers, café proprietors, curators, publicans, burger flippers, mystics, long-distance runners, poets, prisoners, priests, farmers, ghosts, Olympians, and anybody else Michael meets on the way. He has a gift for engaging people and an ear for the particular turn of phrase that captures the uniqueness of each spirit.

The story of the road is also a short history of Australia. Aboriginal people, explorers, convicts, pioneers, bush-rangers, war heroes and writers are all brought to life. Places associated with them are visited, and people who knew them are engaged. Various monuments along the way are considered, from Anthony Hordern's tree to the Dog on

the Tuckerbox, with many war memorials in between. Informal and less obvious memorials are also duly noted, particularly those marking the untimely death of loved ones on the road. Michael observes, 'The Hume hides evidence of many such rituals.' He typically takes time to telephone a number left beside one such memorial to assure a grieving family that their monument is not neglected.

There is some irony in the fact that I read this book while flying from Melbourne to Sydney and back, all in the space of 36 hours. The Hume itself is now



a bypass for most of us, yet many Australians will have travelled it at some stage in their lives. The trip used to be long enough and varied enough to constitute a minor Australian rite of passage, with many memories made and lost.

Those who grew up with the highway will love this book. It is good to be reminded of the long haul through the western suburbs of Sydney, the Razorback, the Liberty Café in Yass, the Niagara Café in Gundagai, and Pretty Sally. When Michael enters Victoria the story flattens out, as did his rear tyre. That may

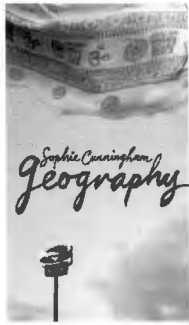
have something to do with the terrain and the length of the journey; or perhaps it is because his attention, and the reader's, has shifted to his companion on the journey and away from the road itself.

THIS IS A BIGGER BOOK than *Things You Get For Free*, full of allusion and information. My disappointments were few and minor. First, while almost every guise of the Hume was detailed, I didn't catch any reference to Highway 31 (perhaps this has to do with Michael's preference for the literary over the mathematical). Secondly, I would have liked a story or two about the Sheahans behind the Sheahan Bridge and the Sheahan driveway at Gundagai (the story I heard had to do with a local magistrate and politician, 'Frank the felon's friend': the omission may have to do with the modesty of the current generation of Sheahans). Thirdly, I wanted to know if the Hume in question was related in any way to David Hume, the author of *A Treatise on Human Nature*.

David Hume's philosophical project was based as much as possible on empirical data and as little as possible on intuition. If you couldn't see it and touch it, it didn't count for much. Australia's secular and public traditions are very much shaped by his ideas. Michael McGirr's project, on the other hand, is about what the philosophers call the isomorphism of matter and spirit, that is, the claim that you only have souls where you have bodies, and you only have graces where there are places. There is something sacramental about exploring the 'evidence of many such rituals' and respecting the invisible reality behind the visible signs. ■

John Honner first travelled the Hume in 1956, squeezed between his older brother and sister in the back seat of the family Holden, reading NRMA strip maps.

the shortlist



Geography, Sophie Cunningham. Text, 2004. ISBN 1 920 88503 X, RRP \$25

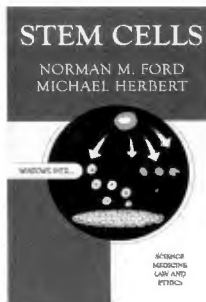
Geography is an assured and engaging first novel—charting the misadventures of a young Australian journalist attempting to navigate her way through the 90s.

Catherine traces her journey with reference to the various men in her life and the headlines of the day. Returning to India at the beginning of a new century, she appreciates how lost she has become. The concluding

pages find Catherine in female company turning away from the BBC coverage of the Twin Towers in flames.

The writing is as evocative in its descriptions of foreign cities and people as it is unblinking in its portrayal of sexual obsession. Seasoned with literary allusions, popular culture and real-life news events, it is at times poignant, delicate, and raw. *Geography* is a contemporary fable; complete with a moral gleaned from hard-won experience. It is unclear whether this experience is that of the character or her creator. Certain personal events appear to have been included (unnecessarily) on the basis of historical accuracy alone. And the voice urging us to heed the lessons of bitter experience sounds more like a direct appeal from the author than the character of Catherine advising her companion. Despite these distractions, *Geography* is a lively tale likely to strike a chord with travellers in general and young women in particular.

