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PO Box 553
Richmond
VIC 3121
Australia

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

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Gospel bit players

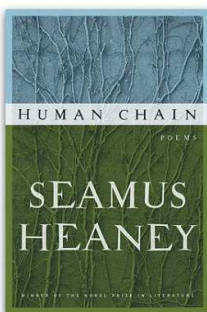
BOOKS

Philip Harvey

How often in a good story, especially a story we value, does our attention move from the main characters to the incidental ones? The supernumeraries, as they say in the theatre. We start wondering what those other people are doing, or thinking. Why are they there anyway? Are they just scene-fillers, nothing out of the ordinary?

The Irish poet Seamus Heaney has obviously asked this question, if we are to understand his new poem 'Miracle':

Not the one who takes up his bed and walks
But the ones who have known him all along
And carry him in —
Their shoulders numb, the ache and stoop deeplocked
In their backs, the stretcher handles
Slippery with sweat. And no let-up
Until he's strapped on tight, made tiltable
And raised to the tiled roof, then lowered for healing.
Be mindful of them as they stand and wait
For the burn of the paid-out ropes to cool,
Their slight lightheadedness and incredulity
To pass, those ones who had known him all along.



Heaney suffered a mild stroke in recent times and the poem speaks of the humbling awareness of how, when sick, vulnerable, helpless yourself, others step in to tend and care. As the poem also makes clear, care can be an incredibly efficient and physically challenging business for those involved. The helplessness of the one in need only increases his powers of observation of those doing the help.

The conventional homily on the miracle of the lame man rightly focuses on his faith and hope. But Heaney, I think with a certain sense of humour about the whole affair, draws attention not just to the faith and hope of the man's friends, but also their charity. It is they who will go to any trouble to help their mate in his hour of need.

The poet even takes on the tone of the preacher, asking us to ‘Be mindful of them’ — and it has to be said, we have probably never been particularly mindful of them before. He deliberately repeats Milton’s phrase, ‘They also serve who only stand and wait.’

This poem is followed in his latest collection by the title poem, ‘Human Chain’. Same verse form, same observation of physical labour, same sense of communal involvement dedicated to a single, satisfactory objective.

Seeing the bags of meal passed hand to hand
In close-up by the aid workers, and soldiers
Firing over the mob, I was braced again
With a grip on two sack corners,
Two packed wads of grain I’d worked to lugs
To give me purchase, ready for the heave —
The eye-to-eye, one-two, one-two upswing
On to the trailer, then the stoop and drag and drain
Of the next lift. Nothing surpassed
That quick unburdening, backbreak’s truest payback,
A letting go which will not come again.
Or it will, once. And for all.

The marvels of Heaney’s art are here to enjoy: plain English, but compressed with meaning, the poem’s argument shifting without show but always with telling effect.

Notice, for example, how the human chain starts not with a close personal experience but the abstract observation on TV, or internet, whatever, of aid workers passing bags. This simple human action starts a pattern of recognition, for he too has engaged in his time in the same basic work, which he describes in solid terms. This serves both to identify with others he has seen doing the same and to remind himself of his, and our, mortality.

For just as ‘Miracle’ has at the back of its mind the greater question of giving in order that another may not merely survive, but live again, so here the process of shifting sacks of grain is ultimately all about feeding others, and doing this in order to feed yourself.

The human chain is not only the line of people moving the sacks, it is any line of people moving the essentials for living. The human chain is the process of doing things together, often without a word spoken. And, as the last verse testifies, the human chain is also the backbone, the links of the spinal column that make possible all of this work, the straightened chain that

makes us all human.

At one level, this is a work poem of effortless simplicity, no storyline at all. But Heaney shows through the description of manual labour how both he and his fellow workers are the main characters and the incidental ones through the process of engagement. They, and we, are the supernumeraries of the everyday exercising, often without words, our part in some agreed purpose.

Doing something for the common good is the end result of thinking it. It might be nothing out of the ordinary, yet Heaney recognises in the poem that we are bound together through labour and destined to live moment by moment an existence beyond words. An existence that is unsayable, but known.

Standing back from both poems we may notice one more remarkable image, common to both. In 'Miracle' the men's backs ache and the stretcher handles are 'slippery with sweat'. While in the second poem, we hear of 'backbreak's truest payback'. These are crucifixion images, the cross you might have to bear when you take on something you know is right.

Careful to avoid laden religious language, Heaney in his unforced yet forcible manner, presents us nevertheless with experiences we all immediately understand. And it is through the process of giving to others that new life starts to happen for all those involved.

Heaney even gives intimations of resurrection: 'incredulity' passes. The stretcher bearers are witnesses to the miracle. The bag lifter remembers that 'nothing surpassed that quick unburdening'.

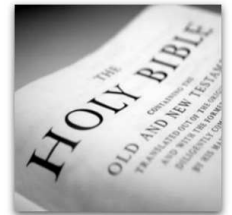
Atheist's Easter guilt

RELIGION

Debi Hamilton

I'm middle-aged. I'm standing at the door of a new life, waving goodbye to my children. One is working as an apprentice; the other has just started university.

A friend rings. He has been thinking about Easter. What did I know about the Crucifixion and Resurrection? What did Bible stories mean to me? What had I taught my children?



Here's the bald news I gave him. I was raised an atheist. I had a lot of exposure to the Bible, because I was a huge reader, and because I was sent, involuntarily, to a Methodist boarding school for three years.

I didn't tell him that, during those three years, I went to church every Sunday, in a crocodile line of submissive girls, two by two through the park in white gloves. I had scripture lessons, sat through Sunday night homilies and Bible readings, and was sometimes caught unawares in the dormitory by an earnest, proselytising girl who had the bed next to mine. She had a beautiful heart and a determination to convert me. It never worked.

I told him I hadn't read Bible stories to my children. They had been raised as atheists. Probably what I should have said was that we raised them as sceptics, or non-believers. I have a problem with some of the harder edges of atheism.

Looking back, I think it may be a pity that I didn't leave a Bible lying about the house; that my children didn't hear those stories.

In my defence, I didn't know how to do this. The Bible had been offered to me in such an unsympathetic way that I had no interest in exposing my children to the same thing. I'd experienced it less as an offering of stories and more as a weapon in a campaign to bring me to heel.

That said, I loved Aesop's fables and fairy stories as a child, however transparent the moral. And I pored over literature from the sublime to the rubbishy, fascinated by all the windows onto the world. I was dimly aware then, and am acutely aware now, of the role that stories play in addressing the three big questions: where have we come from? why are we here? what does death mean?

I can see that my exposure to the Bible, however clumsily handled, gave me several treasured things. Firstly, a store of rich and beautiful language and evocative imagery. Think of that first half-page of Genesis: 'and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the water'.

Secondly, a sense of history; I feel the pull of some long line to those ancient desert people.

Thirdly, illustrations of moral principles. I did struggle with, or downright disagree with, some of them (I was horrified by the preparedness of Abraham to kill his son, for example). However, the story of the good Samaritan, and the many instances of Jesus challenging the cruel orthodoxies of the time, were good and powerful stories.

Have I deprived my children of some richness? Some important way of seeing the world? A beautiful catalogue of references that will never reverberate for them in literature and poetry?

I have no answers. Yes, they have missed out on these things, and I am responsible. But will it ultimately matter? Each of us treasures her own cultural and moral inheritance beyond all others, and cannot conceive of a world constructed otherwise.

Does it matter that I know something of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, come Easter, and my children only think of a holiday and family time laced with chocolate? Well, yes, but not for any logical reason I could give. My children did receive, in other ways, a sound moral education.

What I can observe is that both of them are more generous, gentle, socially able, and honest than many Christians I have met. That is not to say I have not met some extraordinary Christians — it's just that there does not seem to be any correlation between religious belief and goodness.

Given another go at parenting, I think I would make more effort to find ways to give my children the Great Stories (including those from the Bible). What my children did get from me and from the public education system seems to have turned out some fairly morally-successful human beings. But I do grieve for the lack of poetry and of a sense of handed-down wisdom in their lives.

Sex scandals and SNAG soldiers

MEDIA

Lyn Bender

A young woman cadet, believing herself to be engaging in a private and intimate sexual encounter, was betrayed by her lover. He secretly filmed the scene, and the footage was seen by his mates and her work colleagues.

In my view this was sexual assault and group rape. even though at the time the victim believed herself to be engaging in a consensual act. She told investigators that, when shown a still of herself that had been circulated, she felt physically sick.

The media publicity given to this [incident](#) has unleashed community debate ranging from criticism of the defence force culture and allegations of a boys club, cover-up mentality, to broader questioning of our societal values. Listening to the top brass of the defence force wrangling about what to do about the 'female' cadet scandal is like taking a trip back into the 1940s.

Angus Houston, chief of the defence force, said, 'We have worked very hard on women and engaged many prominent women in order to get our act together as far as women'. Neil James, the executive director of the Australian Defence Association, lamented 'that with the wide ranging inquiry and publicity it will most likely be impossible to rehabilitate the career of the lass'.

In response to a call for women to have a broader range of roles in the defence forces, James responded that 'that is alright if it works ... and it depends on bio-mechanical capacities'.

[Dr Kathryn Spurling](#), visiting fellow at the Defence Force Academy, has written and lectured widely on the issue of women in the defence force. She contends that there is an urgent need to address the 'warrior ethic' which at its worst is sexist and racist. She cites the case of a young woman who, having topped her year at Duntroon, was told she could not serve on the ground because she menstruates.

Dr Ben Wadham of Flinders University has described 'group solidarity' as positive, functional and protective in combat. But he adds that it can produce the collective neurosis of 'group think'.

Was this collective lack of empathy and conscience operating when the group of six watched the 'private' act of sex of an unknowing young woman?

Spurling and Wadham call for fine-tuning of the warrior culture. Spurling sees the opening up of women's opportunities in the forces as at least part of the answer. I would add that men also need to be in touch with their feelings and encouraged to develop appropriate

self-disclosure and empathy.

According to Jung, the '[Warrior strides in](#) and conquers the villain or slays the dragon. The Warrior is proud and courageous. He stands up for what is honourable and right. At times he may see everything as black and white, and this may lead him to label others as 'Friend' or 'Enemy'.'

The warrior needs to be able to come home, however.

The armed forces training is an intense socialisation process that shapes and alters accepted ways of behaving in society. James says turning a civilian into a soldier is a process of preparing them for war, and war is always horrible. This is problematic. The thousands of men and women in the defence forces are predominantly aged between 18 and 25. Young adults, whose brains are still forming.

They are also citizens who must return to their communities, families, friends, partners and children. Soldiers are trained to be hyper-vigilant and to react instantly. Soldiers' wives often find that their partner suffers a short fuse, quickness to anger, impatience and restlessness.

The reality is that, despite 'humanitarian' purposes such as so called peace keeping missions, the military is a vast killing machine. Emotionally wounded warriors may return from wars in a state of heightened arousal; due, in part, to trauma, but compounded by the stoic warrior culture that makes it difficult for these men to seek help, recognise and talk about feelings, or admit vulnerability.

They may self-medicate with alcohol and find great difficulty in fitting back into civilian life. The women in their lives often tiptoe around them. They become the secondary victims of this unyielding warrior ethic that prepares people for war but not for peace.

Defending defence

MEDIA

Jim Molan

There is now a plethora of issues that have emerged from the ADFA Skype sex affair.

Skyping a sex act without the knowledge of at least one of the two participants was reprehensible, as was watching it. Remember that the act of having sex was explicitly against the rules that every cadet understood, so there is plenty of liability to go around.

