EUREKA STREET

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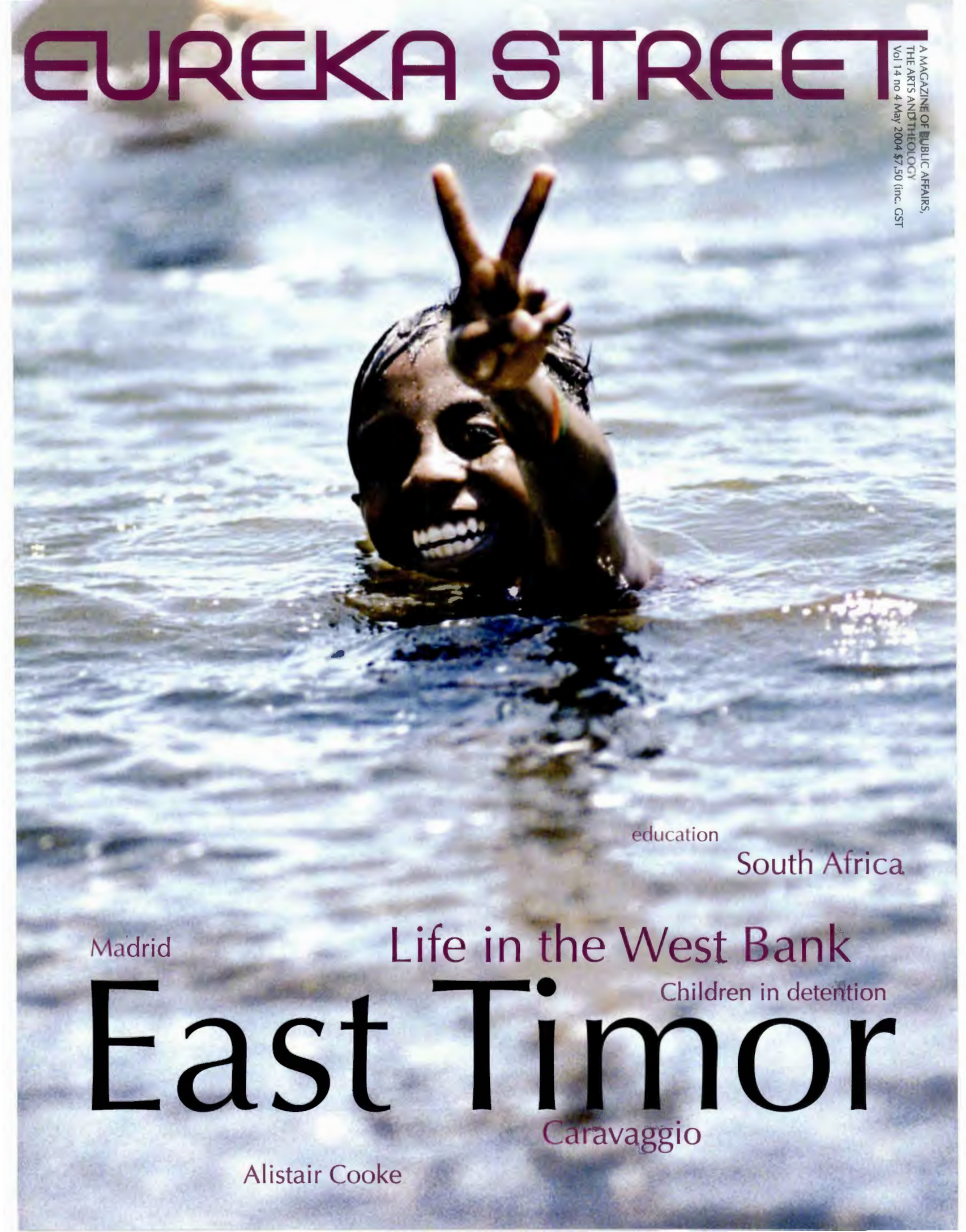

