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Love, lies and cholera

FILM REVIEW

Rochelle Siemienowicz

***The Painted Veil*: 125 minutes. Rated: M. Director: John Curran. Starring: Naomi Watts, Edward Norton, Liev Schreiber, Toby Jones, Diana Rigg.**



With his previous films, *Praise* and *We Don't Live Here Anymore*, director John Curran has proved an expert at depicting the tortured terrain of love and sex in long-term relationships.

In *The Painted Veil* he tackles that theme again, but this time expands his canvas to a grand, almost epic scale; revealing a filmmaker mature enough to explore the painful dynamics of an unhappily married couple, without pulling back from the broader social and political issues that impact on their union.

Based on Somerset Maugham's 1925 novel of the same name, the film tells the story of a vain, flirtatious young woman, Kitty (Watts), who marries a man she does not love in order to escape her controlling mother. Walter (Norton) is a rather humourless medical researcher, who whisks Kitty off to Shanghai soon after their honeymoon. Bored and lonely in the steamy city, Kitty begins an affair with the British Vice Consul (Shreiber).

When Walter discovers the affair, he's so filled with rage that he volunteers to go to a remote cholera-infected outpost. Kitty must accompany him or face a devastating divorce. Neither is vaccinated, so it's essentially a suicide mission, and he seems to take stiff-lipped pleasure in describing the painful manner in which they'll probably die.

Out in the village, among the misty moss-covered mountains, the mass graves of cholera victims are infecting the river and the rice-paddies. Walter works hard to contain the infection, and Kitty makes herself useful in the local convent orphanage, watched over by a wise old Mother Superior (Diana Rigg).

As they work and suffer, Walter and Kitty begin to take stock of each other, and the great pleasure of this film lies in watching their frozen marriage thaw into understanding, then companionship, and finally, into passionate love and devotion.

Walter, especially, is transformed over the course of the film, and suddenly we realise that like Kitty, we have moved from seeing him as a weak-chinned unlikable prig, to viewing him as strong, handsome and heroic. Desirable in fact.

Filmed entirely in China, *The Painted Veil* depicts a country boiling with internal conflict — and a growing resentment of the colonial presence. In contrast to Maugham's novel, China and its people are an integral part of the story, rather than merely providing an exotic

backdrop for melodrama.

Beautifully shot by Stuart Dryburgh (*The Portrait of a Lady*) and scored with haunting piano melodies, *The Painted Veil* is a transporting tale of redemption that feels satisfyingly old-fashioned, yet wholly contemporary.

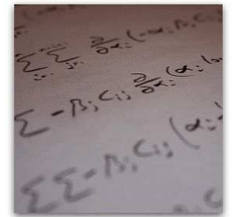
'Meaningless' maths gives way to compulsory multilingualism

COMMUNITY

Frank O'Shea

'I assure you that in real life there is no such thing as algebra.'

The quote is attributed to American humourist Fran Lebowitz, part of an address to a graduating class in her former school. It draws an uncomfortable laugh because we realise it is true. If there ever was a need for the average citizen to be familiar with algebra in order to be a productive member of society, that need has been well and truly superseded by advances in modern technology.



I spent a working life teaching mathematics and I love the subject, its logical neatness, its way of reducing nature to equations, of predicting what will happen not because God or Newton or Einstein said so, but because the algebra says so.

The highlight of my tertiary career was the day a lecturer derived Maxwell's equations for our small class. The highlights of my teaching career were the occasions when I helped my senior students derive Euler's equation:

$$e^{i\pi} = -1$$

I explained to them that what Mozart and Michelangelo and Shakespeare did to show the meaning of the word sublime, Euler did with that simple equation. I think they connected with my enthusiasm.

I do not make those points to big-note myself, though I claim that they give me membership of an elite group. I wonder how many productive, law-abiding adults — politicians, say, or judges — have ever heard of either Maxwell or Euler. Let us put 10 per cent as a working hypothesis.

That might well be a suitable figure also for those who can still solve a quadratic equation, but is surely an order of magnitude higher than those who have ever needed to do so.

Now visit any year 9 or year 10 mathematics class in any school in the country and even allowing for the absence of national curriculum, it is a safe bet that those children have struggled with quadratic equations at some time or are about to do so.

Let us not attempt to put a financial figure on this waste of effort, though surely it would frighten us. Instead, let us consider the poor kids who struggle with the work. Here is one way

of solving quadratic equations: you 'plug in' appropriate values into the expression:

$$\frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

and the answer pops out. I guarantee you, dear reader, that the whole process means about as much to the average year 9 or 10 student as it means to you. Yet, counting revision and homework, your sons or daughters will spend anything from two to six weeks of their lives doing just that: meaningless, routine work that a calculator does more quickly and without ever making a mistake.

This is only one example. I haven't told you about index laws and similar triangles and trigonometry and ships on the horizon and angles of elevation and compound interest. I admit that our students need to understand compound interest: sit them down at one of our Prime Minister's new computers with one of a dozen programs which they can find on Google more quickly than we can; let them enter the amount borrowed, the time of the loan and the interest rate and let them play with it. Did I say play? Oops, sorry.

Remember, mathematics is a core subject. There was a time when girls could get out of doing it, but equality got rid of that idea. It takes up approximately one-sixth of the time and effort of a school day. Go ahead, Mr Tanner, work out what that costs and then what returns the country should expect for such expenditure.

The simple truth is that the country does not need people who can solve quadratic equations. Today's engineers, scientists, architects and designers have computer programs to do their work for them.

What this country does need, and badly, is people who can speak Mandarin, Korean or Thai. We need people who can work in Indonesia, Vietnam or the Philippines without being taken for fools by the locals.

The OR in those sentences is intended as what mathematicians call the exclusive OR: any second language would do. Citizens of a European country would use the inclusive OR for their children's polyglot education — how often in our European travels, we have felt ashamed of our monolingualism.

Mathematics is a difficult subject. It blights the school lives of many children. Instead of the rarely questioned assumption that it must be a compulsory subject, let us make it optional after year 6. That simple act would free up our second-level school curriculum for work that would be more beneficial for the students and the country.

Give a child some competence in a language that would enable them to travel in Thailand or Korea, and we are giving them a skill for life. And that is not to note the research that

suggests competence in a second language can make study of a third or fourth language easier.

People of my vintage studied Latin at school. It was a core subject, at least for boys. I never regretted the effort I put in to learning the declensions and conjugations. But I do not regard myself as better educated than today's generation who never learned Latin. It would make good economic and educational sense if mathematics went the way of Latin.

Denying the divine

FICTION

Adrian Gibb



Numen's sign

In my world I am one of the Unabled.

Through a scientific imbalance, which I don't quite understand, I, and about ten percent of my world's populace, am unable to experience anything beyond normal human intellectual capacity. What does this mean?

Well, I cannot see a ghost, for instance, or experience a transcendental moment, or have any kind of spiritual or religious experience. Unless we can be intellectually persuaded through scientific methods that something exists, the Unabled will not, and cannot, believe in it.

For centuries my kind were scorned and looked down upon due to our lack of faith in anything or anyone beyond human parameters. We were thought of as heartless, cold-blooded, and unromantic.

Then some trials were done on all the unbelievers, and it was discovered that when the lobes that normally elicit a supernatural experience were triggered in our brains, no such experience occurred. Our brains simply don't have the chemical makeup of a believer. We were not to blame, then, for our scepticism and unwillingness to believe. We were simply incapable.