The demand for the immediate sacking of the male involved has been complicated by the suggestion that he also may have been unaware of the Skyping. Sounds unbelievable, but only an investigation will reveal the truth. If we had sacked him on day one, as so many demanded, injustice would have been heaped on injustice.

The act of an uninvolved cadet who went to authorities was commendable, as was the speed with which the authorities acted (albeit with a few ragged edges — shaving cream, apologies etc.) but only an investigation will clarify these issues because already many accusations have been found to be untrue.

I will make my own decision on how appropriate it was to proceed with the female cadet's previous alcohol and absence charge parallel to the Skype incident once I have seen the investigation. I do not necessarily agree with the Minister that proceeding with the older charge was 'inappropriate, insensitive and completely stupid'.

It would only be a sackable offence if the intent was to humiliate her, and there is no suggestion that was the case. The Minister may know something I do not, but I doubt it. But that previous charge must still be addressed at some stage, and public talk of 'quashing' by the Minister was in error.

The Minister must feel embarrassed that he publicly implied that he led the demand for the second AFP opinion, when it was the military leadership that initiated it. There was no cover up — quite the opposite.

None of us know what happened between the Minister and the CDF in relation to a resignation threat, although the Minister would not have been so direct in his denial had there been any possibility of such a threat later coming out. I conjecture that as soon as the Minister thought about the hole he had dug for himself by his initial comments, he would immediately have realised the position into which he had put the CDF. There would have been no need for the CDF to threaten to resign — the Minister would have been amenable to any compromise.

Defence needs reform in a dozen areas, and the Minister cannot do it by himself. Neither can he do it without the defence leadership being on his side.

Even though he may have acted rashly, this and the next generation of ADF leadership will acknowledge his authority and show him loyalty, no matter how irrational he is. If he is truly a reformer, and not just a scared politician afraid that the realities of defence will destroy his career, then defence will welcome his leadership.

The firestorm of ignorant criticism of the ADF, its 'culture' and its leadership was mostly not deserved and could be counterproductive.

The individual complaints of abuse or mismanagement are different. Every complaint of mistreatment must be investigated and action taken. If a complaint occurred 40 years ago, then it still needs investigation. But all parties in the investigation have their rights, and a witch hunt now is just as bad as the initial crime then.

Proportion is important. Over the last 40 years of complaints, there could have been as many as 6-800,000 separate individuals in the regular and reserve ADF, assuming the majority serve for five years. Every case is a tragedy, but let's see how many cases of abuse and mismanagement come out, compared to the total number of Australians serving and the nature of that service. Perhaps defence is brilliantly successful. Rhetoric can be about zero defects and zero tolerance, but it is best to manage for something more realistic.

In my view, given what we know now, wanting to remove the Commandant was wrong. The Minister apparently accepted the compromise of sending him on leave, but that is still sub-optimal before at least an initial, independent investigation.

At the time of writing, the AFP have not yet ascertained what crime has been committed.

Defence has the same problem as society in relation to young people's attitudes to sex, alcohol and social media. Given the defence environment, I wonder if perhaps the ADF handle it better than most. Defence is a reflection of society, but we average people seem to achieve much with Australia's average recruits, even if we do fail some individuals.

I would like to comment on the 'defence culture' that is being constantly referred to, but I am not too sure what it is. Is the defence culture misogynist? I have met few misogynists and none in the ADF, although we probably have as many as in society. Is it 'blokey'? Seeing that the ADF is 88 per cent male, some aspect of maleness is certainly present. Maleness or blokeyness is not necessarily bad in itself: assaults or intimidation, mismanagement or cover-ups, or intolerance are bad.

Defence probably has as many homophobes as society in general, which is sad. I have met only one, and he came from another generation.

Is defence culture a warrior culture? I wish the ADF had far more of a warrior culture: a culture where the most important aspect of any serviceman or woman's life is to prepare to win in battle. Winning in battle is as much about the unit, ship or squadron cohesion as it is about weapons and training. Cohesive units are not characterised by hate, intolerance and

mismanagement. The eulogies for every one of our heroes killed in Afghanistan and the statements from our heroes awarded bravery medals indicate that they come from cohesive, successful units.

The Skype sex act has morphed into a civil/military authority issue. Professors Paul Dibb and Hugh White used it to say 'the military have not shown themselves to be neutral, apolitical and obedient to civilian authority' and 'people in the ADF have got used to thinking that the minister is just another stakeholder and not the boss'.

Are there some silly people in defence who once said their loyalty lies with the Governor General and not the government of the day? Probably, but defence is big. I will bet it is a view none of its leaders have shared for years. Defence does not see the minister as only a customer for the security function that defence provides. They see him as both the boss and as the customer. That is what makes this relationship unique.

Since I became a senior officer about 16 years ago, I have never heard any view put anywhere that anyone but the minister was the boss. We certainly whinged in private about the silliness of some ministers, but there was no disloyalty.

But what we all fully understand is the difference between civilian control of the military exercised by the minister, and the desire that was present in previous civilian public servant generations, even during White and Dibb's period, to want to control the military themselves.

White also used the Skype sex incident to speak about inefficient defence spending. He criticises defence for 'spending a great deal of money ... on capabilities we do not need, such as \$8b on air warfare destroyers'. This might be going a little too far, from bedroom to the high seas. Hugh has a right to make this accusation, it is his opinion that we do not need the ships. But he is not infallible. His is only one opinion and a lot of good people disagree. It is not a failure of leadership and culture to disagree with Hugh White.

I agree with the Minister that the 'biggest challenge we have in defence is to improve personal and institutional accountability'. But accountability starts with the Minister. He is the boss and defence will do as he bids, but he must be accountable to someone for his actions. A series of defence ministers since 1976 have personally failed to be accountable for failing to fund their own five White Papers on defence.

Defence is so strangely organised that accountability is almost impossible at the moment. Should we have sacked the Chief of Navy for the failure of the amphibious fleet, or should we sack the head of the organisation responsible for the maintenance of that fleet?

It is ministers over many years that have set up the current organisation of defence. Of course the Minister should run defence. And accountability should start with him. If he accepts accountability, as he wants others below him to do, he may find he has to go to cabinet and ask for more money. Defence is grossly underfunded. It should be praised for keeping the

amphibious ships going for so long without adequate funding. Once the Minister works out who is responsible for what, I welcome sacking for failure. As long as he is also accountable.

The Minister, supported by the CDF, has directed that a number of inquiries take place. This will be good as long as the actions of the Minister himself are also assessed.

Having shown his displeasure with his view of the ADF culture, he went on to admit that despite all the steps he has now taken, there is no guarantee that actions such as the sex Skyping incident will not occur again. Isn't this the issue? Such grubbiness will occur. It is how you handle it that is important. If the Minister had not stepped in, it now appears from all revelations, that the situation would have been handled well.

Then the issue of women in combat arose. The ADF has women in combat, but not in units specifically for combat at close quarters. In fact, the ADF is at least as advanced as any nation in the world. The myth of women in Israeli combat units has been well and truly exposed. But if Australian society wants women in combat units, then Australian society will have women in combat units.

But I suspect the ADF's critics are looking more at giving women the right to be in combat units. Women are not joining the ADF in areas where there are now no restrictions to their employment, just as women are grossly under-represented in emergency services across Australia, and there are no bans at all on their participation there, and no 'ADF culture' to blame.

All of these issues will consume ADF leadership over the next few years in a way that most outside big government bureaucracies would never believe, even if not one woman volunteers to be in a combat unit or if all the investigations show the ADF to be a paragon of virtue. All the other problems with the ADF, of which there are many indeed, will just have to take a step down in priority. And that is a shame.

Christian and Muslim bullets and blood

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***Incendies* (MA). Director: Denis Villeneuve. Starring: Lubna Azabal, Melissa Desormeaux-Poulin, Maxim Gaudette, Remy Girard . 130 minutes**

This Quebecois Oscar nominee (best foreign language film) is as intricately plotted as a mystery novel, keeps a critical eye on history and the causes and consequences of conflict, and possesses the mythical weight of a Tolkienesque quest story.

In this case, it is a quest for truth and understanding: adult twins Jeanne (Desormeaux-Poulin) and Simon (Gaudette) have been charged with gathering the strands of their dead mother Nawal's (Azabal) mysterious life.

Nawal's will is heavy with penitent symbolism. She is to be buried in an unmarked grave, naked, face-down, her back to the world. The will instructs the twins to return to her homeland in the Middle East and deliver two envelopes: one to their father, the other to their brother. Only once this task has been fulfilled will she be worthy of an honourable burial.

Jeanne and Simon are perplexed: as far as they know, their father is dead, and they have no brother. They are infuriated by what they see as a final prank by an eccentric and emotionally distant mother. But Jeanne is coaxed by notary and family friend Jean (Girard) into accepting the mission.

Incendies discloses two accounts of history. One is pieced together by Jeanne and, later, Simon, as they visit pertinent locations from Nawal's life, rubbing at the grime on the pane of time and peering through the clean spots at the partially revealed picture beneath.

The other unfolds in a series of chronological flashbacks containing Nawal's tragic and harrowing biography, which is marred by the bullets and the blood of interreligious conflict. The roots both of her own personal formation and of Jeanne and Simon's origins lie among the ruins of this fraught history.

The two accounts seem not always to agree. But they are of course different perspectives on the same story. Ultimately they elucidate each other. *Incendies* is a gripping, intricate epic, whose themes are amplified by individually powerful dramatic sequences:

Residents of a Christian orphanage have their heads shaved by Muslim militants. The camera zooms in on one small boy, who stares into it with an expression of fierce defiance. The head-shaver forcibly tilts the boy's skull forward, but the gesture only intensifies his stare, now directed from beneath a lowered brow. 'Don't forget about me', the stare says, and it's both a clue for the audience and a threat to any who oppress him.

Jeanne meets with women from her mother's village. The natural French-speaker communicates in imperfect English via a local girl who translates into their Middle Eastern dialect. The women's disdain for Nawal has fermented over time but the reasons for it are transmitted only stiltedly to Jeanne across the gaps in language and culture. Tabooed truth is hard to come by, but it can be harder still to bear once it is known.

Nawal, disgraced and exiled from her Christian village for an affair with a Muslim man, conceals her crucifix and hitches a ride on a bus laden with Muslims. Shortly, the bus is halted by a squadron of bloodthirsty Christian militants. What ensues is a formative moment for Nawal, and, for the audience, one of Incendies' most powerful sequences. But it merely foreshadows greater horrors that lie in wait.

It seems every moment is imbued with a mystical core and mythical embellishments ('The Woman Who Sings' and 'Nihad Of May' are two mythical figures who emerge as key players in the mystery). So much so that even the film's overly contrived resolution contains a sense of predestination.

Stations of the Cross reinterpreted

VIDEO

Peter Kirkwood

Recent debate in the Australian Catholic Church over the new English translation of the Mass shows the difficulty of expressing age-old spiritual truths in contemporary language and symbols. An associated challenge is how to communicate with the broader culture about those truths in a way that's meaningful and enriching for all.

For the last five years at Easter, the Uniting Church at [St Ives](#) in Sydney's north has risen to this challenge. Led by minister Doug Purnell, this parish has commissioned leading contemporary artists to depict the Stations of the Cross. These representations of Christ's passion are then exhibited in the church over Easter, and used as a basis for lectures, discussion, prayer and reflection.