—Steve Gome



Stem Cells: Science, Medicine, Law and Ethics, Norman M. Ford & Michael Herbert. St Pauls Publications, 2003. ISBN 1 876 29574 0, RRP \$19.95

'Ethical issues in stem-cell biotechnology loom large in people's minds as well as in the public domain.'

From the outset of this book, Ford shows the weight that ethical questions of biotechnology continue to hold in public discussion. It is in the need for accurate

and up-to-date information amid widespread media coverage that this work finds its genesis.

This book covers the four main areas of stem-cell research including the derivation of stem cells from adult tissue and bone marrow; stem cells derived from the discarded umbilical cords of newborns; foetal stem cells derived from either aborted or stillborn foetuses, and embryonic stem cells derived from the destruction and extraction of stem cells from excess frozen human embryos which remain from IVF programs. Herbert provides a well-documented examination of current international research and procedures as well as providing objective observations concerning the medical potential and shortcomings of biotechnology.

Following the scientific survey is an outline of Australian and international legislation on biotechnological research. This provides a window into the conflicting ethics of liberalism and conservatism within many countries (particularly within the

US and Holland). Ford closes the book with a brief but succinct summary of the ethical questions, definitions and viewpoints of both secular and ecclesial ethicists with a clear and strongly argued partisanship toward the latter.

With an extensive bibliography of research papers, books, and websites both for and against stem-cell research, this book provides a thorough, though not exhaustive, overview of the field.

—Bernard Doherty



John F. Kennedy: An unfinished life 1917-1963, Robert Dallek. Allen Lane, 2004. ISBN 0 713 99803 2, RRP \$39.95

Why yet another Kennedy biography?

Dallek's fine writing and analysis undoubtedly adds to the vast body of literature. But more important is the availability of new archival material. Dallek had unprecedented access to medical files. He tells a story of Kennedy heavily medicated, in and out of hospital, and of the suppression of reports in the press. Dallek maintains that neither Kennedy's health nor his adultery affected him in meeting his responsibilities as president.

Kennedy has become a mythical figure. Although acknowledging Kennedy's faults—his overly cautious approach to race relations, the Bay of Pigs and his adultery—Dallek refuses to contribute to the myth. He does not try, as Seymour Hersch did in *The Dark Side of Camelot*, to debunk the Kennedy myth. Rather, he sets out to 'penetrate the veneer of glamour and charm to reconstruct the real man'. He achieves this with remarkable success. A more balanced biography would be hard to find.

Dallek refuses to entertain the assassination conspiracies arguing they represent people's refusal to accept that somebody as inconsequential as Oswald could have killed someone as consequential as Kennedy. An acknowledgement of the 'chaotic, disorderly world that frightens most Americans'.

A fine biography of an intriguing president.

—Aaron Martin

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flash in the pan



Iron grip

Shaolin Soccer, dir. Stephen Chow. Originally released as *Siu lam juk kau* in 2001 in Hong Kong to much acclaim and record-breaking box office bucks, *Shaolin Soccer* was one of the sell-out hits of last year's Melbourne International Film Festival.

I hope you don't like your genres sorted into neat, restrained categories, as *Shaolin Soccer* is what one might call a kung fu/soccer/comedy cross-over picture.

Pow! Ka-blammo! Or rather, Hee-ya!

Now that's in the open, it's time to put on the Cantonese cinema connoisseur cap. Warning: if your cheese-o-meter has low tolerance, you might balk at this light, fun comedy.

Director Stephen Chow stars as Shaolin monk and aluminium-can-seller Sing (Shaolin name: Mighty Iron Leg) who dreams of Shaolin kung fu regaining prominence in modern-day China.

The opening scene introduces Golden Leg (Man Tat Ng), a former soccer champion who is down on his luck, alcoholic and physically disabled, thus fulfilling all the criteria for the archetypal role of the has-been whose dream is to coach a team

of talented misfits, and transform them into superstars.

The misfits are six 'brothers' from the hallowed Shaolin Temple kung fu school, who are finding it hard to get by—there's no call for Shaolin heroes these days. My favourites are Brother One (his Shaolin moniker is Iron Head), a chain-smoking, portly man who cleans toilets at a nightclub; and stockbroker Iron Shirt, who propels the ball forward with mighty kung fu chest muscles.