education

South Africa

Madrid

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Children in detention

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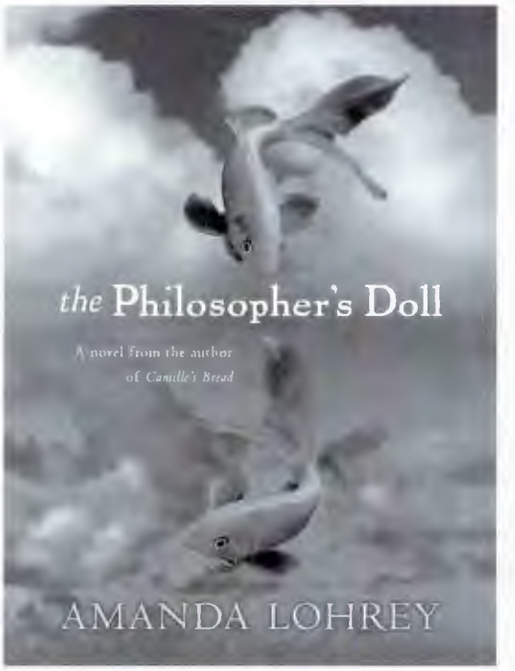
EUREKA STREET book offer

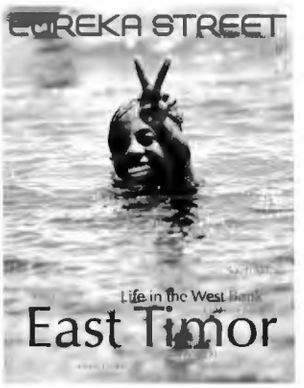
The Philosopher's Doll

by Amanda Lohrey

Award-winning writer Amanda Lohrey explores themes of marriage, family, the struggle to conceive, infidelity and animal philosophy in her latest novel *The Philosopher's Doll*. It is an irresistible read. From the author of *The Mortality of Gentlemen*, *The Reading Group* and *Camille's Bread*.



With thanks to Penguin, *Eureka Street* has five copies of *The Philosopher's Doll* to give away. Simply send your name and address on the back of an envelope to: *Eureka Street* May Book Offer, PO Box 553, Richmond VIC 3121. See page 37 for winners of the March book offer.



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This month
Cover: photo by Rusty Stewart. A young boy swims in the ocean near the headquarters of the UN mission to East Timor, in the country's capital Dili. During the Indonesian occupation the beach was used by the military for exercise, and was out of bounds to the East Timorese. Story pp 26–28.
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Francis Sullivan

Medicare minus

MEDICAREPLUS, THE FEDERAL government's response to falling rates of GP bulk billing, passed through parliament in early March. In an attempt to give those on a low income a better deal, the new safety net pays 80 per cent of doctor's bills, provides access to some dentistry and allied health services and offers differential incentives to encourage bulk billing in both cities and regions. Rather than easing the financial burden on average working families, closer examination reveals the policy leads to the creation of poverty traps.

Since 2001 the rates of bulk billing across the country have declined, but not uniformly. Such is the perverse nature of general practice that the highest rates of bulk billing and GPs per capita are in affluent suburbs. There is an ample supply of bulk billing GPs in those areas where people are most able to pay. Poorer communities and regional areas suffer the most on any barometer of affordability.

The fundamental problem with the decline in bulk billing rates lies with the Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS). Not only does it fail to keep pace with the real costs of medical practice, patients are only reimbursed to 85 per cent of the schedule fee. Patients are paying out of pocket fees regardless of their income. The strategy of a deliberately underpriced MBS to exert downward pressure and restrain doctor's fees is failing. The upshot is that those on low incomes, including pensioners, are being charged to visit the GP rather than being bulk billed. Latest figures indicate that people are paying around $15 more on average for each visit to a GP.

The Government's options were clear. Either re-invest substantially in the MBS so that most people will be bulk billed or pay very little for a GP service. Or, subsidise poorer people and those who most frequently use GPs. The Government chose the latter.

The decision was driven by expenditure concerns rather than sound public policy. The Government's failure to keep Medicare in line with the costs of medical practice means that Medicare only covers some of the cost borne by individuals and will never provide full gap cover. For people with chronic illness and those living on, or around, average weekly earnings, this is significant.