This spiritual practice is usually associated with Catholicism, and its origins generally attributed to St Francis. But Purnell explains that as the Stations of the Cross appeared in medieval times before the Reformation, it is a form of spirituality that 'belongs to all Christians', including Protestants.

In this special Easter interview for Eureka Street TV, Purnell shares his insights into some of the works in this year's exhibition. His enthusiasm is infectious, and he obviously has deep respect for the efforts of the artists as they grapple with expressing their particular episode.

Purnell is well qualified to lead this exercise as he straddles the disciplines of art, ministry and theology. He's been minister at several Uniting Church parishes in Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales, and has lectured in pastoral theology and the arts at a number of theological schools in Australia and the United States.

He gained his doctorate from San Francisco Theological Seminary with a thesis entitled 'Doing theology through expressive art', and is a practicing artist of some standing, with ten solo exhibitions and eight joint exhibitions held over the last ten years at various galleries in Australia and the USA.

He has been artist and scholar in residence at a number of prestigious institutions including the Andover Newton Theological School in Boston, St Mark's National Theological Centre in Canberra, Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington DC, and Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey.

He is a director on the board of the Blake Society for Contemporary Religious Art, and was one of the judges of the Blake Prize in 2004. He is in demand as a speaker, making regular presentations at conferences here and overseas.

He is a prolific writer, contributing chapters to a number of books, and articles to a range of journals. He has published several books including *Working with Families*, *Exploring Your Family Story*, *Conversation as Ministry* and, most recently, *Being in Ministry: Honestly, Openly and Deeply*.

Uncomfortable Easter and Anzac Day

APPLICATION

Andrew Hamilton

It is very rare — once in every hundred years or so — for Easter to arrive before Anzac Day. It happened this year. And the conjunction of the two holidays is a happy one.

The story of Easter always fits well with any form of serious business. It has space for personal and domestic grief and death, and offers promise of life beyond grief. It expands to meet the large seasons of the human heart, the stages of life's journey and the vulnerability of the natural world in which we live. It also offers hope that we and our world might one day be transformed.

The Easter story is serious and far reaching enough to embrace reflection on large catastrophes like the war in Libya, earthquakes in New Zealand and Japan, and flooding in Australia.

So Easter fits well with Anzac Day. Or better, Anzac Day fits well with Easter. Anzac Day recalls matters of life and death, tragic events. So many young men died in a lost battle that was marginal to Australia's interests and welfare.

Much of what was said by generals and politicians, and what was written on gravestones for the consolation of relatives and the reassurance of the people, was taken from the Easter story. 'They died that others might live.' 'They made the supreme sacrifice.' 'Their death was not in vain.' Grief needed to be housed in the Easter story.

But Easter also tests the meanings we find in great loss and disaster. It challenges any easy consolations we may find or offer to others, especially our temptation to describe people's deaths as useful to others and to minimise the suffering and lasting harm caused by natural catastrophes and wars. In the Easter story the connections that link death, in its various forms of loss, ageing, catastrophe and grief, with life and meaning are much more mysterious and complex.

Easter does not sweeten the death of Jesus. It remains a brutal, degrading, dismembering, dirty affair. The Catholic practice of hanging crosses with the image of the tortured Jesus in classrooms and over hospital beds makes the point that this is the only starting point for thinking about what rising to life might mean. There are no shortcuts.

To ignore the casual brutality, pain, death and diminishment of war by depicting it as an adventure for young soldiers is judged as cheap nonsense when set alongside Easter. Anzac Day is first of all the remembrance of painful death and of the loss of so many people and of so much promise.

Nor does Easter canonise good intentions. Jesus' acceptance of death for others was important, but by itself it did not give meaning to his life and death. Choice and good intentions are never sufficient to give meaning to any one's life. Ultimately meaning and life are given, not chosen. The heart of the Easter story is that God raised Jesus from the dead. That was a gift.

So too in the Anzac story, it may be comforting to say that young soldiers died that others may live, but the comfort is too easy. They may have died with this hope, but no straight line ran between their intention and the outcome.

To give ourselves is a good and encouraging thing to do, but our gift has its meaning when it is reciprocated by an unexpected and greater gift. In Christian faith any confidence that the path we have chosen will lead to life comes from the conviction that God has given us life

Both Easter and Anzac Day make a claim on us. We should never give up on life, our own or the life of any human being, no matter how hopeless it seems to be. They encourage us to acknowledge the reality of our world, including the full extent of the grief and loss we suffer, of human malice, of the horrors of war, and of environmental degradation.

We deny or downplay these things because we are afraid of them. If we appreciate life as a gift to be gratefully received and lived fully, we do not need to be afraid. We can respond generously to the needs of our world.

Deportation dilemma

HUMAN RIGHTS

Kerry Murphy



A 46-year-old UK citizen, Clifford Tucker (pictured), was removed from Australia to Britain this week. His visa was cancelled because he failed the character test and no discretion was exercised in his favour. He has three Australian citizen children and has lived in Australia for 40 years. He also has a long history of violence and other criminal offences.

An old principle of law is that you should not be punished twice for the same offence. But governments believe they should be able to remove a non-citizen who is seen to be a risk to the community. It can be difficult to maintain this balance. In the Tucker case, the risk to the community superseded his desire to live in Australia and be near his children.

The Migration Act has a powerful provision in section 501, which provides that the minister can refuse or cancel a visa of someone who fails the character test.

The character test has three main parts. First, someone fails if they have a substantial criminal record (i.e. having been sentenced to at least 12 months in prison). Second is the association test, which came to prominence in the Dr Haneef case in 2007.

Third is the assessment of past and present criminal or general conduct. Commonly this looks at people who, while they may not have been convicted of criminal offences, have breached visa conditions, worked without permission or overstayed their visa.

Most cases now seem to fall into the criminal record category.

If someone fails the character test, four primary discretionary factors are considered. These are: the protection of the Australian community; whether the person was a minor when they came to Australia; the length of time a person was in Australia before they engaged in criminal activity; and relevant international obligations.

The fourth ground includes consideration of whether there are children who could be affected, or whether a person is covered by the Refugee Convention or other international treaties.

Other factors may also be considered, but those who fail the character test need to have at least one of those four factors in their favour to have any chance of winning their case.

Cancellation under s501 means not only are you removed from Australia; you will never be able to return — ever!

Hardly anyone is deported anymore. They are removed after their visa is cancelled. This is because the s501 cancellation power is stronger and wider than the s200 criminal deportation power, which is limited to those who have lived in Australia for less than 10 years. The s501 power has no time limit.

The process of review through the Administrative Appeals Tribunal is complex and requires the help of experienced lawyers. Cases become more difficult when there is a long criminal history and the person has been in Australia for many years or since they were a child.

A previous case went all the way to the High Court after one Mr Nystrom's visa was cancelled due to his long criminal record, despite his having lived in Australia since he was one month old.

The Ombudsman considered the power in a detailed report in February 2006 and criticised the former Government for the way it exercised the power. A key point was:

The desirability of protecting the Australian community from non-citizens who have committed serious crimes, and are likely to reoffend, is not questioned. However, the permanent residents affected by the removal decisions under examination in this investigation have been here so long that they, and the communities they live in, see them as Australians.

The system was reformed and former Immigration Minister Evans redrafted the discretionary guidelines to take greater account of these factors. There is a risk that those who have already 'done the time' for their crimes will be punished again by migration law — a double penalty.

It is ironic that a country which started as a penal colony now treats those with criminal convictions more strictly than the UK does. While criminal acts cannot be condoned, it is problematic that there is this possible extra punishment outside the criminal justice system.

It may be that an arbitrary period of lawful residence (10 or maybe 15 years) is needed to say, 'This person has lived here so long that they are now Australia's problem.'

Anzac revelations

NON-FICTION

Gillian Bouras

The Bombardier was always there. I looked at the photograph on the wall as I lay between my grandparents while they luxuriated in the hip-hooray-it's-Saturday morning lie-in. 'There he is,' one or the other would say, with a sigh lurking behind rueful laughter. 'The Bombardier.'

My grandfather, a serious lad of 23 dressed in the uniform of the Australian artillery, gazed into the room: the photograph had been taken before he left for France and Belgium in 1915. He'd thought himself bound for Gallipoli, but military and political plans changed while he was still at sea.

To the end of his life he regretted that he had missed out on Gallipoli, despite the fact that he must soon have learned the details of that hell on earth.

As a child of six I capered along the passage of my grandfather's house, chanting *bomb-bomb-bombardier*. I had no clue as to what the noun meant, just that it was a wonderful word to say aloud. In between times I registered the fact that Billy-Next-Door had made it safely back from a mysterious place called Korea, and that everybody of course was glad.

For children of my generation the word *war* was a part of life. Not that we understood what it meant. To me it meant a very little information from Grandfather, and the knowledge that my father, a veteran of the Second World War, had a Japanese sword stashed in the hall cupboard and his Glengarry cap wrapped in mothballs in a certain drawer.

Like most ex-servicemen, father and son never talked much about their experiences. I suppose such people realise nobody can enter, let alone share, such a fractured world, even via the imagination.

My imagination certainly failed when I was 15. An old teacher at my school, unwell and deaf, was another First World War veteran. The smart alecks gave him hell. But when the teachers brought along their early photos for a guessing competition, his showed him mounted on a camel. The Pyramids were in the background, and the face under the slouch hat was young, eager and alive.

'Hard to believe, eh?' he commented. And grinned.

That same year I saw him on television during the Anzac Day parade, marching at the head of a straggly line of similarly old men. 'He's MC and MID, you know,' said my father. I didn't, and when he died not long afterwards I felt deeply ashamed that my schoolmates and I had not been kinder.

My father was also just 23 when he saw action, although he had been present during the attacks on Darwin. He is now nearly 90, and his very recent description of the Borneo beach landing, which he had never mentioned to his offspring before, made my brother's blood run cold. He told Dad that he would have been trying to hide somewhere, anywhere, on the landing craft.

'We all felt like that,' said Dad. 'Many of the lads were crying like babies.' (Grandfather admitted that he had screamed for his mother during the first shell attack to which he was exposed.) 'I just kept my head down and kept on going.'

Now we can see how young men, especially those of the first global conflict, were misled, manipulated and duped by politicians and governments, as men always have been and perhaps always will be.

On Anzac Day we should remember the sheer waste and perversity of war. But apart from war itself, we should remember *people*, and try to understand what it was to be human in 1914 and 1915, when young men often volunteered out of a sense of duty and a feeling for others. They believed they could fight for an ideal, win, and never have to fight again.

If we cannot understand, the least we can do is remember.

In 1915 the young woman who became my grandmother received a letter in which a couple of lines read: 'I know you think I have done right; I enlisted because I could not bear to think that you might consider me a shirker.'

For this reason, among many others, I cannot let the Bombardier fade away: he will always be with me.

Forgotten Aboriginal war heroes

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Paul W. Newbury

As Anzac Day draws near, we prepare to celebrate the 102,000 Australian men and women who lost their lives in defence of their country. Anzac Day commemorations tend to neglect the history of the many Indigenous Australians who also died in defence of their land.



Until the 1970s, a myth dominated Australian history that the continent was settled peacefully. Then research of the historical record inspired by Australian anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner brought that fiction to an end.

The Frontier Wars raged across the continent for 140 years. Historians generally regard the wars to have ended in 1928 with the killing of 31 Warlpiri people by a police punitive party at Coniston in the Northern Territory.