Soon the harassment of our kind stopped, pity took hold, and we were given the mantle of 'unable'. We were used in positions which could utilise our qualities. We became mediators for international conflicts, lecturers in comparative religion and philosophy at universities, scientists and newspaper editors — any position which required a complete lack of religious baggage or spiritual moral parameters.

Of course before long a school of thought developed within our kind — and I admit to being in the vanguard — that asserted that we were not in fact *un-able* but rather *super-able*. We determined that if we, the small elite of the populace, contained no ability within our temporal lobes to feel supernatural and religious experiences, then that is how nature must surely have intended it.

The rest of the population, led astray by this aberration in *their* brains, had fallen into a delusion that such meta-physical phenomena could occur. The fact that 90 per cent of the population had this aberration as opposed to our meagre numbers just reassured us of our intellectual cultivation.

On the 14th day of our summer, we have what is called 'Divine Day'. This is when the god worshipped in our world, called Numen, displays himself/herself/itself to the general populace. Numen does this by performing a miracle, often manipulating an aspect of nature that, according to all the laws of science, cannot be manipulated.

Needless to say, Numen is much loved among the Abled. Gatherings and concerts proclaiming a relationship with Numen are commonplace. Divine Day is a way of confirming this relationship and providing proof to those who believe in Numen and who are, of course, able to experience the miracle. There are many who say that one can communicate with and even see Numen every day if one is open enough.

I joined a gathering in a large meadow set aside for Divine Day and sat, bored and melancholy, with some other of the Unabled who I lectured with. While we sat staring at an unchanged panorama, the ooohs and aaahs emanating from the assembled masses signalled that the miracle was taking place.

I asked one of the Abled ones what was happening and he told me that Numen had made the moon and the sun come together as one, and emit a glorious light that was both silver and gold. 'Sounds great,' I mumbled before returning to my brooding brood and watching a normal sun pulse inconsequently.

Then I saw her. She was turned away from the miracle, and was walking slowly towards me. She had gleaming brown hair, and a smile as wide as pi to the last digit. She was wearing a white summer frock that billowed with the warm breeze.

'What a beautiful girl', I said to the Unabled man beside me.

'What girl?' he asked, bewildered.

I turned to him in surprise before returning to the vision before my eyes. As she came towards me she lifted her delicate hands and placed them on my cheeks. She looked deeply into my hazel eyes with her piercing green ones and seemed to bore into my soul.

Then she kissed me. There was no tongue, no chewing of lips like one sees in a movie. Just a long, moist, lip to lip, loving kiss.

When I opened my eyes she was gone. But she had left me with such a gift: I could see the miracle! The translucent glow of the moon seemed to be dancing with the sun's rays and the two were entwined in a beautiful and glorious haze.

Along with the visual feast, I could feel love penetrating me. My body seemed to vibrate with the amazing and awesome love I was witnessing in the skies. I had no words to describe it — indeed my intellect was so incompetent to deal with what I was experiencing I didn't even try to analyse it. Instead in silence, I let the feeling swim through me, over me, into me. I

realised this was what I had been missing all of my years.

As abruptly as the miracle began, it stopped. Moans of disappointment were quickly followed by clapping and singing and shouts of praise for Numen. I looked at my fellow Unabled, chins in their hands and looking at their watches to ascertain how much time they had just wasted.

‘Thank goodness — another Divine Day over!’ said one. ‘I don’t know why we have to attend these things. They are lost on the Unabled. We should be concentrating on more intellectual pursuits. I mean, I saw nothing!’

‘Me neither’, ‘Same here’, ‘Never do!’ came the collective responses.

‘What about you?’ one colleague asked, slapping me on the back. ‘Did you see the ‘miracle?’ He guffawed along with the others.

I looked away from the blue-white horizon and stared at the man’s derisive, sarcastic expression. I wanted to hit him.

But I didn’t hit, nor did I correct, nor stand up for the divine feelings I had experienced. I saw the humiliation which would follow if I explained what had happened to me. I saw the look in their eyes at my foolishness and my fall from the intellectual firmament into the Numen delusion. I had written many books proclaiming the intellectual greatness of the Unabled — if I were to open my mouth and tell the truth, my reputation, my job, my status would crumble into dust.

‘No,’ I said finally. ‘I didn’t see a thing.’

For 50 years I saw Numen’s Sign,

Though my intellect tried to defy it,

And each of those years, I did touch the Divine

Though I stood and did cowardly deny it!

Bricks and mortar don't care for children

COMMUNITY

Daniel Donahoo

'The real question is how to use the available funds wisely. The best evidence supports the policy prescription: Invest in the Very Young.'
—James Heckman.

The Prime Minister's proposal of setting up 'child and parent centres' across Australia was endorsed by those attending the 2020 Summit. It is a big idea, but like the republic it isn't really a new idea. More significantly, the 'evidence-based' research that supports the idea is at best being misinterpreted and at worst ignored.

At the centre of the discussion is the name Dr James Heckman. Heckman was the Nobel Laureate for Economics in 2000. His work extends across human capital and productivity. He is interested in lifelong learning and this led him to research early childhood development.

It is his research into investment into early childhood development that has produced the paraphrase, 'for every dollar invested into the early years of a child's life, we save up to 'x' dollars in the long run'.

This is one of the most misunderstood and misused quotes I have come across in my time as a researcher. It is littered through the ALP's child and family policy documents. It is used by a vast number of early childhood professionals and advocates and used as a sound bite regularly by the media.

But it is being used incorrectly. No one appears to recognise the context in which Heckman made that statement.

The claim is based on an intensive research project and longitudinal studies from the United States. These studies, such as the Perry School Study, take young disadvantaged children and put them in early childhood development programs run by tertiary educated professionals at low child-teacher ratios for up to 40 hours a week until they start school.

The studies demonstrated that children in the intensive early childhood programs had substantially improved their opportunities and outcomes in later life. They were less likely to commit crime, more likely to finish high school, would earn more and so on.

In fact, for each dollar invested in those children, Heckman has established the government saves seven to nine dollars by the time they reach adulthood. In the Perry School Study, most of these returns came from reduced crime — a factor that won't apply to middle class Australian children.



Heckman's research targets children living in significant disadvantage. As a result, his conclusions are only relevant for children in similar target groups.

Even recently, in his 2007 paper titled 'The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children', Heckman and co-author Dimitriy V. Masterov conclude that while the research highlights a need for greater investment in disadvantaged children, 'none of this evidence supports universal preschool programs'.

To suggest Heckman's results justify an investment in children's service infrastructure is a poor argument. Heckman's conclusion actually argues that governments should be directing their early childhood dollars at children of significant disadvantage, to allow them to attend a large number of hours of childhood development support each week, with tertiary trained professionals, at very low ratios.

Instead Heckman's conclusions are being used to support a universal system that simply puts all children and family services in a similar location, without necessarily even investing in better staffing levels for childcare.

This doesn't mean 'child and parent centres' are a bad idea. But are they the *best* idea? Given the potential cost I'd prefer to see investment in reducing ratios in childcare centres by 2020 before I saw new buildings. Bricks and mortar don't care for my children, people do.

Here is the crux of this grand policy idea. It doesn't actually contribute much to improving our respect for children, particularly those children who most need the support. A one-stop shop is not going to make it any easier for an isolated mum without transport to get to the maternal and child health nurse. It won't provide better intervention supports for children with a disability. It won't get to the children who need it most — unless the first ten child and parent centres they build and staff are in remote communities in the Northern Territory.