Hong Kong martial arts movie fans will appreciate Kwong Ting-Wo's refreshing cinematography: the camera dances around the action, a great deal of which is tasty computer generated imaging from Centro Digital (*Storm Riders*). There's artful spinning of dough into steamed buns a hundred feet into the air by love interest Mui (Vicki Zhao) and the close-up sequence of a computer-rendered soccer ball's metamorphosis from a blazing flare to a flame-tiger that slams into the intravenously enhanced Team Evil defenders. Memorable.

Generally, the comedy in *Shaolin Soccer* is camp slapstick, but well executed. Chow's delivery is self-deprecating and witty, but occasionally risks being too self-conscious. The cast includes many veterans of Hong Kong cinema, and aficionados might enjoy a Karen Mok cameo.

Writer/director/actor Stephen Chow made his name with *All The Winners*, a spoof of a Chow Yun-Fat (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) classic, *God of Gamblers*. He's been compared with the Farrelly brothers, Jim Carrey, and Charlie Chaplin.

I doff my cap to Chow—selling the idea of a soccer/kung fu/comedy movie with Matrix-style effects, and choreographed song and dance routines—impressive.

—Gil Maclean

Smoke screen

Fahrenheit 9/11, dir. Michael Moore. Make no mistake; this film has no intention of being balanced or even-handed. It is, deliberately, a propaganda film aimed squarely at getting George W. Bush kicked out of office at the next election.

Non-compulsory voting in the US has meant that, historically, a large proportion of potential Democrat voters—particularly black, Hispanic, and working class people—have simply not participated in the political process. *Fahrenheit 9/11* aims to motivate these predominantly left thinking non-voters out of their political passivity.

Criticisms that the film preaches to the converted miss the point entirely—the film doesn't aim to *change* people's minds, its intent is to urge a specific group to vote on what's already in them.

Moore's starting point is the Gore/Bush election, which, as he argues in *Stupid White Men*, was clearly won by Gore, but snatched away by Bush through a combination of corruption and political manoeuvring on the part of Republicans, and the incompetence and passivity of the Democrats.

With his usual humour and flair for making the political personal, Moore makes his case for why Bush must go. As evidence Moore cites the corruption and illegitimacy of the Bush administration, the Bush family's economic ties to the Saudis (particularly the Bin Laden family), the incompetence and compliance of the US senate, the engendering of an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty in the American people (in order to persuade them to accept a restriction of their constitutional rights) and Bush's obsession with Iraq at the expense of any attention to al Qaeda.

The information Moore presents is nothing new, nor does he 'prove' the links he seeks to make between the different threads of his story. Indeed, his 'argument' is essentially 'where there's smoke, there's fire.' He does, however, find a lot of smoke.





The film is the cinematic equivalent of Marc Antony's speech in *Julius Caesar*—a rhetorical display of passion and emotion aimed at provoking 'the people' to rise up and overthrow an illegitimate putsch. In so doing, Moore takes up the banner of a proud tradition of leftist political documentary, especially in his emphasis on the manipulation of found footage for rhetorical effect.

The documentary tradition has long been engaged with the real world, often explicitly in order to change it. References in the media to *Fahrenheit 9/11* as a 'pseudo documentary' fail to adequately distinguish between documentary and journalism. In many ways the film is less tendentious than *Bowling for Columbine*. Such criticism fails to recognise the poli-

tics of the film for what they are—nothing more or less than a call to action.

—Allan James Thomas

A drag?

Connie and Carla, dir. Michael Lembeck. After *My Big Fat Greek Wedding's* quarter-billion-dollar success, Nia Vardalos probably thought she could indulge herself. Trouble is, you need either gorgeous looks à la Monroe, or fantastic talent à la Streisand to pull it off: star vehicles only work if you have a star. Vardalos can act and even sing, (if that is really her voice and not a dub) but as the writer of a film that draws so heavily on *Some Like it Hot* and on *Birdcage* she needed to deliver quality, and she hasn't.