In 1979, distinguished Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey proposed that the Australia War Museum (AWM) commemorate the Frontier Wars. The idea has been raised a number of times since by historians including Henry Reynolds, but the AWM steadfastly refuses to consider the matter.

This is a moral issue — it is incumbent on non-Indigenous Australians to own our past and accept that our British antecedents perpetrated wrongs against Australia's Indigenous peoples.

War memorials honour the fallen in battle and celebrate sacrifice and valour in war. They are central to our national identity. We should commemorate Indigenous people who fell fighting British invaders on their lands.

A number of Australian historians have proposed that the AWM erect a memorial to Indigenous Frontier War dead alongside existing sculptures commemorating Australian war dead that line Anzac Avenue in Canberra leading to the War Memorial.

The War Memorial Council says frontier conflict falls outside its charter, a claim that is disputed by historians and military academics. The Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL) also rejects the proposal.

The Frontier Wars began in 1790 when Bidjigal resistance hero Pemulwuy killed Governor Phillip's convict gamekeeper for his abuse of Aboriginal women. In response, Phillip ordered a punitive expedition to bring back any six Bidjigal or their heads. Though the expedition failed, Phillip's order foreshadowed countless such wanton reprisals against Indigenous people for the next 140 years.

Pemulwuy was said to be at the head of every raid on settler farms. In October 1802, two

settlers shot and killed him. Pemulwuy had led his peoples' struggle against the invaders for 12 years.

In 1795 in the Hawkesbury-Nepean area, Dharug people began to raid farms, and there were a number of deaths on both sides. In response, Governor Macquarie sent the British 46th Army Regiment to quell the conflict. The conflict known as the Hawkesbury Wars lasted till 1816.

Aboriginal warriors fought an economic and physical war against settlers, raiding farms and pastoral runs. They killed settlers and their servants, destroyed cabins and farm buildings, and razed crops in incendiary raids. Aboriginal people fought the invaders on a tribe by tribe basis — they were sovereign peoples defending their lands.

They used the element of surprise, emerging suddenly from the bush in swift and effective guerrilla raids. They took thousands of cattle and sheep annually. They were known to erect yards to enclose sheep and consume them at their leisure.

In the early years, many settlers abandoned their runs for economic reasons as well as the terror and panic Aboriginal attacks generated. In a battle between the Duangwurrung people and George Faithful's party near Benalla in 1838, natives killed eight of his men. Faithful wrote of Aboriginal women and children running between his horse's legs to retrieve spears for their warriors to reuse.

Indigenous people resisted fiercely but military police and settlers equipped with horses and rifles eventually overwhelmed them. They died defending their homelands, sacred sites and lifestyle.

The historian Richard Broome says Australia's frontier history was a bloody one. He estimates that frontier violence was responsible for around 1700 European deaths while Indigenous deaths were at least ten times that number.

To say that the Frontier Wars do not fit the AWM mould is to exclude a whole people from commemoration based on a trifle. If Indigenous peoples could go to the War Memorial with their families to see a portrayal of their resistance heroes and a testimony to their ancestors' tenacious struggle for their land, what a boost to their morale it would be.

Such a memorial would be an acknowledgement of a long repressed aspect of our past, and an abiding act of reconciliation.

Tommy's twin brother Jesus

POETRY

Brian Doyle

Easter

Windy, same as usual. Shivering daffodils, huddled crocuses.
Sunbursts that are essentially a dark joke. Spattering of moist
Proto-hail, says our sister, who will eventually become a nun.
Funny that we remember single words spoken forty years ago.
The huddle of shoulders in pews, the hands held out for Hosts.
The rich russet scent of raincoats and overcoats and umbrellas.
The slight polite hesitation as someone looks to lift the kneeler.
The way everyone kneels except the very old and the surgicals.
The clasps pinning down mantillas and veils and white scarves.
The burly theater of it all, the ancient tidal rise and fall and ebb
And startling resurrection against all sense and patent evidence.
The awful genius of the faith is that it is so much more and less
Than religion; we have no choice but to insist on a resurrection,
And choose one among us to drag a cross, and then leap from it
And emigrate, but not before collecting documentary witnesses;
Otherwise we are all merely walking compost, and where is the
Fun in that, not to mention why not commit crimes twice daily?
And at the other end of the spectrum, not one soul on that rainy
Easter morning long ago cared a whit about theological matters.
They did not even care if the thin man once died and rose again.
They were there, in clans and tribes and couples, for each other,
Out of respect and affection, and habit and custom, and because
They wanted to give their children a thing they couldn't explain

Very easily, something to run away from and later back towards,
Something insistent that didn't make sense then and still doesn't.
Something you can easily disprove and can never actually prove,
Which is basically the point. We cover it with smoke and money,
With vestments and learned commentary, with visions and edicts,
But under the cloth there is only wild hope, to which we give His
Face, sitting there by the lake quietly eating baked fish and bread.
At the end of the meal we walked out into the rain, singing badly.

Tommy's twin brother

Because there were not only the four regular gospels, you know,
There were lots of others, all jostling and elbowing for the Book.
There was the Gospel of Thomas, which begins *Here are hidden
Words that Jesus spoke as written down by his twin brother Tom,
Also called Didymos*. Also there was Mary Magdalene's Gospel,
Which is missing its first six pages but then asks a good question,
Will matter be destroyed or not? and Tommy's twin brother says,
*All nature, all creatures exist in and with each other and they will
Be resolved again into their own roots*, which is really interesting
If you think in terms of no energy lost and reincarnation and such,
Although it sounds like something someone says after seven beers.
Also he says everyone has the exact same line to God because He,
Tom's twin brother, is *in* everyone, which, if he's right, sure shuts
Up a lot of religious idiots about owning the only toll road to God.
Also there is the gospel of Judas, which says that poor pained man
Was only doing what Tom's brother wanted him to do, which was
Free him from his earthly vessel, so all could go according to plan;
And there is the Gospel of the Hebrews, which says Tom's brother

Was born two months early, which explains why he was so skinny;
And there is the Gospel of Philip, where it says *he who is, has been*
And shall be, which sure echoes what the voice in the burning bush
Says, which is *I am who am*, that's a line from the Book of Exodus,
Which is *not* a gospel. Are you following all this? You are puzzled?
Look, the point is that there are a lot of stories about Tom's brother,
And to think that only four of them apply is to shutter the windows
When the sunlight is pouring in. Maybe all of them apply somehow.
Maybe they apply at different times. Maybe there's shreds of genius
In all of them. Maybe we should listen for Tom's brother in all sorts
Of places. Maybe there are lots more gospels all ready to be written.
I mean, he was blunt that he was *in* everyone, why not go with that?

Sex and humility in the church and the military

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins



In the wake of the defence force Skype sex scandal, former diplomat Bruce Haigh [made](#) the simple but fundamental point that things start to go wrong when commanding officers lose sight of the reality that they are there to serve, and instead act to protect their reputations.

He put into context Defence Minister Stephen Smith's dressing down of military top brass:

[A]fter the Australian intervention in East Timor, Howard glorified the military ... | putting them beyond the scrutiny and accountability normally expected of public servants. He did the same with the Federal Police after 9/11. Howard encouraged the ADF to think of themselves as elite; Rudd and Gillard did nothing to reverse that.

Haigh's point holds true for leaders of institutions including unions and churches. Union leaders and bishops can be looked upon as demigods by members and the faithful. This makes it difficult for them to serve their constituencies. Servants need to be humble.

Bishop Kevin Manning [suggests](#) that the sex abuse scandals have paradoxically made the Church better able to do its job.

'The Church is shamed and humbled. But a humble Church can preach the Gospel more convincingly than one in whose halls abuse has been overlooked.'

When there's news of behaviour that is at odds with the fundamental values of an institution, the instinct of many leaders is to cover it up and carry on with business as usual. After all they are duty-bound to do all they can to protect the institution. It's usually specified in their employment contracts.

Haigh comments on military officers' reaction to the recent unacceptable abuse of the female student at the Australian Defence Force Academy.

Once the story broke, defence went into damage control. Senior officers, including the head of the ADF, Air Chief Marshall Angus Houston, sought to play the matter down, when what he should have done was to immediately front the media, condemn the appalling behaviour.

What happens to the institution once it goes public with its weaknesses?

Bishop Manning ponders whether a church ravaged by sex abuse scandals is fit to receive new members. He believes a humiliated church is an authentic church. He says adults embracing the Catholic faith 'cannot be doing this in ignorance of the sex abuse scandals' and

the duty of Catholics 'is to welcome them into a Church that is humble'.

It is up to leaders to project images of themselves that are at once strong and humble. In the lead up to Easter, Christians meditate on Christ humiliated, the king crowned with thorns. Humiliation is a condition that leaders do not ask for, but must accept when the time comes.

Thinking positively about getting a job

POLITICS

Lin Hatfield Dodds

Both the Government and the Opposition have in recent weeks signalled a determination to move people from welfare to work through tougher participation requirements and stiffer penalties for those who fail to comply.

People on unemployment benefits get \$120 less a fortnight than people on pensions. They can earn less than someone on the aged pension before their benefit is cut. People lose their benefits for eight weeks if they do not meet activity tests. Australia has a strict and tightly targeted payments system already.

The Federal Budget this year promises hefty cuts to welfare and the unemployed are firmly in the Government and Opposition's sights.

Prime Minister Gillard's speech to the Sydney Institute last week, and Tony Abbot's policy announcements two weeks ago, drew unanimous response from the community sector; that getting people into work is a sound objective, but it's harder than it looks.

The welfare reform debate is in danger of sliding into an unhelpful blame game but a more positive approach will limit the number of people who face a lifetime on benefits. Long term unemployed people are seen as a risk by many employers. So how do we minimise the risks and change or shift that risk profile? We need to test the capacity and interest of employers to offer jobs to this potentially high risk group of job seekers.

The income support system must recognise that people will cycle in and out of jobs, not because they are slack, but because that's how the low skill part of the labour market works. In addition, employers have limited capacity to absorb the risks and costs of employing someone who has been out of work for a long time.

UnitingCare Australia welcomes measures that move people from welfare into jobs, but the UnitingCare network experience as an employment service provider and a provider of services to support families that have had generations of social exclusion does not support tougher sanctions and cuts in entitlements.

There are, no doubt, people who abuse the system. But UnitingCare's experience is that the overwhelming majority of people on unemployment benefits and other income support payments want to work. They want to take responsibility for meeting their families needs and contribute to their community.

The reality is there are a decreasing number of entry level jobs in the Australian labour market. Many people out of work do not have skills or experience that match the needs of

employers where they live. So while any job is welcome, low skilled jobs are often short-term, casual placements in retail, hospitality and agriculture. These jobs do not lead to secure, long term employment.

At least this was the UnitingCare experience during the boom times from 2001-2008, and we predict this will continue for the foreseeable future.

Unemployment in Australia currently sits at around 5 per cent, an enviable achievement by current world standards. People who are not working, employers and governments share responsibility for moving unemployment numbers those next few percentage points down. These are complex, interrelated issues and can only be resolved if all parties involved work together to find effective and lasting solutions.

For many who face significant barriers employment is not possible without early, intensive, specialised support and access to significant training to improve literacy, numeracy and skills that meet gaps in the current labour market. With unemployment at historically low levels we know that all the people who can get jobs with the usual supports have already done so. People who are homeless, who are coping with the reality of mental health problems, who are living with drug, alcohol and other addictions, or who have recently been released from prison can and want to contribute to their community.

But a lack of life skills, relationship skills and job ready skills provide real challenges. Access to transport is another barrier and age and disability are a disincentive for many employers.