There is ample research indicating that the introduction of fees discourages patients from accessing health care not only because of the cost, but the propensity of such costs to rise frequently. Consequently, many patients either delay access to, or select only that care they can afford, irrespective of need. From a public policy perspective, the negative impact of such outcomes far outweighs any short-term public expenditure benefits.

The MedicarePlus package provides a two-tiered cash relief measure for people who spend up to either $300 or $700 annually on medical bills, variant upon their income. This is a welfare measure, not a mechanism to ensure access to essential health services. Those on low incomes are cast in the invidious position of determining whether or not they can afford access to health care.

THAT SAID THE SAFETY net structure is an improvement on the original $500 proposal placed before the Senate. At least low income families will now be assured of some cash relief after they spend $300 a year. Yet should they spend slightly less there is no cash relief. Nor is there any assistance if they spend just under $300 in the following year, or the one after that.

MedicarePlus institutionalises the notion that all people can expect to pay more for care before the government subsidy reduces the cost. This is a far cry from the spirit of Medicare and propels Australia's primary health care system along the path of a user pays scheme.

Some commentators have long bemoaned the 'middle class' welfare provided by Medicare. They have called for reforms which shift costs more squarely on to households. They have their wish. Trouble arises however, when those very households struggle to keep pace with the rising costs of health care as real wages lag behind and employment remains tenuous, elusive or in many instances non-existent.

The flawed nature of this shift to 'welfare health care' is clear. Commonwealth figures indicate that up to 711,000 individuals and families pay more than $300 per year in 'out of pocket' medical fees. The MedicarePlus package at best assists around 450,000. In real terms many people on modest means are facing a more expensive health service. In the absence of increased public investment, the users of the system are being 'taxed' at the point of service.

Make no mistake, MedicarePlus does not guarantee even the unemployed a bulk billing service. It places a notional safety net in the void left by an inadequate MBS benefit. It signals that the public medical insurance scheme, Medicare, is being eroded and the Government has no intention of making Medicare benefits accurately reflect the cost of medical care. The prospect of higher fees for the majority of the community is real. ■

Francis Sullivan is the Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Health Australia.

capital letter

Easy relations

JOHN HOWARD AND Alexander Downer do Australia no favours in suggesting that to place Australia's interests ahead of those of the United States, is proof of anti-Americanism or unsound policy. They help the nation, even less when inviting interjections from an ever-obliging US Ambassador to Australia, or from the US State Department, when questions of the Australian-American alliance arise. This emphasises the crude politics with which Howard plays national security issues, and makes it harder to have a gentlemen's agreement to disagree when our interests conflict. And disagreements happen, even under Liberal administrations.

The whole 53-year history of the ANZUS treaty, and the 61-year history of general alliance, is littered with such disagreements. Only three years after the Anzus Treaty was signed, Eisenhower made Menzies look foolish over Suez. Menzies, got no warning that the US was about to torpedo old European imperialistic pretensions. Six years later, Kennedy coldly abandoned Australia, the Netherlands and the people of Irian Jaya in the interests of appeasing President Sukarno of Indonesia. Australian troops were soon engaged against Indonesian soldiers in Borneo as an emboldened Sukarno tried to destabilise the new Malaysian federation.

Australia promoted American escalation in Vietnam, committing its own troops even as a dispirited and diplomatically isolated US was losing appetite for the conflict. This had little to do with the US line about fighting communism: it was about encouraging a continuing American military presence in Asia, because of Australian fears that China would fill any subsequent vacuum. President Nixon did not bother to tell Billy McMahon about his secret negotiations with China, nor of his plans for his Guam doctrine, through which the US largely abandoned its commitment to the region, claiming countries had to do more to help themselves.

Malcolm Fraser shared US panic about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, but received little insight into American thinking. American attitudes to its relations with India, Pakistan and China bore little relation to our short or long-term interests. Bob Hawke, who under domestic pressure, refused to participate in US missile trials, seemed not to disturb the relationship. More recently, President Clinton had to be strongly cajoled by John Howard to support Australia over East Timor.