All those early childhood advocates busily patting themselves on the back for getting their issues back on the front page of the policy book are engaged in a large bout of 'group think'. They should start asking more questions and demand more for the youngest Australians. Most of them know what Heckman's research is all about. So does Kevin Rudd — it is clearly written in the Council of Australian Government's Human Capital document. The 'Better Start for Children' section begins with another Heckman quote:

'If we don't provide disadvantaged young children with the proper environments to foster cognitive and non-cognitive skills, we'll create a class of young people without such skills, without motivation, without the ability to contribute to the larger society nearly as much as they could if they'd been properly nurtured from an early age.'

As Heckman says, 'The real question is how to use the available funds wisely.' Are we using them as wisely as possible? If you want to invest billions, why not start with adequate funding for child protection and services for children with a disability, Mr Rudd?

Church's future beyond left-right divide

RELIGION

James McEvoy



Much popular reflection about the current state of the Roman Catholic Church frames the church's situation in terms of a tussle between two groups, variously named left and right, progressive and conservative, or liberal and restorationist.

Coverage of church affairs in the secular media seems dominated by this polarity and although it may be tempting to see the tension as a creation of the media, in truth it's far more than a media mirage. Catholics often speak about the greatest challenge facing their church as either one of updating, to make it more relevant in this age, or one of returning to the true identity that it abandoned in the early 1960s.

Yet it seems to me the polarity is the problem. When the church's place in the world is understood from the perspective of the restorationist-liberal divide, we are let down on two fronts. Firstly, both sides of the polarity rely on a shallow analysis of the cultural change that swept through Western society in the 1960s. Second, both sides underestimate the power of the gospel to transform this culture.

There are issues, then, of cultural analysis and of the relationship of the gospel to culture. I will discuss them briefly in turn.

Both liberals and restorationists believe that the church has adapted in response to the radical cultural change that has shaped the West since the '60s. Liberals evaluate this cultural change positively, highlighting the furtherance of human rights, the recognition of the equal dignity of women, the increasing emphasis on aid for poor nations, and many other developments. Restorationists evaluate the cultural change negatively, highlighting the decline of religious practice, the seeming failure of family life, and the many other signs of disintegration in contemporary Western culture.

Yet neither of these evaluations gives an adequate picture of the cultural shift; nor will a trade-off between the positive and negative evaluations give a fuller picture. The cultural change in the West over the last 40 years is much more subtle and complex than either of these positions allows.

In a sense, both positive and negative evaluations portray part of the picture. Much is admirable in the development of Western culture, the furtherance of human rights being a fine example. Much is also frightening in the West's cultural shift, for example when significant relationships like marriage are treated instrumentally — seen as there to be taken up or set aside as determined by an individual's happiness.

So, both get part of the picture but simple positive or negative evaluations of cultural change won't suffice. What's needed is an analysis that would allow us to judge how best to foster the admirable developments in this culture while avoiding its debased forms. And that analysis is far richer than the polarity allows.

Second, both sides of the liberal-restorationist polarity underestimate the gospel's power to transform culture. Restorationists tend to withdraw from contemporary culture because of its supposed degenerate, godless state, and they step out into the world only to fire a volley of shots at their latest targets — a strategy with minimal likelihood of success. Liberals, focused on updating the church, tend to lose sight of the significance for our world of the great transformation to which Christian faith calls us — to open human life to the divine.

From my perspective, the greatest challenge facing the church today is to find a way to express Christian faith in this new context. This requires a broad and deep analysis of the culture in order to distinguish authentic developments of the gospel-inspired way of life from those aspects of the culture that negate the gospel.

But once stated in this way, the challenge has just begun. Both the individual and the Church itself are called to live in such a way that those with whom they share the planet could discover the love of God embodied in very ordinary existence. Simplistic solutions won't communicate what's required here. A life lived in love with God while attentive to God's action in the world has a far better chance.

Summiters treated to mix of showbiz and serious performance

POLITICS

John Warhurst

The 2020 Summit, like the Olympic Games, has turned out to be a mixture of showbiz and serious performances by elite participants. The Prime Minister was very aware of the former and some of the displays, including the opening session, were very well done indeed. All half dozen performers at the opening, including Matilda House, Sania Nakata, Michael Jeffery, Michael Wesley and the co-chairs Kevin Rudd and Glyn Davis, did well. But later plenary sessions sometimes became self-indulgent and wasteful of the limited time available if intellectual work was the only aim.



It was effectively a one-day summit. This makes the successes remarkable and any failures more explicable. Trying to judge its success is difficult because any evaluation has to take into account its different levels and its different sections. Not only are there different indicators of success but some of the ten sub-sections probably turned out better than others.

The Summit certainly has to be considered as a total experience. The extras were integral to the successes. These included the more than 8000 nominations, the more than 3600 individuals who made submissions, the many local summits, the more than 500 school summits, the Jewish and African summits, the national youth summit and much more. This whole package was an impressive achievement in democratic engagement.

The Summit proper was subject to some of the limitations of venue and process noted in the weeks leading up to the event. The meeting spaces looked as crowded and as ill-fitted for their purpose as those found in many a university. Even the Great Hall was not quite big enough for the plenary sessions. The 40 small groups seemed as variable in their composition and achievement as any group of tutorials in a large first year university class.



However the government did successfully shape the process in the final weeks. The riding instructions from Rudd helped. He asked each section for one big idea, and three policy ideas, including one that came at no cost. Furthermore the work of the facilitators seems to have been of the highest calibre under the circumstances.

But, as demonstrated in the events leading up to the Summit, many participants as well as many observers still struggled with understanding the difference between ideas, policies, visions, aspirations and general directions. The outcomes were a mixture of all of these. This has meant that the strictly hard-headed were probably disappointed just as others were delighted by vision statements. This complicates the first

indicator of success, the generation of new ideas. But there were many of them.

Judged against the second indicator of success, energy and momentum, the summit was clearly successful. This exercise in large-scale participation was grasped enthusiastically and much of it was transmitted to the viewing public. For every discontented participant there were probably ten who left with fresh ideas, recharged batteries, better government connections and a wider network of like-minded activists. This is no mean achievement, likely to be especially significant for the B rather than the A list. Within the summit membership there were gradations. For the 25% making up the A list it was just another opportunity among many. For the 75% on the B list it was probably their best opportunity ever to have input into policy making.

The final indicator is what it means for the government and for party politics. In the short term the summit will be good for the government. All the talk of non-partisanship and the reforming centre has effectively taken the wind even further out of the Opposition's sails. By surrounding Rudd and his ministers with the best and the brightest in such a large community event it has engendered substantial further good will. Many of the government's general inclinations and directions have been given a stamp of approval and few, if any, have been stymied.

The longer-term is harder to predict. The government has promised a full response by the end of the year. This will be harder to manage, especially as understandably many of the participants have a sense of urgency about their ideas, like foreign aid and climate change. They want action and they want it now. Rudd will have to emphasise the often forgotten 2020 time frame. Implementation must be carefully staggered. Some ideas will have to be delivered over two or even three terms of government if they are not to be brought down by undue speed.

Thinking big doesn't necessarily mean immediate implementation. But the prevailing culture seeks a quick fix. Balancing these twin impulses means hastening slowly in some instances. Yet such an approach is often contrary to the demands of adversarial politics and the electoral cycle.