More real training and education are needed to skill people for long-term job opportunities. And post placement support is essential to keep long-term unemployed people in work.

While there are some excellent programs in place in some places, these are often short-term initiatives that have good outcomes but no chance of operating long term.

The programs that do work to get people into jobs use funding from both the employment support system and broader social welfare programs to get people ready to work and support employers to take on people who start with low skills and whose productivity grows over time.

This might seem a complex approach, but it delivers much better social and economic dividends to governments who invest in Australian citizens, to a capacity constrained labour market, and to people and communities, than our current simplistic approach.

Real improvements need real action on addressing labour market factors, anomalies in the income support system, and helping individuals to overcome the personal and systemic barriers that have prevented them from getting and keeping a job.

Shop floor priest

EULOGY

Andrew Hamilton

Fr Ian Dillon, who died recently at the age of 85, lived an unobtrusive Jesuit life. But his story is of wider interest because it reflects some of the central changes in society, church and the Society of Jesus during his lifetime.

Ian's father was Joe Dillon, the personnel manager and trouble shooter for General Motors in Melbourne. Industrial relations, particularly in a company with its head office in the United States, were robust and often confrontational. Joe Dillon had a wide reputation for being tough, but also fair.

That was also Ian's reputation as a teacher. I first met him after I had joined the Jesuits and he had been ordained. He came to the Melbourne funeral of his brother, Alan, who was my father's partner in their medical practice. Alan, whom I had known as a softly spoken and gentle man, died of leukaemia at the age of 31. At that time Ian spent much time with Alan's wife, Jean, and her young family. He was practical and forthright, as rugged as Alan was gentle.

At that time Ian often told colourful stories about his experience in schools as student and as teacher. He portrayed teaching as a power struggle, in which the students and teachers were naturally pitted against one another.

As a boy he had studied at Xavier College during the early 1940s. Many of the students' fathers were away with the armed forces, to which the boys themselves might expect in their turn to be called. The mood of the school was boisterous and edged. Disorder could break out at any time.

Ian recalled with a participant's enjoyment the mini-riots in the school hall. The teachers were unable to quell them, until Fr Tom Montague, a diminutive priest, entered the hall, stood and surveyed the scene and its actors. The boys melted away. Fr Montague was Ian's model teacher, a man who wordlessly projected power.

I later taught with Ian. He was nicknamed Matt, after Matt Dillon the TV sherriff. He was strict and direct, but well accepted by the students, especially the mischievous and headstrong. They sensed his respect for those who played their part in the adversarial game. But he made sure that he won.

I found him warm and supportive when I asked him for advice, a man of firm and practical faith. But as a beginning teacher who lacked all confidence in this contest of wills, I also found his strength and certainties intimidating.

In 1967, after seven years teaching, Ian was asked to go to Papua New Guinea as student chaplain. He stayed there in various capacities for 15 years.

The change was a blessing for him. He and his world would have narrowed had he continued, and he may have struggled to adjust to the rapid changes in education and society. In PNG he was not in a position of power, and was able to associate convivially with a wide range of people including those who had power unjustly wielded over them.

It was not easy for him to return to Australia in 1985. In PNG he had found freedom from the sharply defined institutional forms of living and working that had been characteristic of the Catholic Church and of its religious congregations. His taste for freedom was by then widely shared among Catholics. He was also reluctant to take positions of institutional responsibility in church or among the Jesuits that might have forced him to see himself as a company man.

In an inspired move, he became a chaplain with the Industrial Trade and Industry Mission. He moved easily on the shop floor, ate and drank with the people among whom he worked, and for some years lived in an industrial suburb where he became well known at the Rising Sun Hotel. He spoke directly with people about faith and life in his no-bullshit style.

He still described his environment in terms of adversarial power, but he no longer represented the bosses but the workers. He flourished, and enjoyed criticising those in power at any level of state and church. His stories would end with a laugh, and his exclamation of delight, 'They really haven't got a clue! Not a bloody clue!'

Within Catholic and Jesuit circles, Ian's move can be seen as part of a more general desire at the time to make an 'option for the poor'. This involved imagining life and the world from the perspective of the deprived and not of the comfortably off. This change of perspective inevitably involved changes of living style and of work commitments. Ian was not a theoretician. For him the change was visceral, a place of freedom.

In 1998 Ian became chaplain at Jesuit Social Services. Despite a succession of illnesses, he was always available, always encouraging, always inviting people to focus on what really mattered. He still resisted any temptation to become a company man, still enjoyed his contemplation of the powerful who didn't have a clue.

In this last stage of Ian's life I increasingly looked forward to chatting with Ian at the Jesuit events he so enjoyed. He still played the old game of adversarial power, now from the underside, but what mattered to him was simply people.

Even though I knew that in Ian's terms I really didn't have a clue, I always felt encouraged. He was interested in what I was doing, noticed and appreciated anything I had done. More precious, though, Ian had that rare gift of making me feel a fellow conspirator with him. I went away enlivened for the next small battle. And I was just one of many whose lives he

touched in these simple ways.

In many worlds and with many people, Ian kept faith.

Publishing George Orwell

BY THE WAY

Brian Matthews

When actor Peter Moffett signed up to play the role of the fifth Doctor Who, following in the galaxy-striding footsteps of William Hartnell, Patrick Troughton, Jon Pertwee and Tom Baker, doctors one, two, three, and four respectively, this was the kind of imaginary world he entered:

Illegally using the Arc of Infinity, a species of antimatter has invaded normal space. Its dangerous and radical instability must be countered by a physical bonding with a Time Lord. President Borusa, at a meeting of the High Council, considers the deadly threat and decides whose life must be sacrificed to avert catastrophe.

Meanwhile, Omega, long imprisoned in the universe of antimatter, has established control of the Matrix. The bonding procedure has failed and Omega's imminent reversion to antimatter will cause a cataclysmic explosion. The Master desperately needs a dynamorphic generator but Omega resolves to bring about his own destruction only to dissolve into nothingness when targeted by the Ergon's matter converter.

As the fifth Doctor Who, Moffett inherited a well-established science-fictional world that had a massive and dedicated following and has spawned a labyrinthine complexity of universes, enmities, alliances and exotic characters. Intricate manoeuvrings, death-defying clashes, ploys and counter-ploys emerged from a time-bending, space-invading technological maelstrom.

The fifth Doctor Who had to deal with threats familiar to his predecessors — the Daleks, the Cybermen and the Tardis's inconveniently timed electronic eccentricities — as well as innumerable new challenges, life forms and, of course, bobbing up in various disguises, his indefatigable *bÂte noir* and renegade Time Lord, the Master.

As it happened, it was not 'Peter Moffett' who became the fifth Doctor. At the start of his theatrical career, Moffett had changed his name to Davison, to avoid confusion with a namesake in the film world. Thus it was Peter Davison, not Moffett, who, following his success playing the slightly effete Tristan Farnon in the TV hit *All Creatures Great and Small*, became the fifth Doctor.

This was bad luck for Professor Peter Davison, whose career was as star-crossed, as important to the world of the imagination and as much a hostage to fortune as that of the fifth Doctor, but whose name is swamped in search engines by references to the actor and his famous role.

In September 1981 — a few months before Peter Davison became the fifth Doctor Who —

Peter Davison, the literary scholar, accepted a commission from Tom Rosenthal, the publisher at Secker & Warburg, to 'produce the corrected editions of Orwell's nine books'.

As Davison remarked, it looked 'pretty simple' — one volume a month for £100 per volume, with a £100 bonus if he delivered on time in July 1982, which he did. The idea was to publish in the 'Orwellian' year of 1984. (Peter Davison the actor had completed three seasons and 19 episodes of *Doctor Who* by 1984 and had given up the role before he became typecast.)

When no books appeared, Davison was accused of not having delivered, but his proofs were then found buried in a stack of papers in Secker & Warburg's Poland Street office. In April 1986, the first three volumes were published. Davison's celebrations were soured, however, when he discovered the texts were riddled with errors. The whole edition was pulped.

By this time, with much more Orwell material available, Secker asked Davison to prepare a complete edition of Orwell's works. With the help of his wife and Orwell scholar Ian Angus, Davison started on this daunting task. With 4183 pages of typescript completed, however, Secker & Warburg succumbed to a takeover bid and the project lapsed for two years.

Then in 1986, the American publisher Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich revived Davison's project and transferred everything to New York. In late 1989 they pulled out, resumed in January 1990, abandoned Davison again in April 1992, but returned in August of that year.

By 11 November 1992, Davison had almost 8000 pages of typescript. In December 1993, Harcourt, Brace abandoned the edition for the last time.

Davison, meanwhile, worn out by the task and its false dawns and recurring frustrations, was diagnosed with a serious cardiac condition: now, following the repeated example of his publishers, life itself was preparing to abandon him. A dynamorphic generator might have saved him, but in the end a sextuple heart bypass did the trick.

Under new management, Secker & Warburg — Orwell's original publishers — with Time Lord-like control moved all the operations back to London, but further buy-outs and takeovers ensued before Davison's monumental 20-volume edition was published — by Secker & Warburg, an arm of Random House.

The Davison namesakes contributed substantially to our imaginative, intellectual and creative life. *Doctor Who's* problems and privations — for all their exoticism, outlandishness and sheer terror — were fictional whereas the Prof genuinely suffered for his art, and his triumph was as amazing, as just and as thoroughly deserved as any of the Doctor's.

Humiliating Gbagbo

POLITICS

Binoy Kampmark

It looked like an episode that was going to drag on to its bloody and tragic denouement, another African calamity for those eager voyeurs of violence. But the fall of the Ivory Coast's Laurent Koudou Gbagbo was less mighty than perplexing (mostly for him).



Pictures released to papers and television stations show the defeated leader and his wife Simone sitting on a bed at the Hotel du Golf in Abidjan, surrounded by soldiers loyal to Alassane Ouattara. To the victor go the spoils, and the spoils were on full view for local and international consumption.

Journalists taking account of the scene vary in their accounts, though there seems to be a running theme of gloating, an unhealthy note of satisfaction at power tarnished and defeated. 'His cheek swollen from the slap he received from a soldier,' writes Martin Argyles of *The Guardian*, 'he wears the shocked expression of a loved child who has just had his favourite toy wrenched from his grasp.'

Then, the hyperbole — the attempt to find some grand historical villain to compare: 'Mussolini and his mistress hung upside down in Milan by Italian partisans. Ceausescu and Elena, joint rulers of a cowed Romania, hastily shot by his own soldiers at the end of a kangaroo military court, she screaming "My children, my children!"'

The *Ghana Business News* shows a more modest creature who posted his impressions on Twitter even as the crisis was unfolding. It takes note of Gbagbo's credentials — the template for African and Asian despotism: a French education minted in part at the Sorbonne. He 'had a long, momentous, and remarkable history behind him. He is a teacher by profession, he holds a PhD in history from a French University.' Nor can we ignore his time spent at the university of hard knocks, the ever accommodating prison cell.

While at the University of Lyon in the 1960s, he earned the nickname of 'Cicero' for his love of Latin. Sessions were duly spent at the Sorbonne and then at the Paris Diderot University. In fact, this humiliated figure might well have been something greater. He may well have become 'a Colossus, a political enigma in Ivory Coast but for his intransigence and strong headedness'.

Instead, he was a traditional figure of power who spent time in the groves of academe and the dust of conflict, finding it difficult to work with opponents and seeing enemies everywhere.