Indeed, it is unfair to think that the US assumes that we shall passively acquiesce with their plans, placing their interests first, uncritically supporting their diplomatic or military adventures. They assume that we can define and defend our own interests. The Administration appreciates our support, though this is invariably more important in diplomatic than military terms. Such support secures few rewards; certainly not in very tough, and essentially unproductive, negotiations over the 'free' trade agreement.

John Howard is stuck with his decision to join the coalition that invaded and occupied Iraq. While the decision had its advantages, the negatives are obvious. His decision was contrary to strong local opinion, even if it won him some credit for sticking to his guns, and even as an instinct to be supportive saw active opposition subside. He factored vulnerability to attack for 'me-tooism' with the US, against his hope that Australia's support of America's position might win rewards in Washington.

He hedged his bets by limiting his commitment and by (alone among coalition members) having an exit strategy. He rebuffed British appeals for an Australian brigade among the occupying forces, and limited our post-war contribution to people who generally ought to have been well out of the line of fire. He retained the right to take his troops home at any time.

WITTINGLY OR OTHERWISE, Mark Latham outflanked John Howard by promising to have the troops home by Christmas. Howard had to accuse him of making policy on the run; of wanting to cut and run, and inviting anger from the US for defecting while their role is under heavy fire. The counter argument is that Iraq has become a quagmire, the US has mismanaged its goals, and in the face of a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan there is increasing hostility towards moderate Muslim opinion in the region.

Howard's problem is that the argument in the US is moving against him. The Democrats are prepared to attack George W. Bush over his conduct of the war against terror, not to mention his unilateralism, pre-emption policies and capacity to alienate traditional friends and allies. Bush, moreover, is simply unable to deliver much to Howard while he is under re-election pressure.

Bush's foreign policy, with or without the war on terror, is contrary to Australia's own interests. It undermines an international rules-based system (which we need), dismantles international cooperation on environmental and social problems, and ignores the crises in our region. Moreover, our supine cheerleading reduces any power we might have to influence an active internal American debate about the best options. Had we been harder to woo, the US might have listened, so desperate were they for international support.

An Australian official tells of working on exchange in the US defence establishment, and of asking, once, what his colleagues thought of Australia. His colleague spoke of common language, interest, old common struggles—all puffery. Yes, but what do you really think? One of the Americans grinned, pretended to look about for witnesses, and said, 'We think you're an easy lay'. Perhaps not a joke for polite company, but, actually, not a joke at all. ■

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

Power of persuasion

ELECTIONS IN EL SALVADOR

To an Australian, elections in El Salvador have both familiar and strange aspects. The main difference is that the results are entirely predictable. In March, the Presidential election was won by Antonio Saca. Once a sports broadcaster, Saca is a right-wing businessman from the ruling National Republican Alliance (ARENA) party. He is also a strong supporter of the US. His opponent was Shafik Handal, of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) party; the resistance during the civil war. This was the third consecutive Presidential election won by ARENA.

The poll—with ARENA winning 57 per cent of the vote, compared to the FMLN's 37 per cent—showed how difficult it will be to change government in El Salvador. Economic power in the country is heavily concentrated in ten or so leading families. There is large scale unemployment, and the economy, heavily reliant on now low-priced coffee, is maintained by remittances from relatives in the United States. There is widespread poverty and few health or educational services.

There is also much violence. Shortly after the election, Ismael and Nelson, two young men from rural Arcatao were shot on a bus when returning home from university. Ismael died and Nelson was hospitalised. The two men were on scholarships that bonded them later to work in rural development programmes.

In such climates, fear becomes a powerful force. ARENA claimed the opposition would turn the country into another Cuba, and that foreign investment would dry up. As ARENA's supporters own most of the media, such unlikely charges can be made to seem plausible. All the more so when opposition party rallies display red banners and the trappings of a revolutionary past. The irony is that the opposition had already lost touch with the poor they represent.

So, with the nation's bishops withdrawing from interest in social morality, the committed voters for each party remained faithful, and the undecided voted against change on the grounds that it might make the violence and poverty even worse.