Humanity reflected in the diversity of books

REFLECTION

Brian Doyle

They have faces, of course — covers for what is inside. Often the cover belies the interior, just as the bright alluring faces of people often hide the seething and confusing stories beneath them.



And they have spines of various strengths and tensile pliability like we do. Spines that sag and crack and creak, spines that are wonderfully strong and flexible for a few decades and then invisibly deteriorate and lose their glue. They have arms too, so to speak — a book opened wide very like arms flung open. And their back covers, so dense with explanation and blurb, look very like the hirsute backs of heads;.

Like people, no book is exactly symmetrical, the printing of pages leaving the edges just slightly awry, as we are always, despite all preparation and presentation — one shoe tied loosely, the beard unevenly trimmed, one eye larger than the other, the spectacles askew, all the bills paid but the one that arrives with a snarl.

Some books are as small as a hand, some as fat as a head, some broad as a beam, some very nearly the size of a coffee-table. Some are faint as a whisper, some old and brittle, their skins leathery, their stitching unraveling. Some are so fragile that a good sneeze would reduce them to dust, yet the ancient fragile ones are so often the ones with the most dignity and the most remarkable stories inside — just like people.

Some blandly bound but roaring inside, some brightly bound but insipid, some missing pages, some amputated, some excoriated, some burned in piles, the ideas inside too incendiary for the authority of the moment. Some imprisoned for the ideas therein, some confined to cells. Some stolen, some kidnapped, some tumble into rivers and oceans, a few have travelled into space and hovered weightlessly under the patient and uncountable stars.

Some humble, some pompous, some evil, some crammed with inextinguishable joy. Some born to delight children, some to poke the powerful, some to pierce the heart. Some have no words at all and some are so wordy as to be unintelligible. Some earnest, some nefarious, some renowned, most obscure. Some advance the universe in extraordinary ways, many distract and delay rather than enthrall or edify. Some filled with lust, some with song, some brave, some craven. Some famous for no reason, others incredibly unsung.

All have layers upon layers and are more subtle than they appear. Most get better the longer and deeper you pursue the story. Some end with a bang, some just slide quietly to a

close. All are born in mysterious ways — we haven't the slightest idea how a wriggle of story wends its way into complex creation.

Some we cannot live without, some we leave after years of struggle, some we cannot comprehend or engage, some we cannot forget. Some we wish to have by our sides always, their familiar faces beaming nearby, their voices warm and wise, their spines welcoming your fingers, their very scent a redolent country you itch to visit and are loathe to leave. Yet some we dislike, even detest. Some we set ourselves against with faces like flint.

Many we ignore too easily, many we will never read, a million we will never know, such being the way of the world.

Some once meant everything and now mean nothing. Some grow quietly in our hearts as the years go by. Some spoke powerfully once and then faded. Some arrive suddenly, stunning and refreshing, from unexpected quarters of the compass, and you know in moments you will be friends for life. Some are dressed in motley and rags but a light shines forth adamant and strong. Some are all thunder and no rain. Some are wiser than their own words can measure.

All matter in ways great and small, as all house stories, and stories are what we are and how we speak and how we mill mundane into miracle.

We take so them for granted. We think new ones will always be freely born. We see them so often we forget how extraordinary they are; until, once in a while, maybe this morning, we think for a moment what the world would be like without them.

APEC echoes in World Youth Day idealism

AUSTRALIA

Tony Smith



As the symbols of the Catholic Church's World Youth Day youth event were paraded in his diocese, one Bishop likened the Cross and Icon to the Olympic torch. The comparison is interesting. The Bishop noted that both WYD and the Olympics had the power to connect people, and that their symbols represent the hope the world places in young people to promote a peaceful future.

In both international movements — one peaking in July, the other in August — mainly young people seek to advance ideals that should benefit everyone around the world. While some WYD objectives are relevant only to the Catholic Church, if the day succeeds in its aim to 'build bridges of friendship and hope', then the cause of world peace should be advanced.

Both supporters and critics of WYD have compared its likely impact on Sydney with that of the 2000 Olympic Games. Unlike those inside the Church, who stress spiritual benefits, the general community is entitled to assess the potential economic impact.

While supporters argue that pilgrims are tourists who will inject large amounts of cash into industries such as accommodation and hospitality, critics suggest the costs are being socialised and borne by the state on behalf of the community. Critics have also pointed to the enormous costs involved in hosting the Pope, and the security crackdown, which many citizens will find inconvenient and some will regard as insulting.

The Olympic Games also involve huge security operations, and not just because of the presence of heads of state. All world media events provide great opportunities for political protest, whether peaceful or violent.

When the Olympic flame left the 2004 host country Greece to head towards Beijing, international news agencies revealed the presence of protestors, who used the torch event to draw attention to human rights issues in China and in particular to the lack of political freedom and autonomy in Tibet.

The images arising from those demonstrations suggest that the protestors were mainly young people and that they hailed from many countries. It would be interesting to know whether there is a common membership among WYD pilgrims and Olympic protestors. It should not surprise if people who are committed to international understanding are also committed to universal human rights.

While the 2000 Olympics is usually cited as the forerunner of WYD, last year's Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum provides a more challenging comparison. When Sydney hosted

APEC the security precautions were immense. Huge fences were erected around Sydney in a display that must have delighted the enemies of open government, and the police force acquired a water cannon allegedly for use against violent crowds.

The only knowledge most Australians have of such devices is the television footage from dictatorial regimes where they are used to suppress political dissent.

APEC demonstrators were also young and idealistic. They believe 'free trade', as mooted by the agents of globalisation, is a means of diverting attention from the concentration of wealth in the hands of elites. They point to the irony of a rhetoric of freedom for multinational corporations existing beside international political anarchy and domestic repression.

On the institutional level, religion and politics should remain separate. On a more personal level, an individual's religion can lead to engagement with politics or isolation from it. In the early 21st century, politics intrudes more deeply in personal affairs than ever before, and people who proclaim their faith publicly are challenged to respond to matters political.

Observers in the broader community will make a range of responses to WYD. Perhaps they will be impressed by the pilgrims' faith and wonder why it so strong. What seems more likely is that they will search for signs of social responsibility and wonder whether the Church is an agent for social progress or yet another institution demanding obedience rather than giving fearless leadership towards justice for the world's have-nots. Somehow the pilgrims need to demonstrate their passion for this ideal.

Tibet trauma not written in the stars

BY THE WAY

Brian Matthews

You probably don't realise that Venus is in aggressive mood in Aries and spoiling for a fight. Pluto, meanwhile, from his sinister realm of dark shadows, is being provocative at just the critical moment and, quite apart from the effect on fiery Venus, is causing jealousy, obsession and control-freak behaviour all over the place.

As an inevitable and obvious result, relationships are under pressure. In case you hadn't noticed, all through April Aries' purifying fires have been 'blazing through heavy relationship swamps'. With the full moon in Scorpio on 20 April we are urged to 'watch for juicy essence' rising like an ashes-spurning phoenix.

In short, and to borrow from Bill Laurie, there's a good crowd in and it's all happening in the cosmos. Who would have suspected such a maelstrom of emotions, encounters, perfidies and attacks was constantly assembling and re-assembling itself among the apparently innocent stars?

Not me, being perhaps a bit slow on the Zodiacal uptake. The astrological narrative is not easy: it makes some leaps, sidesteps and plunges that even the most accomplished and daring fiction writer would jib at.