His term of office was characterised by fractious rule over a divided state. A peace deal

with the rebels made in Burkina Faso on 4 March 2007 bought some time for Gbagbo, till his run-in with Ouattara in the November elections last year. While Ouattara was endorsed by outside powers as the clear victor, Gbagbo claimed fraudulence in the votes from nine regions. He also refused to be bought over by sweetened deals of a teaching appointment in the US. Not the academy, at least not now.

There is always room to embellish the significance of such events. Will this be a precedent for democracy on the continent? Hard to tell. Parallels are sought in order to make sense of local and untidy conflicts. In this case, the situation remains more difficult than ever.

The ex-colonial inferences, with the presence of France in the operation that led to Gbagbo's capture, are unmistakable, even if it may well have averted the repeat of such slaughters as took place at Duékoué. This, despite the insistence by Commander Frederic Daguillon that not a single French soldier had entered the residence.

There is little reason to gloat, and it is easy to throw in one's lot with the victor, who is far from being a saint of any quality. Scratch the surface, urges George Orwell, and we shall find a very active sinner.

When one abandons the pedestals and looks at the brutal realities of the situation, the need to restore order is first and foremost in the minds of those on the ground. The sooner the international forces withdraw the better. Then, it will be for those of the Ivory Coast to deliberate over a rather uncertain future.

Gen Y, iPods and isolation

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***How I Ended This Summer* (M). Director: Aleksei Popogrebsky. Starring: Sergei Puskepalis, Grigory Dobrygin. 130 minutes**

***Medianeras* (Unclassified 15+). Director: Gustavo Taretto. Starring: Javier Drolas, Pilar L pez de Ayala. 95 minutes**

Two new films contemplate loneliness in vividly distinct environments. One, *How I Ended This Summer*, is a Russian thriller in which the practical and psychological implications of isolation erode the sanity of two meteorologists based on a desolate Arctic island. The other, *Medianeras*, is a modern fable about ‘urban loneliness’ in which the crowded, thoughtless architecture of Buenos Aires is a metaphor for the chaos of connections in the modern world which, ironically, can make it harder to connect on a human level. Both films identify a lack of interpersonal connection as detrimental to basic humanity.

On paper, *How I Ended This Summer* reads like a social experiment gone wrong. Writer-director Popogrebsky takes veteran researcher Sergei (Puskepalis) and recent graduate Pavel (Dobrygin) and places them upon the claustrophobic vastness of the icy, bear-infested island. The two men take readings and periodically report their findings back to the mainland through the static of an old two-way radio. In between, they have only each other and their shockingly picturesque surrounds to occupy them. They don’t get along: Sergei demands but does not receive respect and vigilance from his young charge; Pavel resents the older man’s unfriendliness and is wary of his short temper.

This visually stunning, contemplative film could almost be read as anti Gen Y propaganda. Pavel’s meanderings upon the island are soundtracked by rock music blaring through his earphones. Initially this invokes transcendence; Pavel’s appreciation of spirited, raucous music augmenting rather than tempering his appreciation of the natural beauty of the island. As the film progresses and Pavel is revealed increasingly to be lazy and irresponsible, his iPod and videogames seem more and more to symbolise some nonchalant skein that isolates self-centred youths from the world around them.

When Pavel receives bad news from the mainland that affects Sergei, he makes the rash decision to refrain from passing on the message until they are due to return home from the island. Pavel seems to regard life on the island as a kind of fantasy vacation: earlier we have seen him swinging wildly from decrepit equipment and leapfrogging along columns of empty drums, himself like a figure from an industrial-age videogame. Presumably his desire to shield Sergei from harsh reality stems more from a desire to maintain his own comfort and pleasure, rather than out of compassion for the older man. Gen Y or not, his decision is infuriating, and

has sinister consequences.

Medianeras translates loosely as ‘medians’ or ‘side walls’; taken in the context of the film’s concern with urban loneliness, it refers to barriers that divide humans from each other, both literally and metaphorically. Making his feature film debut, writer-director Taretto has his central character communicate the extended architectural metaphor that is at the heart of the film, during an opening voiceover monologue describing the soulless and thematically incongruous layout of the city of Buenos Aires. These spoken words are illustrated by a montage of images of the city’s buildings, emphasising the variety of architectural character: some buildings are grandly framed by sky; some look squat and soiled; some are cramped and crowded-in; others are abstractly beautiful.

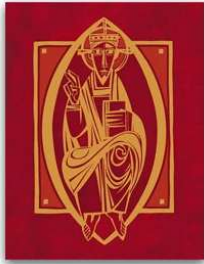
Indeed, visually, the film is striking, and its imagery compelling enough to carry the comparatively lacklustre human stories. Admittedly, *Medianeras* does find in the individual characters of multi-phobic IT whiz Martiñ (Drolas) and reclusive shop window artist Mariana (Ayala) – prototypical ‘neighbours who have never met’ – plenty of humour and pathos, often simultaneously: Martiñ enjoys a brief affair with a po-faced goth dog-walker; Mariana, with an anatomically correct mannequin. But their ultimate, fated union is too predictable and its resolution too trite to ward off encroaching tedium.

How I Ended This Summer is screening in [selected cinemas](#) nationally. *Medianeras* is screening as part of [La Mirada Film Festival](#) in Melbourne (14–26 April).

Liturgy translation 'suprisingly good'

THEOLOGY

Andrew Hamilton



Liturgy has always aroused strong passions. In the 19th century, some London churches served by Anglican priests who wore lace were stoned. So it is not surprising that the introduction of a new translation of the Catholic Mass should be turbulent. It raises many interrelated questions about the process by which the translation has come to exist, about the quality of the new texts, and about how best to respond to it. It is helpful to treat these questions separately.

The central question concerns what matters. For most Catholics what matters most about texts is to transcend self-consciousness in praying aloud with others. They want to be on the same page and to sing from the same hymn book. So it will be important for people happily to pray the same responses. Uncertainty about how to respond simply breeds a mumbling hesitation that proclaims neither faith nor freedom.

The process can be described briefly. The Roman Missal, revised after the Second Vatican Council, was quickly translated into English under a committee representing the Bishops of the English-speaking world, the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). It was always recognised that the translation, which tried to render the prayers of the Missal into contemporary spoken English, would need substantial revision.

A new translation that took account of the many criticisms received of the first text was prepared for discussion by ICEL in consultation with the Bishops of the English-speaking world, and in 1998 was subsequently approved by each of their Bishops' Conferences. But the translation did not receive approval by the Vatican which was preparing a new Latin text of the Roman Missal.

This was published in 2002. In the previous year the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship, with little consultation even of members of the Congregation, had issued the document *Liturgiam Authenticam*. It contained guidelines for translation which emphasised integral and exact translation.

In 2002 the Congregation established the *Vox Clara* committee to give advice to the Holy See on English-language texts. In 2003 ICEL was restructured to have a formal relationship with the Vatican Congregation. It prepared new translations under the new guidelines, which were discussed by Bishops' Conferences, approved in 2006 and confirmed by the Vatican in 2009.

In 2010 the Vatican authorised the final text. It contained some 10,000 further changes from the text previously approved by the Bishops. This intensified controversy about the

translation, led to widespread anger among the translators, the leaking of texts, and declarations of resistance among many of the clergy who will implement it.

In addition, the German Bishops withdrew a translation of liturgical texts prepared to the new guidelines on the grounds that it was unusable. (The documents relevant to the process and opinions can be found on [PrayTell](#) .)

Underlying this long process is the question of who controls the liturgy. It has been proclaimed that the Vatican controls the translation of texts, not the Bishops' Conferences. To what extent that is theoretically a good thing depends on your understanding of the Church.

When judging the process devised by the Congregation for Divine Worship, however, most people will focus on its success in producing good texts that are happily received by clergy and laity. A tacit consensus has emerged that the consultation and transparency central to due process have been lacking, and that this lack has diminished the quality of the work and the good will necessary for its implementation.

Judgments about the quality of translations are inevitably subjective. Commentators tend to compare the best bits of the version they applaud with the worst bits of the versions they dislike.

My own judgment, based on a limited reading, is that, considering the narrow instructions governing its preparation, the new translation overall is surprisingly good. In less skilled hands the result could have resembled Inspector Poirot's English. In fact it reads more like the English used in costume drama — workable, but with a slightly archaic and formal flavour. It demands that the celebrant slow down and settle into period. It also supposes relatively high linguistic skills in its audience.

In the Australian Church the formality of the texts will make great demands on the many celebrants and the members of congregations for whom English is not a first language. Communication of meaning will inevitably suffer.

Most congregations will find it difficult to take in the meaning of the Sunday prayers as they listen. The translation retains the complex balanced periods of the original Latin text, and so demand a long attention span. To help comprehension, some celebrants will adapt what they read; others may precede the prayer with a commentary on its meaning. Neither expedient helps good liturgical celebration.

These reflections are not intended to criticise the translators. They are faithful foot soldiers landing on a beach chosen in some one else's battle plan. But my reflections do raise a wider question about liturgy. Should it be seen as a jewelled ossuary of precious symbols and words, or as a living resource to be worked with and adapted? The process of translation, following the long practice of the Roman and Eastern churches, regards it as the former.

Gandhi's echo

POLITICS

Kimberley Layton

Gandhi has an echo, and his name is Anna Hazare. The elderly social activist has just completed a 96 hour hunger strike to focus India's attention on the issue of corruption - as if it may have slipped unnoticed between the sofa cushions had he not been around.

Last weekend, on a rickety stage in the capital New Delhi, the 72 year old rallied thousands in support of the proposed Jan Lokpal (Citizen's Ombudsman) bill. After having been recruited by a motley group of NGO activists under the banner 'India Against Corruption', Hazare is now being spruiked as the face of a new, corruption-free India.

The national media, never one for quiet and considered reflection, has wasted no time in comparing him to the illustrious Mahatma Gandhi. However hunger strikes raise some important ethical questions. Just because Gandhi did it, doesn't make it right.

Journalist Pratap Bhanu Mehta has [roundly condemned](#) Hazare's choice of action, if not the cause he represents. Mehta notes the coercive nature of a 'fast unto death' and adds that 'when it is tied to an unparalleled moral eminence, as it is in the case of Anna Hazare, it amounts to blackmail'. He goes on to assert that 'in a functioning constitutional democracy, not having one's preferred institutional solution to a problem accepted, does not constitute a sufficient reason for the exercise of such coercive moral power'.

Hazare's fast unto death was uncharacteristic of a typical hunger strike in a number of ways. Not least of which being that he was, under no circumstances, ever going to die. This was a political stunt; Hazare is a veteran campaigner. Winner of the prestigious Padma Bhushan, a prize awarded by the Indian government, for his work establishing a 'model village' in Maharashtra state, this is his third fast unto death against corruption since 2003.

As Hazare is still alive, he may appear to be quite the success story. Yet as many a wearily outraged Indian will tell you, corruption remains rampant. His protest comes in the wake of a series of corruption scandals that are impressive even by Indian standards. A despairing Supreme Court recently exclaimed, in language not usually found in judicial rhetoric, 'What the hell is going on in this country?'

Hunger strikes seek to strategically exploit the complex and oft contradictory significance of food. Congruent to its role as vital nourishment, food also augers hospitality and charity, and is exalted in times of major life events. When viewed as a construct food represents human sociality and points to shared community.