In the meantime, the great social challenges facing a small Central American nation in the shadow of the US remain.

For those working for a more decent and fair society, the immediate challenge is to maintain hope in the political process. Jon Sobrino, the theologian whose six Jesuit brothers and friends were massacred by the army in 1989, offered this take on the elections:

'Hope is not the same as desire. It is very understandable that the poor should desire. They see life in the FMLN, but this is not life but desire. Hope is not the desire to win power, and it's not the same as optimism.

'What is hope? It is the conviction that goodness is possible, and that goodness is there to be found. Whoever has hope will participate in the next elections. Whoever has hope will love again.'

This theological interest in election results may also distinguish elections in El Salvador from those in Australia.

—Kent Rosenthal

Unsettled city

LIFE IN KABUL

Location is everything when trading on the bustling streets of Kabul. Seasonal fruits fly from roadside tables, towering woodpiles atop rickety carts are pulled through the traffic by diminutive couriers, and child spruikers ply the souvenir economy. A man, his bicycle festooned with balloons, pedals through the traffic, seeking to sell his stock before he himself takes flight.

There are many whose sales pitch is an open hand in a speculative market of money for nothing. Always, the maimed victims of conflict are found steadying themselves at slow points in the road, seeking a benign toll for their service and legacy.

Though the drought has decimated the once bountiful agricultural sector in Afghanistan, landmines remain an abundant and fertile crop. The much needed rains bring a treacherous consequence; the unearthing of mines buried below the ground. From the Soviet invasion, through periods of factional fighting among mujahadeen alliances, and the sweeping rise of the Taliban, landmines and their crude variations were employed as tools of aggression, deterrence and fear. The recent anti-terrorist operations by coalition forces has again seen the landscape replenished with an assortment of explosive ordinances and cluster munitions; an anathema to the concept of sophisticated warfare, and human life.

Too often, these devices find the hands of children and the tools of farmers in residential areas and on grazing lands. According to the Red Cross, nearly 5000 mine related casualties have been recorded since 1998 including more than 650 fatalities. Cruelly, of those killed and injured last year, 90 per cent were civilians, and more than half aged under 18 years. Across the rural and urban divide, the land harbours a continuing menace.

Efforts are being mounted across several fronts to reduce the level of danger and to address the devastating aftermath. Despite a ten-year best estimate for ridding the country of landmines, clearing operations continue in earnest, the combination of international expertise and local knowledge undoubtedly saving the lives of many. Work is slow and often imprecise as teams reclaim the land by inches. Although large tracts of the country remain off limits, courageous land clearance teams—the majority of them Afghans—assume responsibility for the perilous task.

Collaboration among mine action partners and renewed financial backing have given birth to a cautious optimism for a safe and habitable environment for Afghan communities. Nevertheless, landmines will remain a major cause of dislocation for Afghanistan's predominantly rural population for years to come.

An information campaign, with a focus on children, has been promoted across the country, emphasising a heightened awareness of the dangers of land mines and an enduring attitude of caution. Posters depicting various mine types are circulated among schools in a country where a child's recognition of shape, size and colour—the red rocks of danger, the white rocks of safety—is an essential test of survival.

Health care and post-trauma facilities have given victims a better chance of

survival and rehabilitation. Prosthetic and orthopaedic centres are responding to the pronounced need of thousands of amputees, providing artificial limbs, walking aids and physiotherapy services. Other non-government organisations are offering psychosocial support, skills training and income generation opportunities as a means of reinvigorating the human capacities of landmine victims. Demand however continues to outstrip supply and the majority of services remain urban focused.

While Afghanistan is not known for the production of landmines, the country has served as a prolific market for invading armies and disparate militias. The legacy of war and guerilla conflict in Afghanistan is self-evident. The Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled is itself debilitated by limited capacity within a fledgling national government. In the corridors of power, there are tough choices being made between rebuilding bodies and rebuilding nations.

In the midst of policy gaps, and benefit shortfalls, the legacy for many victims remains buried within their memories and written forever on their bodies.