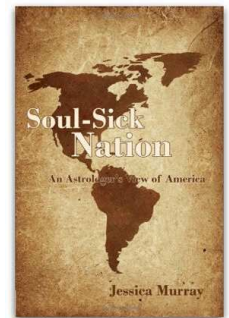
Take astrologer Pascal Le Segretain. He reckons 'Venus ... in her warrior garb (Aries) ... was calling out superpower China (Pluto) for its "hidden" unfriendly human rights policies'.

Guessing that 'such events have a longer arc', he has recourse to 'the geo-politically astute author, astrologer and San Francisco resident Jessica Murray'.

Author of *Soul-Sick Nation: An Astrologer's View of America*, Murray explains that 'this particular Mars cycle has been hammering away at us for months, going direct-retrograde-direct while opposing Pluto in the sky'.

'Two words: power plays. The Chinese clearly wished to distract the world from their ruinous campaign in Tibet ... Distorted Mars means violence, and Pluto-opposite-Mars means violence ... Then came the explosive Full Moon on the Equinox that made the Mars-Pluto opposition a Grand Cross, the most stressful aspect in astrology; signalling that the next three months are going to be about flinging into the open all manner of domination/ submission scenarios — unsavory on the personal level, downright genocidal on the geopolitical level.'

And so, Jessica concludes, 'the Chinese chose exactly the wrong time to try to make a show



of being the Benign New Superpower ... Their longstanding attempt to destroy Tibetan culture has broken through into mass public awareness.'

Or, in purely astrological terms, the Moon is in the Seventh House but Non Sequitur is banging on the door. Is that Pluto whirling past with his characteristic dark force or just shards of Russian and American space junk?

But maybe I have misconstrued this aspect — a favourite astrological word. Dynamic Astrology IV, at Positiveastrology.com, makes an alternative view clear to even the feeblest minded Capricorn:

'There is more than one way to calculate the progression of an aspect and the positiveastrology synastry application uses a more accurate algorithm to calculate the curve of the progressed aspect. This method averages the aspect distance month by month; the previous method was to calculate the aspect difference as a yearly average.'

Mired in the old yearly average routine, I found myself marvelling at the 'collision graphs' the positiveastrology synastry application produced to illustrate the remorseless inevitability with which Paula Yates came across Bob Geldof, then Michael Hutchence; how Charles intersected with Diana and then Camilla; how all of them wished they'd missed the Duke of Edinburgh; and how the Olympic Torch could have avoided protesters by going through Heathrow Terminal Five. Amazing astrological stuff: a zodiacal finger on the starry pulse of the universe.

Serious astrologers scorn Nostradamus' complexity, but the venerable Gallic prophet was at a disadvantage. You try translating 'In the 20th century the BMW Series 323i will introduce a locking nut security facility' into Medieval French. Just because it comes out as 'The Russian Grand Bludgeon will persecute the Grey Bears of the Southern Forests' doesn't mean he was wrong.

But for all their glib outlandishness and pseudo-scientific jargon, contemporary astrologers still fascinate. This is because they have what journalists call 'a hook'.

Listen to this: 'you are capable of reaching the greatest heights'; 'you are trustworthy'; 'you have a meticulous, sharp mind', 'you are a wonderful judge of character'; 'you are a big thinker'. That's me they're talking about. Is there anyone under the sign of Capricorn who wouldn't believe that, especially as it's so accurate.

Astrologers in the end tell us what we want to hear. The impossibly distant stars whisper in echoing riddles and astrologers, tuning in, wrap these gnomic, intergalactic ambiguities in a veil of space dust and sprinkle it on our ready-to-be-deceived eyes.

So much for stellar philosophy. I'm off to the Swamp of Relationship for a stubby or two of those juicy essences.

Female bishop sets Church on wider path

RELIGION

Charles Sherlock



The Rev. Canon Kay Goldsworthy will be consecrated a Bishop in the Church of God on 22 May, in St George's Anglican Cathedral, Perth. She will be the first woman to become a bishop in an Australian church, although women have been appointed as bishops elsewhere in the Anglican Communion since 1989.

No-one who knows Kay Goldsworthy would question her spiritual, intellectual, pastoral or administrative capacity for episcopal ministry. She was one of the first women ordained deacon in 1986, and one of the first ordained priest, in 1992. She has held school, parish, diocesan and international positions.

But Bishop Goldsworthy will face significant pressures. Some will arise from the nature of a bishop's vocation. Others will come from those who cannot accept the legitimacy of a woman as bishop, and from those who have been waiting for this moment for decades.

The Anglican bishops, meeting this week in Newcastle, have worked hard on ways of accommodating opposition, but at local level this is unlikely to be a large issue. Opponents will have little direct contact with the new bishop.

Supporters of the ordination of women, on the other hand, can place unhelpfully high expectations on both the women concerned, and on the church as an institution. As time has passed, these pressures have eased, but may be reignited. Where clergy constitute a mix of women and men it is soon realised that holiness, effectiveness and pastoral sensitivity are not the preserve of either gender.

But deacons and priests function largely in congregations, where they become known personally. That they are male or female is less significant than their ordained identity. A bishop is seen much less regularly at parish level, and a new bishop is something of a curiosity to those who do not know them already. Bishop Goldsworthy may need considerable patience to help some supporters move beyond stereotypes.

And a bishop is a representative person, a personal sign of the wider church to the congregation. Here, many people retain the deeply-held presumption that men can represent both women and men, but women can only represent women. This is unlikely to be an issue in Goldsworthy's home diocese, where she has undertaken episcopal roles for some time. Yet it may present issues in relating to other parts of the Anglican Church, and ecumenically.

This situation will be eased considerably when another woman is nominated or elected as

bishop in the near future — it is not as if Australian women with the capacity to be a bishop are few in number. That would at least dilute the pressures of being the ‘token woman’, especially in bishops’ meetings, where Bishop Goldsworthy would be a lone voice, and with the best of intentions still expected to give ‘the women’s point of view’.

Fortunately, she has the opportunity to experience working in a mixed group of bishops when she participates in the Lambeth Conference in July.

One interesting aspect of this appointment is the date. It is traditional practice for a bishop to be consecrated on a ‘red-letter’ feast day. In 2008, 22 May is the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, ‘Thanksgiving for the Institution of the Holy Communion’ — ‘Corpus Christi’. It is a feast included in the Australian Anglican Calendar only in 1995, a tangible sign of ecumenical progress.

The celebration of this day in this year may bring challenges, but it may also be a sign of hope of Christian churches walking down a wider path.

Smooth ethical edges give way to corruption

ES CLASSIC

Moirra Rayner

The greatest threat to our security is not SARS or terrorism, but distrust of government. This goes far deeper than our disdain for leadership squabbles.

We never have liked politicians. Australian police have been repeatedly exposed as corruptible. Governments in three states — New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia — have had to set up anti-corruption bodies to protect the integrity of public decision-making from erosion by officials' private interests. Governments increasingly form partnerships and develop relationships with business and the non-profit sector to achieve their public policy goals. The likelihood of conflicts of interest has never been greater.

At the same time, slippery values and an incapacity to identify, eliminate or manage conflicts of interest are obvious. This may be the outright, 'children overboard' variety, or the rambling incoherence of Rodney Adler when asked to tell the Royal Commission how he distinguished between his own and his company's interests.

When a major management consultancy firm is offering consulting and auditing services to the same client, and can't foresee and prevent an inherent conflict of interest, the public should be concerned. The failures of government and the private sector — whether that be the financial-planning industry, AMP, HIH, Enron or the tobacco industry and its advisers — wound not only the wallet, but our willingness to work together.