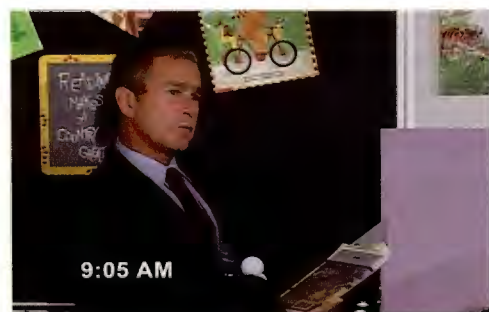
Connie and Carla is not a gigantic disaster on the *Hudson Hawke* scale—say, more like chicken pox than smallpox. David Duchovny is wasted as the romantic interest; Toni Collette, (awakening girl-double-act memories from the good bits of *Muriel's Wedding*) is wasted as Vardalos' dumb friend. Both work hard to get something out of the lame script

which, Streisand-like, feeds all the best lines and shots to Vardalos. Remember *Yentl*? As an exercise in narcissism it had academic value for psychologists, but for this reviewer it had a powerful emetic effect. So if Streisand cannot get away with it, how much less can Vardalos? The story? Two show-tune singers witness a gang killing; are discovered and pursued by baddies of little brain (e.g. did not out-wit brainless girls.)

Said brainless girls flee to L.A. and pretend to be drag queens to get work singing show tunes that are the only redeeming feature of the film.

The rest is all Vardalos upstaging Collette and vamping Duchovny. One of the problems is that the script often makes no sense; for instance, there is a load of inspirational stuff about women accepting their size and not buying into the whole thin is beautiful thing. This would make sense if Vardalos did those lines, because although she is not overweight she is not thin. But, madly, it is the reed-slender Collette who is admonished for over-eating and who has to talk about accepting one's size. Don't go with all that cheese, you gotta watch the cholesterol.

—Juliette Hughes





Going swimmingly

WHEN I SWIM, IT TENDS TO ATTRACT NOTICE: a triumphal progress from the changing rooms in my bathers (the Dawn French specials); a stately procession down the slow lane doing my personal stroke (the one that reminds you that the old name of freestyle was the Australian Crawl). It all looks rather special, partly because I hate putting my face in the water, which, though smelling hygienically of bleach, has always had someone else's bottom in it quite recently. I know that you are supposed to dive your head under and create less resistance and all that, but for good or ill, my swimming style feels comfy to me even if my head does stick up like the Loch Ness monster. My beloved, who was a champion swimmer in his youth, still cleaves the water like a swordfish, head fully submerged, arms in smooth powerful arcs, feet flipping in an idle-seeming way that gets him there and back and there again while I splosh up one length. He says my swimming is vulgar without being funny and that he will overlook it for the time being because it offsets part of the chocolate that gets eaten round our house by someone who isn't him. Yet despite all, I enjoy it: swimming is actually fun, unlike walking the dogs, who pull me briskly, ruthlessly, around the park like a pair of boot-camp sergeants.

When I saw Dawn Fraser on *Enough Rope* (ABC, Mondays, 9.30pm) in early August, looking grey and grandmotherly, it was hard to remember that she had been the greatest swimmer in the world. Being in hot water has always been her style and she is still talking out of turn. 'Disinvited' to the Athens Olympics after telling the truth about drug use by Australia's athletes, she must have felt the familiar sense of being an outcast again. For those of us who can remember, she is no stranger to official nastiness, to being the target of unfair reprisals. When she was punished for pinching the Japanese flag in 1964, the penalty was to ban the world's greatest swimmer for ten years. Today's sports bureaucrats were no more magnanimous towards her this August than were yesterday's batch of faceless, vindictive nobodies, uncaring of the ultimate fate of Australia and its reputation as an open, honest sporting nation. It goes deeper, and wider than just sport: there has to be better support for truth in public life, not just whatever slippery plausibilities that can be got away with.

We need another satirical program, one that will be as fear-

less as America's *The Daily Show*. ABC Radio National's *Background Briefing* had a really interesting program on 1 August, *Seriously Funny Politics*. In America, it seems that despite all the power of big media, there is plenty of articulate comment on public affairs. Satire is flourishing in a climate of increased suspicion since September 11. It comes mostly from the left, partly I think because there is more imagination in that direction and partly because there is so much more to laugh at from that perspective. There are in fact some right-wing comedians, but from the examples I heard, Michael Moore needn't worry because they just aren't funny. Good old radio: TV may be moribund here, but radio is still making us think, still talking to us where we are after all these years. If you want to sample *The Daily Show*, (and I do suggest you give it a try) the official website is at www.comedycentral.com/dailyshow/

You can actually download clips of some of the most sharp and hilarious bits of the show. Look under 'd' in the video index of Lisa Rein's wonderful weblog: www.lisarein.com/videoindex.html. My personal favourite is 'Daily Show on Condi Rice's 9/11 Testimony'.