Likewise, the rejection of food represents a rejection of community and therefore of society. By refusing food, fasters voluntarily remove themselves from the allegedly unacceptable circle

of society. Hazare's fast was unusual because it drew to it, like moths to a flame, representatives from almost every section of Indian society. Far from being outside the circle, Hazare located himself in the centre of a media frenzy. He happily played along, sharing the stage with almost anyone who offered to join him, including controversial (and not politically neutral) figures such as yoga guru Swami Ramdev.

During a hunger strike, food becomes a weapon of social reform primarily because it displaces the authority of language; it becomes an alternative medium of communication. But the noise surrounding Hazare has been deafening.

In a nod to the current social media fetish, more than 195,000 people have joined the India Against Corruption Facebook page and comments on it are flowing thick and fast. Bollywood too, has come out tweeting. Actress Shilpa Shetty attempted to make the most of her 140 characters with 'Anna Hazare has won: Salute his gumption and selfless work..makes me feel very small..complete Respect! Now this is Democracy'. Although correct grammar may have been displaced, language has certainly survived.

On the surface it sounds promising, yet Hazare will likely find himself hungry again if history is anything to go by. Although the media may have decided there will be a revolution, public scepticism remains in all but a few idealistic student activists.

A wearily outraged Indian friend upon finding himself amidst the ruckus rather condescendingly sighed, 'what did chota Gandhi do now?' It is unfortunate but 'chota', the Hindi word for little, meagre and at times trivial and insignificant, encapsulates India's current anti-corruption movement nicely. Put bluntly, it's mostly coercive hype.

Muslims who venerate St George

NON-FICTION

William Gourlay

On an island known to the Greeks as Prinkipo, Ayshe Ā-zakcam spends six months of the year attending a small stall beside a steep cobbled path. She sells home-grown plums, and apples, which she peels and quarters deftly with a sharp knife, to pilgrims passing en route to the Orthodox Church of Ayios Giorgios (St George) on the summit of the island.



What is intriguing about this is not that Ayshe ekes out a living by selling apples, or that she sits all day in the full glare of the Mediterranean sun, but that she is a Muslim, that the island is off the coast of Istanbul, the great Turkish metropolis, and that the majority of visitors to the Orthodox church are in fact Ayshe's fellow Turks.

Ayshe sees nothing remarkable in this. She doesn't appear to dwell on the faith or motivations of those puffing past her up the hill. When I ask her who the most common visitors are here she can't answer definitively. 'Greek, Turks,' she shrugs. 'Everybody!'

On the day of my visit, in late summer, she may not be far wrong. On the island (called BĀ¼yĀ¼kada by the Turks), I encounter well-healed Istanbul locals, Turkish matriarchs in headscarves and dour gabardines, a black-garbed Greek widow, and a gaggle of Iranian tourists who offer around pistachios.

But the busiest day of the year is St George's Day, April 23, when Turks come by the thousands, taking advantage of the fact that the date coincides with a national public holiday, Independence Day. Crowding onto ferries in Istanbul, they arrive on BĀ¼yĀ¼kada early in the morning, Muslim pilgrims en route to a Greek Orthodox church to ask favours of St George.

'The path to the monastery is packed with bodies,' recalls long-term Turkish resident and journalist Pat Yale of her visit on St George's Day last year. A festive air reigns. At the base of the hill pilgrims buy charms and trinkets designated for whatever they may be praying for: health, love, marriage, children. 'People unspool cotton along the lower slopes,' says Pat, 'and some hand out cubes of sugar.'

These are Muslim customs; cotton threads in white, red or green signify wishes for peace, love or money; the sharing of sugar and sweets is characteristic of Turkish hospitality and communal gaiety.

At the top of the hill pilgrims bustle forward to be allowed into the church in small groups where, with hands upturned in an attitude of prayer, they pass slowly before Greek icons and place handwritten entreaties to St George in a wish box. Outside again they form an orderly

queue to be blessed by an Orthodox priest and then proceed on their way.

But aren't the Greeks and Turks mortal enemies? Isn't their mutual antagonism prima facie evidence of the 'clash of civilisations', the incompatibility of Muslim and Christian cultures? On the face of this, perhaps not. No one is sure when the Muslim practice of venerating St George began, but it is well documented.

In the early 1900s, Edith Durham encountered Albanian Sufis who observed St George's feast day. In his much-lauded travelogue, *From the Holy Mountain*, William Dalrymple tells of Palestinian Muslims crowding into a musty Church of St George near Jerusalem. These are just a few of countless instances of Muslim-Christian symbiosis throughout the Balkans and the Levant.

After enjoying one of Ayshe's tart apples, I continue up the path towards the church, enjoying sweeping views of the Sea of Marmara and the Asian and European shores of Istanbul. Along the route, remnant cotton threads linger on the trunks of scrubby oak and pine trees, and votive rags flutter from the branches of wild olives.

The church itself is not of architectural note, but it too offers panoramic views. Nearby the Turks have, perhaps inevitably, built a teahouse and restaurant. The site seems quintessentially Mediterranean to me, combining the Greek genius for building places of worship in remote locales with the Turkish predilection for tea and other such sedate pleasures in picturesque landscapes.

A Turkish teahouse abutting a Greek church, and Muslim pilgrims receiving blessing from Orthodox priests strike me as powerful evidence that civilisations do not inevitably clash, that where faiths meet the result need not be a tussle whereby one must cancel the other out. Through long interaction and mutual respect, cultures can fuse and meld, adopting and adapting from each other.

St George, the 'warrior saint', may be puzzled by all of this. Known for smiting the dragon he offered inspiration to belligerent Crusaders, but for countless years on *Bâ¼yÄ¼kada* he has brought members of different faiths together. On April 23rd, as at many times during the year, their prayers in different languages will again intermingle and rise heavenwards.

Joe Bageant's option for the hillbillies

EULOGY

Michael Loughnane

'Poet', 'prophet', 'hillbilly revolutionary', 'progressive redneck with a conscience' — these are some of the epithets that have been conferred on Joe Bageant who died on March 26. The ABC's Steve Austin called him 'The Woody Guthrie of the typewriter' for he championed the cause of the 'white redneck', a social group he saw as being one of the most marginalised and disenfranchised in America.

Joe was a man of wisdom, intelligence and penetrating insight, but what made him really special was his warm, wry — sometimes acerbic — sense of humour and his direct no-frills honesty. He was also, in my view, a kind of a genuine working class liberation theologian — at least he would have been had he believed in God!

Today liberation theology appears dead (it is certainly in cold storage), and while there are strong voices advocating on behalf of the poor and disempowered, there is little conversation about the transformation of unjust social and economic structures and virtually no conversation at all about class. Bageant bypassed our denial mechanism and laid bare the despair, the sense of indignant outrage, the oppression of 60 million white Americans whose spirit has been burned dry 'like raisins in the sun' by American corporate power.

Bageant was very proud to be one of *his* people, and spoke and thought in the vernacular of the 'redneck'. Witness this opening statement at a recent talk:

'I don't like middle class people very much; they tend to be smug and they tend to look down on *my* people ...!'

A nice opening gambit to capture the hearts of his cultured, liberal, middle class audience! He was a mischievous 'stirrer'; he liked to feed and subvert the stereotypes, preconceptions and misconceptions of his readers and listeners.

Bageant saw class as being the basis of all politics — which is, in his view, the primary reason we don't wish to talk about it. The silencing of such conversation is an essential strategy of the few who benefit from the present structures — the one percent of the population that owns 45 percent of America's wealth.

With one well-formed sentence he could burst the illusory bubble of America as 'the land of opportunity': 'If yer mamma was waitress and yer pappa worked in the mill, if there ain't a book in the house, well, you're not goin' to be in the Whitehouse kid ...!' — a bull's eye summary of innumerable sociological tomes.

Bageant believed that the American psyche is now programmed to a setting that is

antithetical to the very idea of equality and the common good. It has become a 'corpocracy' where corporations, not the Government run the country. The hyper-individualism that flows from the profit-at-all costs mindset comes at the cost of the social fabric of the nation.

He reserved his most caustic scorn for the American media and their abject failure to inform the populace. Instead of informed analysis they stage 'fake media revolutions' and turn all of American life into 'cheap propagandistic theatre'; it is a nation 'immersed in spectacle' — two headed babies, Martians in Los Vegas, Obama practising Voodoo in the Whitehouse. The people are permanently 'distracted from distraction by distraction' (T.S. Eliot).

The irony is that (as a consequence of the drip-feed of propaganda), the poor 'rednecks' are the most likely to support that very policies that will impoverish them even more. How could they be aware they are being tricked if they are deprived of the very capacities that would empower them to perceive the trickery? Their only option is to 'house' the mindset of the elites (Paulo Freire).

Though he rejected organised religion, Bageant's world view was deeply humane and entirely consistent with Catholic social teaching. He loved to repeat the phrase 'I am my brother's keeper':

'treat the people with humanity, for God's sake, they get up in the morning and they bleed with the rest of us. Try to look on them with a little bit of compassion instead of building a damn wall around them. ... | Are you your brother's keeper? Then see to it that they get a damn education. ... | The worst prison is ignorance, and you let them rot ... | you didn't reach out. ... | You are perfectly happy to let'm be dumb. ...'. (From *The Kingdom of Survival*)

Bageant reminds all 'us Christian folk' that religion is not primarily about what we believe but about how we behave.

Bageant brought us beyond the caricature and stereotype and took us right into the mind of the fundamentalist redneck and in so doing invited us to understand the historical, social and psychological reasons why they see the world as they do. The recent film *Winter's Bone* powerfully supports Bageant's claims for the resilience, integrity, loyalty and self-sacrifice of this white underclass, despite the humiliation of poverty wages, inadequate healthcare and poor education.

I'm not sure if there anyone out there who can quite fill Joe Bageant's shoes. There are some excellent journalists and scholars writing about the American underclass (such as Barbara Ehrenreich, Jonathan Kozol, Noam Chomsky, Henry Giroux and bell hooks). But none has the charisma, charm, laser light wit and poetic turn of phrase that Joe Bageant possessed.

He will be missed by large numbers of people around the world. But we still have his books. Books with those marvellous tongue-in-cheek titles that were typical of the person that he was: *Deer Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War* and *Rainbow Pie: A Redneck*

Memoir.

May Joe Bageant, literary high priest of rednecks and hillbillies everywhere, rest in peace.

Girls in the military

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas



The coarse brass voice of the Vespa

POETRY

Various

A morning at La Place des Vosges

In the garden of the great Square
the sun has been called to duty,
and the lime trees dress
to their cool attention,
their shade in meticulous ranks;
a fuss of pigeons in the leaves
whinges a gallic monotony.
Hushed joggers puff their discretion
in obedient lines,
and the German ladies
impose their Kaiser bulk
onto the graceful belligerence
that is Tai Chi.
A Vespa, with its coarse brass voice,
falters for an instant,
a dying moment
in the breath of its gear change,
a petit mort.
In an early promenade
Grandmere pouches songs and astonishments
for a sleepy pram;
Granpere trails behind
as silent as the Somme.

Some of the mansions squint
in the morning sun.
If they were not cast
in meticulous brick
they might be tempted to
nod a small acknowledgement
across the way
to the mirror of themselves.

- *Grant Fraser*

Horizons

There is no horizon
for the high-rise city;
nothing out there even to imagine.
5000 people per square kilometre
see the sun at midday,
watch it soak the city salmon pink at sundown.
After four days as guests in a father's house,
four days straining into accents,
four days positioning our words
in the right place; our feet in footprints
like training wheels on the escalators
of a foreign culture,
we packed our bags, carried them
and baggage to the airport.