Having a conflict of interest is not, in itself, wrong. It is the potential for wrongdoing and corruption that must be avoided. We are not very good at this in Australia, but we need to be. There is much opportunity for discretionary and casual misuse of power in our relative isolation, interlocking loops of power elites, the increasing mobility of employment between the public and private sectors, the rising numbers of joint projects and temporary public offices, and the relatively small number of individuals making and influencing public decisions.

In Australia, the narrow range of relationships is perhaps the most fertile ground for conflicts of interest. In a small town there is nothing like six degrees of separation between business, government and social cliques.

It takes distance to recognise conflicts of interest and their potential risk. Dealing with them demands clarity and transparency. It's a problem not only in the small-town cultures of most of Australia, but also in complex cities and in more densely populated regions such as Europe



because economic unions will only cohere if their members trust each other.

That is one of the reasons the OECD set up a project for managing conflict of interest in the public service. Its recently released draft guidelines — discussed in a Sydney workshop with anti-corruption and public sector commissioners from Australia and New Zealand in June and led by one of the authors, Janos Bartek — adopted a generic definition of conflict of interest:

A 'conflict of interest' involves a conflict between the public duty and private interests of a public official, in which the public official has private-capacity interests which could improperly influence the performance of their official duties and responsibilities.

Note the use of the word 'could'. Finding that you have a conflict of interest is not a revelation of wrongdoing. Bartek describes it in terms of chess: when you find that your king is in check, the situation must be resolved, and if it is not, the consequence will be the end of the game.

A conflict of interest is only a potential one if the public officer is never in a position to make a decision that each interest could affect. But if the elements of the definition are met, there is an actual conflict of interest. This is true even if the public official with conflicting public and private interests — in, say, the benefit of awarding a contract to a friend or future political mentor that may be at odds with achieving the best price for the public purse — was not actually influenced by these personal preferences.

If he or she were influenced, the 'conflict of interest' has already become misconduct, abuse of office or at worst, corruption. But if it is identified and acknowledged, and adequate steps are taken to make sure both that misconduct does not result, and that it is made apparent that such steps have been taken, then the conflict of interest has been managed properly. The true aims of public service have been met: the protection of the common good and of public service ethics, and the preservation of public trust in government.

It would be helpful if we had Australian standards for recognising and managing conflicts of interest. New South Wales' ICAC and Queensland's CMC are working to produce a tool for this in Australia. It is timely.

Most of Australia's 'corruption' scandals have developed from cosy arrangements among powerful men to whom ethical edges have become smooth under the gentle buffing on the conference tables and in the boardrooms of power.

That seems to be the way that even men standing on the high moral ground in religious institutions fell into error. They failed to recognise the conflict of interest between their duty to protect the rights and interests of sexually-abused children, their duty to their fellows and colleagues, and their duty to limit the financial and legal liability of religious institutions.

Anwar may not be Malaysia's political messiah

POLITICS

Helen Ting



With the expiry of a five-year ban, former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim today regains his freedom to contest a Malaysian general election and internal party election.

Anwar's political comeback is as stunning as his spectacular fall from power following his 1998 fallout with then boss, Prime Minister Dr Mahathir.

The general elections, in which the ruling National Front lost its two-thirds majority in federal parliament and in which the Opposition won control of five state assemblies, have been described as a 'political tsunami'.

For the first time ever, Anwar's multiracial party, Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR, or the People's Justice Party) won more parliamentary seats than any other opposition party. As a result, Dr Wan Azizah, Anwar's wife, who was also re-elected, has become the Opposition leader.

Commentators have interpreted the results as an endorsement of PKR's electoral pledge to replace decades-old race-based affirmative action with needs-based assistance programs. They argue that racial politics and the battle cry of Malay hegemony have finally been superseded.

'The people have voted decisively for a new era where the government must be truly inclusive and recognise that all Malaysians, regardless of race, culture or religion are a nation of one,' an elated Anwar declared the night the electoral results were known.

The darling of the foreign press, the charismatic and capable Anwar generally receives positive and enthusiastic coverage. Widely seen as the uncontested Prime-Minister-to-be should the opposition gain control of the Parliament, many Malaysians are ready to give Anwar another chance.

But many others harbour lingering doubts. One key concern arises from uncertainty over the extent of Anwar's commitment to multiculturalism.

Until the late 1980s, the conversion of a Muslim to another religion could be validated by making a statutory declaration to that effect. More recently, state registrars have refused to recognise such conversions unless validated by the Syariah courts. Recent cases have shown the Syariah Courts are reluctant or refuse to do their job. A Malay convert to Catholicism, Lina Joy, contested this requirement in the civil courts in order to have the religious status recorded

on her identity card rectified without going through the Syariah courts.

Lina lost her case and, while this came as a disappointment to those who are already alarmed by the continuing erosion of the role of the civil courts as the guarantor of constitutional rights including religious freedom, Anwar declared his agreement with the verdict.

Secondly, even though several PKR campaign pamphlets attacked the government's marginalisation of Mandarin and Tamil-medium primary education, the PKR election manifesto contained no measure to rectify the situation. This silence raises doubts as to whether PKR will change the status quo should it win government.

Then there was the question of who would become Chief Minister in Perak after the opposition won that state. The Perak constitution stipulates that the state government should be headed by a Malay although this requirement can be waived by the Sultan. In this instance, none of the newly elected state assemblymen of the Democratic Action Party, the Chinese-based opposition party which gained the most seats, were Malay. Yet, rather than considering the merits of the candidates, Anwar simply objected to having a non-Malay as the Chief Minister, citing the need to protect the Malay position politically and economically.

During the election campaign, he also attacked the previous government for raising petrol prices, and declared that he would lower them, once in power. Such a measure would be immensely popular, but to implement it would cost billions of ringgit in petrol subsidies. Is this the policy of a 'far-sighted' leader when this money could be used to finance a long term solution to the prevailing over-dependence on private cars?

Anwar, who plans to return to the parliament in a by-election, has already announced that he is moving towards forming a new federal government with the help of defectors from the ruling coalition. A question arises as to whether such a 'back door' approach to gaining power is fair to voters, who tend to vote for a party rather than individual candidates. Besides, the opposition parties have previously backed an 'anti-hopping law', which would require elected representatives to resign and stand for by-election should they switch political allegiance.

It remains to be seen whether they will apply the same standard to themselves if and when they come to power.

Olympic Torch a symbol of oppression

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

The power of marketing has obscured the original symbolism of the Olympic torch as an effective celebration of human rights violation.

The modern Olympic torch relay was initiated by the organisers of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. It was carefully orchestrated by the Nazi leadership to uphold the image of the Third Reich as a dynamic and expanding influence on the international culture and economy. It fitted perfectly with the Nazi belief that classical Greece was an Aryan forerunner of the modern German Reich.



Olympic officialdom has since cast aside the torch's original link with political oppression and human rights violation by asserting that it's about sport, not politics, and that the two are mutually exclusive.

2008 is not the first occasion on which protestors have attempted to expose the flame's link to human oppression. Before the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, a veterinary science student at St John's College at the University of Sydney was successful in upstaging the torch with a fake flame that rose from kerosene-saturated underwear, before Sydney Lord Mayor Pat Hills. Frankster Barry Larkin and fellow students organised the action because of the torch's Nazi origins, and the fact that it was given 'too much reverence'.