SO WHILE FAUX-REALITY TV has taken all the joy out of goofing off in front of the telly, real TV like *The Daily Show* can still engage, can still make us demand something better from the duplicitous dullards who rule us. It might also interest you, when you are on the ABC Radio National website, to check the 18 July *Background Briefing* program entitled 'Psychopaths in Suits'. It might just get one pondering about how the country has been run largely by school bullies and their sucks for a very long time.

At time of writing, TV and the whole country are in limbo, waiting for the Olympics and the election. All the regular programs are so tired right now. *Frasier*. *Angel*. *Friends*—so many big series finished over the last year that it is hard to imagine what can charm us to the couch again when the Games finish. Televised Olympics are the ultimate irony, with the inactive many watching the active few. In a world full of extremes, how will we balance ourselves? ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer.

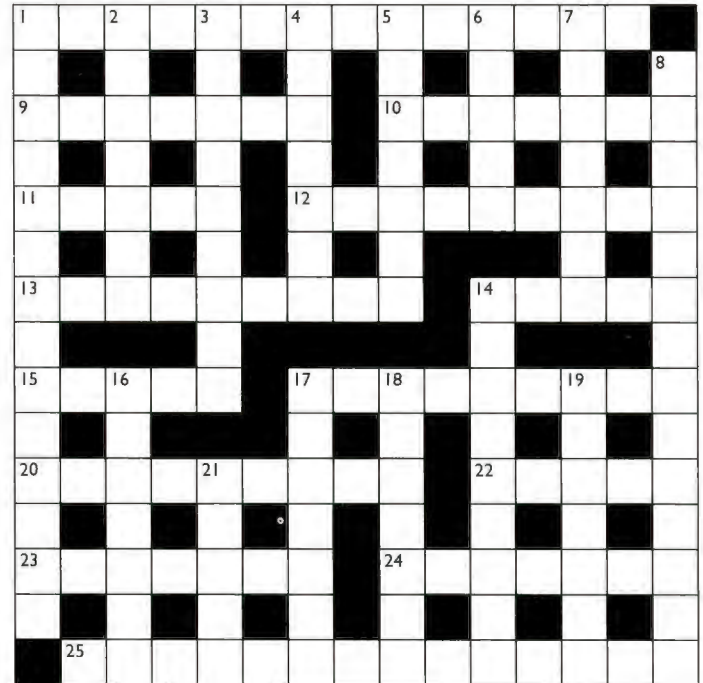


ACROSS

1. Terrific! A roll and reel, perhaps. It's more than enough! (14)
9. Kind of record—not yet beaten. (3-4)
10. Novel French detective enjoyed ragtime, curiously enough. (7)
11. This being good can be an exclamation of surprise—or should it be of sadness? (5)
12. Unfortunately, petit roué in France is in a spin! (9)
13. Sort of muscle, fleshy at both ends—sounds like double stomach trouble! (9)
14. See 15-across.
- 15 & 14-across. Magnificent culmination to the season. (5,5)
17. Having stomach trouble again? Pet CID spy is irritable. (9)
20. It would be for the better to follow this. (3,6)
22. Girl's returned for a sort of tea that might help with a 17-across condition. (5)
23. If he finds a good perch, he crows about it. (7)
24. Will you have a second helping, Mary? One, possibly. (3,4)
25. Women principally concerned with peculiar maid he emphasises? (14)

DOWN

1. Unkempt canine yarn? What's the point of this rambling account? (6,3,5)
2. Teeming cats and dogs careering! (7)
3. Check electric wire on top of door—has it been charged again? (9)
4. Portable radio receiver or car horn allowing for learner's inclusion. (7)
5. Unusual cure minister, in short, received—related to figures. (7)
6. Goodbye to all my friends in Paris. (5)
7. Team unlikely to be involved in 15 and 14-across is feeling rather blue. (7)
8. Horse obstacle racers Charles and the queen kept in church towers. (14)
14. Liberated fashion for some aquatic events at the Olympics. (9)
16. Men go up to be contained in a single flower. (7)
17. Possibly I rained old Roman coins on them. (7)
18. Maid, maybe, revs up over the worker. (7)
19. Bradman's half-score beforehand stretched his muscle sinews. (7)
21. Made public by a whistleblower, perhaps? (5)



Solution to Crossword no. 125, July–August 2004



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** Warren Buffett 1988*

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