The taxi-driver smiled *You've seen*
the greenest country in the world.
His world. We are wondering
where in our world it fits;
Where the light is in the shadows.

— *Marlene Marburg*

Snow in Kaunas

At first I thought you were calling
from the town square, softly
like the warbling of a magpie,
or reciting one of the poet's lyrics
as students are wont in Spring:
but this was an October night
and my room was colder than ice
a thousand fingers tapped
and you breathed so many kisses
on the trembling windowpanes.

— *Edward Reilly*

Cyber traps for young players

MEDIA

Chris Middleton

Last week's incident involving the use of Skype to demean a young female trainee at the Australian Defence Force Academy once again highlights the potential for inappropriate use of the internet to destroy young people's positive sense of self. A few weeks earlier, Australian soldiers serving in Afghanistan were severely embarrassed, and even put in danger, by the unthinking and racist comments of a few posted on Facebook for all the world to see.

At the same time such sites as Facebook, and the Internet in general, have enormous power for good. Closed and oppressive systems fear them. The movement for human rights and democracy that has swept across Egypt and other places in the Middle East depended on the social networks and mobile phones to communicate, protest and to build resistance.

But patterns of behaviour associated with internet use have thrown up new and important concerns not just for defence force chiefs, but for school teachers and parents as well. Sexting and the videoing of fights on mobile phones between students are increasingly commonplace. Schools struggle to keep up with what may be happening, let alone in responding effectively to incidents that affect the welfare of their students.

A recent article in the Fairfax press [quoted](#) Rosemarie Costi, the school captain at Monte Sant'Angelo, North Sydney. She said 'It is really easy to misrepresent yourself [online] when you are trying to look cool.'

There are increasing concerns, also, about how social networking sites create new opportunities for bullying and demeaning others, and how this can magnify the impact of bullying on victims.

In reflecting on such threats it is important to put forward what is at stake. Reputations, of individuals and of schools, can be put at risk by what is carelessly or maliciously put out. Perhaps the most invidious aspect can be the breach of trust that can occur — between friends and peers, within a Year level, or between staff and students. So much of what school is about centres on relationships, and an environment of trust and security is integral to this.

It is not always that such consequences stem from deliberate choices. We need to realise that there is a tendency in forums and chat rooms etc (as with emails, and with adults as much as with young people) to write with less care about the impact on others than we would in any face to face encounter.

The whole format of these new forms of communication can coarsen our sensitivity towards the feelings and rights of others. Often a student is genuinely surprised when such an impact is pointed out. The cumulative impact of unthinking comments or misplaced humour,

carried into the victim's home by the computer, and in ways where so many others can see, is an attack on a person's privacy and sense of self that can't be underestimated.

Words written in haste and without thought cannot easily be retracted. It is also very easy to fall back on an unthinking use of language in a medium where communication is immediate, spontaneous and where rules of language (from spelling to swearing) don't apply.

Inappropriately sexist and homophobic references are too easily made. Anti-Semitic comments can be made without much thought, or without a realisation of the appalling legacy that such attitudes carry. All this goes to make the net a potent weapon that most are not even aware that they are wielding.

As in many areas of modern life, then, the internet has elements of light and shadow mixed in it. We need to reflect continuously on what is happening in our information age and learn to discern what our response should be. It is not necessarily the case that there are clearly good guys and bad guys, but there are a multitude of voices out there that can almost overwhelm.

It is important for parents, teenagers and schools to carry on a dialogue on the use of the net and the role of chat rooms and social networking sites, on the location of computers and the hours spent in front of computers.

We should do so with a respect for the importance that these new media have for young people for they relate to one of our most precious and basic needs — our ability to communicate with others. Such reflection should also lead us to acknowledge the importance of providing an educational program for our young that encourages in them an awareness of our culture, a questioning of all information, the ability to critique forms of communication, and a values system to bring to this information age.

Moral challenge for Catholic clubs

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

It is ironic that Clubs Australia President Peter Newell began his recent National Press Club [speech](#) against poker machine pre-commitment technology with a quote about truth from Abraham Lincoln, who is best known for his role in ending slavery in the United States.

Senator Nick Xenophon [portrays](#) gambling as a modern day form of slavery.

‘The poker machine lobby reminds me a bit like the slave owners of the 19th century in the United States, who say their whole way of life would be ruined if there were any changes bought about. That’s how the industry is behaving.’

The Catholic Catechism agrees, [stipulating](#) that while games of chance are ‘not in themselves contrary to justice’, they ‘become morally unacceptable when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for his needs and those of others. The passion for gambling risks becoming an enslavement’.

Many gamblers lose their liberty to control the amount of money they wager because they are in a trance-like situation. Their discretionary powers are captive to a seductive playing environment, and usually alcohol.

The pre-commitment technology would empower them to decide in advance — while they still have control of their senses — how much money they can afford to part with. It would remove the ill-gotten element of the profits of the pubs and clubs, in that the losses of gamblers will be the result of their rational decision to wager a specific amount of money.

What’s wrong with that? The answer is that, if it works, the technology will have a severe impact on the profits of the pub and club owners and the jobs of their employees.

We are about to be subjected to a massive advertising campaign that is likely to depict pubs and clubs as the heart and soul of the community, in other words a contributor to the common good and a moral asset. There is the convivial setting, the subsidised meals, as well as the contributions to charities and sporting clubs.

But these are largely built with funds supplied involuntarily by problem gamblers. A business or facility that is not economically sustainable without ill-gotten funds is surely not morally sustainable. The Catholic Catechism says:

The seventh commandment forbids ... enterprises that for any reason — selfish or ideological, commercial, or totalitarian — lead to the enslavement of human beings ... It is a sin against the dignity of persons and their fundamental rights to reduce them by violence to their productive value or to a source of profit.

Of course use of the word 'violence' does require interpretation. The allegation would be that clubs are not kidnapping gambling addicts as such, but instead luring them into their premises by exploiting their mental health weakness.

The point is that it's not gambling itself that is wrong, but rather gambling that is out of control or enslaving. That is where pre-commitment technology comes in.

Newell says the technology 'is unlikely to have a significant impact on the majority of problem gamblers, and may even exacerbate problem gambling'. If he really believes that it won't work, he wouldn't be worried about its impact on profits, especially as the cost of installing the technology could be outweighed by the increase in problem gambling he refers to.

Newell quotes Dr Alex Blaszczynski of the University of Sydney Gambling Treatment Clinic and Research Unit, who [says](#) pre-commitment technology is not the perfect solution for all problem gamblers. But even its strongest advocates do not claim the technology will eliminate problem gambling. Robert Chappell, the director of South Australia's Independent Gambling Authority and a strong advocate of the technology, [calls it](#) the 'air-bag' of poker machines. Air-bags in cars sometimes cause minor injuries, but they [prevent](#) many more deaths and serious injuries.

Prominent in the industry, especially in Sydney, are clubs that include the word 'Catholic' in their name, such as the Liverpool Catholic Club and the Campbelltown Catholic Club. They are officially sanctioned by Catholic Church authorities, and as such should be expected to exercise moral leadership in the area of protecting problem gamblers.

Now is the time for them to exercise such leadership. A good way to do this would be to publicly and immediately support pre-commitment technology and actively distance themselves from the campaign of Clubs Australia/Clubs NSW.

Educating bigots

COMMUNITY

Moira Rayner

The problem with freedom of speech is that some people broadcast to a willing constituency, and others are effectively silenced. Syndicated columnists have the ear of millions. Unpopular minorities preach to the small ranks of the converted.

The ideal remedy for targets of vilification and incitement to hatred is, surely, to give them the resources, support and opportunities to counter and contradict and 'speak back' to the vilifier, in a way that validates their experience and increases their confidence, competence and conversational presence in the community.

This should counteract the disabling, silencing, marginalising and disempowering effect of vilification. It puts the objectively determined facts — not a vilifier's claimed 'fact' — into the public domain. It demonstrates a public value on refusing to tolerate or embrace discrimination. It begins a different conversation that other listeners may hear and decide is valid. It maintains the conversation.

How might it work? The key element is that the target participates in the response. A few years ago NSW academic Katharine Gelber suggested a range of approaches to reach the same audience as had been affected by the original vilification, such as a local newsletter or the workplace, if that's where it happened, or a regular TV 'talkback' such as the ABC's *Media Watch*.

All of these approaches would require an independent statutory office to monitor and determine the seriousness of the vilification, and invite targets to respond.

Only those who could demonstrate that they had been 'silenced' by opponents could invoke this remedy: those who could point out that their opponents were more numerous, articulate, better financed, and more easily able to use the media than they were, could claim it.

Gelber says these should be people who inhabited 'an objective world characterised by inequality, and to norms and values which enact and support discrimination'.

This would rule out bullish campaign groups and overuse by an oversensitive 'insulted' person. It need not require the cooperation of the respondent, would involve no punishment, and would encourage more, not less, discussion and debate.

It would be expensive, but the idea of the targets of religious or racial vilification having a prompt and immediate remedy through an independent third party to contradict racial or religious vilification would let victims challenge any 'silencing effect ... and to contradict (with

their own speech) the claims raised by hate speakers’.

Public participation would be enhanced — rather better than in a court. The truth of the claims made could be contradicted, without the need to prove the speaker was deliberately offensive or motivated by racist prejudice. The relative power of the hate speaker could be challenged

There are a range of possible ways for achieving this. A government official could be responsible for ensuring that targets of vilification had their say and gave them the resources they needed to do so. It could be triggered by application to an existing officer such as (in Victoria) the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity and Human Rights. Or it might be a matter that a court or tribunal could order upon an *ex parte* (i.e. not involving any other party) application by an aggrieved person.

For example, if there were such a right, Holocaust denier and discredited British ‘historian’ David Irving would not necessarily be prevented from speaking in Australia, but the target group, Jewish people wounded and concerned by the peddling of anti-Semitic misinformation, could counteract his claims by referring to the facts in the public domain.

They would thus reassert the social value of tolerance, and demonstrate through appropriate, equally effective counter information that Irving had already been found, through an exhaustive judicial process (one he instigated himself, in 2000, through defamation action), not to be a ‘historian’ but a partisan propagandist quite reckless with the truth.

This would not prevent serious race hatred and religious propaganda campaigns from being challenged under other, criminal law procedures that would require proof of intention or *mens rea* — and this practical, civil remedy should be equally open to religious groups who are similarly victimised, to correct miscommunication of their views and stifle vilification campaigns.

Nor would it be inconsistent to make amendments to anti discrimination law to enable complainants to seek conciliation and ‘their day in court’ if they would prefer that.

But the recent reporting of the race hatred litigation against a *Herald Sun*, syndicated columnist shows the limitation of a court-focused, particular plaintiff-led approach.

Criminal laws do not ‘educate’ if they are not used. The relatively new remedies of litigation by victims of racial or religious vilification or incitement to hatred do not educate true bigots, crusaders, propagandists or victims. Criminal laws are rarely used, and then only affect the worst propagandists, rather than the more influential, if often unthinking, views expressed in the home, which children absorb, as they do in their playground, our shops and workplaces, radio and television, and cars.

The problem of conflict based on race or religion will not go away. Australia’s relative success as a pluralist society requires a consistent effort to address it.

At base, establishing the right of reply without demonising the liar or blind pedlar of a muddled world view should be supported by governments of all colours with a comprehensive, long-term, public education program that attracts bipartisan support to address our common fears and misperceptions about the race and religious differences of we, the people.