Last week, Fr Shay Cullen wrote that the Relay is 'a very political gesture' first used by the Nazis to 'justify their self-proclaimed superiority over others'. Cullen is a Columban missionary in the Philippines who has been shortlisted three times for the Nobel Peace Prize. He was writing in the context of the 'unarmed saffron robed monks kicked, clubbed, beaten, tortured, imprisoned and killed in Tibet simply because they want religious freedom and dignity'.

He suggested that we should all 'take a good look at ourselves and our beliefs'.

'Is it not natural to resent and resist being conquered, occupied and dictated to by a more powerful nation? That's what Buddhists, Muslims, Christians and people of all faiths want and have a right to.'

From his own experience in the Philippines, he has come to the conclusion that the United Nations is a 'toothless organisation with no power to change anything or stop the pain of those being tortured and abused'. 'Only people of conviction have to do it and the more united we are, the more effective we will be. May the flame of oppressive pomp and power be extinguished and the light of justice and truth shine out.'

Rudd Social Inclusion also makes economic sense

POLITICS

Paul Smyth



Every so often Australia gets a chance to remake the policy foundations that shape the life of its citizens. Today a new policy framework is under construction: social inclusion. It ought to be the basis for a new integration of economic with social prosperity.

The Federal Government is still forming its approach to social inclusion. Sometimes it seems minimalist. The 2020 Summit papers, for example, add social inclusion to the usual fare on strengthening communities and families.

This might indicate an agenda little more than the place-based neighbourhood scale initiatives we have been familiar with for over a decade from State Governments. While these have value, they will not shift the structure of disadvantage unless they are integrated with economic policies and a renewal of mainstream social services.

That social inclusion could represent just such a radical overhaul of our social and economic policy was the message delivered by Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard at the Australian Council Of Social Service conference last Thursday. Here we see a wide-ranging social inclusion agenda. The vision is to reverse the inequality which has coexisted with prosperity. It includes the spatial dimension of disadvantage but extends to include a number of key areas across the life cycle, including the early years and school to work.

For the first time in decades, equality is said to be a friend of efficiency. Moreover, social inclusion is not to be an activity of some marginal departments focused on 'the excluded', but rather a whole of government exercise driven by a cabinet committee co-chaired by the Prime Minister and his Deputy.

Member countries of the European Union including the United Kingdom have had a social inclusion framework for nearly a decade. Drawing on that experience, Kate Green, the Director of the UK's Child Poverty Action Group, encouraged a recent Brotherhood of St Laurence seminar to think big and make the most of this reform opportunity. Challenge the government from the outset, she said, to benchmark our social policy performance against the world's best practice and settle for nothing less.

How should we proceed? First the big difference about social inclusion down under is the way that it is being embedded in economic policy from the beginning. Unlike the EU, where social inclusion has come to be treated as something of a residual of good economic policy, Australia's National Reform Agenda has recognised from its beginning in 2006 that excessive social disadvantage is not only a break on economic participation and productivity, it also

becomes very costly if left unattended.

With these principles already accepted, the immediate challenge is to establish a system of accounting for the economic returns on sound social investments in human capital so that they become legitimised in the same way as public spending on roads and bridges is now.

The economic dimension of social inclusion is also apparent from European research on 'the excluded'. This shows they are not some kind of permanent underclass. Only a small proportion experience all the dimensions of exclusion over long periods. Rather we are looking at a large pool of people who move back and forth from welfare to low paid employment. Our approach to social inclusion will need to clarify how minimum wage and welfare policies can best work together to combat exclusion while developing new suites of policy to encourage employment retention and advancement.

Some might feel that the importance attached here to the economic foundation of social inclusion somehow diminishes social rights. This must not be so. Social investment to enable people to be productive is an enhancement of their rights.

At the same time social inclusion must be about more than being productive. It should also recognise the worlds of caring, culture, education and other civil society endeavours. Here, citizen entitlements will differ across the life cycle. A complete social inclusion framework will support citizens realising their full potential in each transition from their early years to retirement and beyond.

The historic opportunity represented by the social inclusion agenda would not escape the notice of long time *Eureka Street* readers — Frank Castles' much quoted 'farewell to the Australian welfare state' appeared in its pages, and highlighted the demise of 'wage earners' welfare'. Since then social inclusion has emerged as our first real opportunity to make a safety net of economic and social participation suited to the 21st century.

Memorable voices invigorate Ireland Anzacs study

BOOK REVIEW

Brenda Niall

Kildea, Jeff. *Anzacs and Ireland*. UNSW Press, 2008. RRP \$39.95

Just over four years ago, a memorial plaque was unveiled at Belvedere College, the Jesuit school in Dublin. It honoured all former students who died as victims of war. It therefore honoured men whose beliefs took them in quite different directions.

Many Irishmen volunteered to fight for Britain and the Empire in the First World War. Others took part in the 1916 Easter Rising and in the subsequent struggle against Britain for Irish independence. A third group, whose members painfully divided the Irish people, were those who died in the civil war of 1922-3.

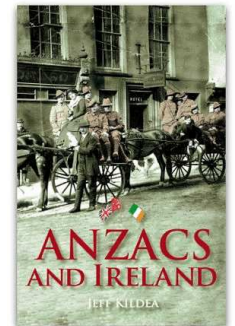
Jeff Kildea's book, *Anzacs and Ireland*, goes some way towards explaining to a new readership why the gesture of reconciliation — not just at Belvedere but nearly everywhere else — was so long in coming about.

His central focus is the Irish and Australian forces who fought side by side at Gallipoli. He rightly deplores the fact that to have fought in what is seen as the 'wrong war' is to be an embarrassment, best forgotten. The 'Great Oblivion', as Irish historian FX Martin described the mood of denial, obscured the part played by nationalists as well as Empire loyalists in the war against Germany.

Some thought that by showing solidarity with Britain, they would hasten home rule for Ireland. Others saw Ireland's future within the Empire. For Irish-Australians, the same tensions existed, though from a different perspective.

In April 1916, just one year after the Gallipoli disaster, the problem of divided loyalties was made more acute by the Easter Rising in Dublin. Doomed to fail, it became, like Gallipoli, a legend more powerful than a military success could have been. The Irish men and women who raised the republican flag might have been dismissed as dreamers or fanatics — if the savagery of the British response had not made them all heroes.

Although Kildea aims at even-handedness, his account of the background of the Rising is curiously confused and muffled. The Irish who fought at Gallipoli, he says, did so 'with a similar mix of motives that inspired their cousins down under; they enlisted to serve Ireland, recently granted home rule, as much as the empire'. To suggest that Ireland already had home rule is quite mistaken. When Britain decided to defer home rule until the end of the war, the Irish had good reason to be sceptical; there had been so many delays, so much bad faith.



The leader of the Irish parliamentary party, John Redmond, believed Ireland's best hope lay in supporting England's war. Others, like Pearse and Connolly, decided to seize the moment and declare a republic. Right or wrong? As Yeats pondered the question: 'Was it needless death after all? /For England may keep faith.'

Kildea's sketchy treatment of the background of the Easter Rising oversimplifies the section in which he describes the part played by Anzacs who were caught up in the fighting. On leave in Ireland, preparing to go back to the trenches, they were called on to help deal with the rebels. In one bizarre episode, a few Australian sharpshooters on the roof of Trinity College were said to have saved the building. A few months later, in a ceremony in the Provost's Garden, these and others of the Allied troops were awarded silver trophies. As Kildea acknowledges, these men had little idea of what it was all about. That is one reason why *Anzacs and Ireland* makes sad reading.

The study is most memorable for giving a sense of individual voices. Kildea's valuable research in primary sources brings a universal quality to the experience of war, whether in the Dublin streets or the larger battles. The letters home to Australia, sometimes shocking in their naïveté, are very moving, as are Kildea's accounts of the neglected war memorials and unvisited graves which now are getting due remembrance.

How the West was warped

FILM REVIEW

Tim Kroenert



It's interesting that a film by *The Age* political cartoonist Bruce Petty should receive a scathing, one-star review from that paper's main Melbourne rival. That's not to suggest the *Herald Sun* review lacked objectivity *per se*. After all, this is a highly idiosyncratic film, bound to provoke extreme reactions.

Nonetheless, the review lends weight to the idea that a viewer's response to *Global Haywire* will depend partly upon their own political sympathies, and their sense of good will toward the filmmaker himself.

The filmmaker in question is Bruce Petty, an astute septuagenarian and award-winning animator, cartoonist and regular *Age* contributor. He's crafted a film as ambitious and chaotic as its title suggests. *Global Haywire* takes talking head interviews with po-faced political prophets and pastes them alongside outrageous animated satire. The result is like a political cartoonist's answer to a schoolboy scrapbook.

At the centerpiece of this scrapbook is the story of Vince. While providing a nod or two to Leonardo da Vinci in full-blown inventor mode, Vince also serves as an unsubtle metaphor for Western Civilisation. His invention, a massive vessel designed to fly its passengers to 'freedom', becomes a microcosm of the world as we know it — Vince and his cronies luxuriate on the top deck while the rest of the world languishes on the lower-class B-deck.

This animated allegory proceeds full-tilt through the pages of history, from the grand inception of Vince's freedom machine to its ultimate, current malfunctioning. It's a heady journey, packed with metaphors and ideas.

Petty provides firmly grounded signposts along the way — the likes of Beirut-based journalist Robert Fisk, political commentators Noam Chomsky and Gore Vidal, and activist Arundhati Roy offer their thoughts on 'global haywire' and Western Society's benign (at best) complicity in the current state of the world. These 'talking heads' supply points of contact between Petty's outrageous allegory and our chaotic reality.

Petty also provides a framework for the cinematic pandemonium: a committee comprising real and fictional, animated and live-action characters assembles to study Vince's story and try to find a solution to the world's problems. In an already busy film, this additional element tends to confuse matters, rather than focus them.

It's on this point that most criticisms of *Global Haywire* will pivot. There is a lot going on in this film — possibly too much. Audiences need to be thoroughly versed in history, global

politics and world economics to keep track of all of Petty's claims and ideas.

Debatably, the animated allegory of Vince — which is brilliantly conceived and well thought-out — would be more resonant if it were allowed to stand, straight-faced, on its own; a modern-day fable. The film purports to be about the power of comedy to address serious issues, yet by propping the satirical element up with expert talking heads, Petty doesn't seem to take his own claim seriously.

The converse is also true. With heavyweights such as Chomsky, Fisk and Roy bringing characteristic insight and keen analysis to their sound bytes, it's a shame they are obscured by the more outlandish goings on in Petty's animations. It could be that *Global Haywire* is two engaging (but very different) short films mashed into a less successful feature.

At the very least, this is a unique and challenging film. Certainly viewers would benefit from repeat viewings, in order to better connect the manifold ideas that skitter throughout. As a conversation starter, few films are more worthy — we on the top deck would do well to consider how we came to obtain this privilege, and what can be done to ensure those on the lower deck get a fair deal as well.

Country war memorial

POETRY

Bob Morrow and B. M. Oakman

Country war memorial

Half an acre, roughly mown,
a single row of twenty-one
neat blocks of grey cement,
each occupying just the space
a head would, resting on the clay.
On every block, a bright brass plaque:

In memory of

name, branch of service

Lest we forget.

Three Hansens, two McNeills.

A bunch of plastic pink carnations;

two white roses, limp,

scorched by frost.

Oak leaves in drifts

against the fence.

— *Bob Morrow*

God's place

This was the house of a tired god, one who was making-do
until retirement, letting things go, watching the paint peel,
suffering the fowls of the air to roost in the gables,
ignoring rosy glass fractured by the stones of the scornful;

a neglected house assaulted side and front by angry traffic,
surrounded by cafes of reflection and sellers of fine raiment,
its message-board out-spruiked by blandishments of usurers.
Yet this was the house of a god of green pastures and still waters,
a restorer of souls, a guide on the hard paths of righteousness,
a friend in the valleys of shadow — but an old god set in old ways
unappealing to the clappers and stampers on the hillsides
who shout their hallelujahs by the score, a god whose debts
were unforgiven and whose chattels have been flogged
but whose prime half-hectare has soared beyond belief;
An Opportunity Heaven Sent, cries the agent's board.
—*B. N. Oakman*

Lotus flowers bloom regardless

POETRY

Anne Carson

China on My Mind

Beijing shadows chase the kite flyer across the square
Our musician guide tells how he was made to smash his violin, his love
Fifty years on and grief still shapes his hands; splinters in his palms
Taoist statues wear ragged wounds in place of noses
Practitioners snow-bound in Siberia; statues humiliated at home
Beijing shadows chase the kite flyer across the square
Allowed back to the monastery, the monk first mends kicked-in doors
Half his time in practice, the other opening gates for strangers
Fifty years on and grief still shapes his hands; splinters in his palms
Empty after fullness; women forced to miscarry mourn their unborn
Mattresses soaked in tears and no one to staunch the flow
Beijing shadows chase the kite flyer across the square
The Yangste is a brown water vortex to another world
In the lea of the giant Buddha the boatman strains against his oars
Fifty years on and grief still shapes his hands; splinters in his palms
Lotus flowers brave the smoke-grey air, bloom regardless
The Falung Gong follower keeps faith behind closed doors
Beijing shadows chase the kite flyer across the square
Fifty years on and grief still shapes his hands; splinters in his palms

On Giving Away Your Old Red Scarf

The elegance of our dance — like brolgas courting — on earth
and in air too — from body to spirit, spirit back to body —

our dance was what I loved about us most. Riding luck
on your motorcycle, slipping earth's tether, moving
to gravity's secret hinge. Our flirt with weightlessness;
two immortals swinging between heaven and earth.
You fell into torment the way we'd fallen into love —
without warning, bodily — losing your sky-blue nerve,
your way, your resistance to gravity's pull, falling
like a stone from the sky, flat on your back on forest's floor,
carbon monoxide for oblivion. A new centre of gravity in me;
the core fragile, easily shattered, the cast of each day grave
as a cemetery, full of the dark birds of death,
circling, whirling, very near, close as to carrion.
Your death was the bundle I lugged like weighted animal skin
through the years' tundra, eating dirt and rock.
Gravity teaches humility, patience, lays down gravitas
like an open misere, but who wants lessons such as these?
Two decades before I become gravid with words
as a womb is with babes, a comb with bees.

*

The cemetery engraves a threadbare hill, parched
paddocks, bleached grass. Death has cobbled your parents
and me into in-laws for a 20th anniversary visit — my first.
I knew you'd been cremated but the smallness of the mound ...
just big enough to rest the plaque on, ashes under.
The absence of a grave, of a body shaped mound
shouts gone into the dismal air,
shocks me into grief all over again.

*

Your scarf — from the rug shop in Marrakech — used to be red
as cyclamen, vivid as blood — faded now to palest rust.