—Ben Fraser

From pieces to peace

DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH AFRICA

With the re-election of Thabo Mbeki on 14 April 2004, South Africans celebrated the tenth anniversary of democracy. Among the host of events to mark this momentous event was a musical commemorating the achievements of the past ten years.

New Day included a tribute to the World Cup rugby victory in 1995, an interpretive dance of the elections (which to Australian audiences may seem comical but which local audiences saw as reverent) and scenes of those who have been brought 'into the fold' by the constitution of the 'new' South Africa. In one scene a refreshingly camp character celebrates the inclusion of his right to equal treatment in spite of his sexual orientation. His question at the end of one scene drew a mixed response from the audience, 'Why didn't the new South Africa come with instructions?' The question was, for me, revelatory.

In the lead up to the election, campaign posters identified the problems facing this

summa theologiae

Letter from James

Football teams, empires and prime ministers rise and fall but, it is said, God's word abides forever. True, but the books of scripture themselves also rise and fall in popularity

Take, for example, the Epistle of James. For much of its biblical life it has been a backbencher. Although it was little quoted in the early church, it was received into the Canon, only to spend many centuries in decent obscurity. Its glory days came with the Reformation. Against Luther's attacks on a theology of good works, Catholics rallied to its insistence that 'faith without works is dead', a phrase that will be familiar to older Catholics from the Catechism. A provoked Luther called the letter an Epistle of Straw.

The Epistle then resumed its minor status. But among young Christians, it has more recently come into favour because of its outspoken moral comment. Indeed, at first sight it is an urger's manifesto, arguing pungently against a faith that is preoccupied with beliefs or feelings. James wants generous living, and is particularly unimpressed by status—by the inclination to make more of people who own helicopter pads than of those who sweep them:

> If a man with gold rings and in fine clothing comes into your assembly and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing, and say, 'Have a seat here, please', while you say to the poor man, 'Stand there', or 'Sit at my feet', have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?'

James also challenges popular Catholic attitudes to sin. For him, the part of the body you need to watch most closely is the tongue, because it feeds arrogant and divisive behaviour.

> And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell.

When thinking of sinful bodily members, later Catholic moralists set their sights somewhat lower.

For all James' virtues, however, you would not want to make him the staple of your diet. James is a moralist. The risk of listening too intently to moralists is that you become earnest, judgmental and legalistic. You are surprised to find the Christian message described as Good News. You then face the challenge to live faith seriously without losing the sense of grace, of unexpected gift, that is the Christian version of the lightness of being.

St Paul sorted out that challenge by opposing grace to law. James took another tack. He was happy enough to describe as law the claims of living generously. But he described it as the law of freedom. The phrase is paradoxical, for we instinctively contrast law and freedom. Many Christian interpreters have knackered the paradox by making James say that obedience to law will make you free. It doesn't, of course.

What James meant, perhaps, is that there is a lightness, almost an anarchic spirit, in Christian faith that naturally expresses itself in generous and countercultural living. Maybe that is why the Letter of James has an important place in Scriptures. Maybe, too, that is why he is usually unfashionable. ■

Andrew Hamilton SJ teaches at the United Faculty of Theology, Melbourne.

archimedes 

Laser zone

IT WAS 1917 WHEN Albert Einstein first proposed the possibility of lasers. When the first true laser was built in 1960, the technology seemed esoteric and expensive, good only for space age weapons in sci-fi movies. Lasers have since become an integral part of everyday consumer products; play a central role in telecommunications and measurement; and are used for imaging and intricate surgery. It is hard to imagine life without them.

It's also becoming difficult to imagine how such technology could be developed in Australia today. Given our approach to research—the competition for funds, the need for return on investment, and the drive for efficiency—we cannot afford to have people, equipment and ideas sitting around without profit for 50 years.

Recently, Federal Education Minister Dr Brendan Nelson released three reviews of research funding and infrastructure. They dealt with the efficiency of using public funds in universities and government research bodies, such as the CSIRO and the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation. One review examined closer collaboration between universities and research agencies. It proposed putting hundreds of millions of dollars (that now goes directly to institutions) into a competitive 'collaborative fund' for cooperative ventures. While closer collaboration between institutions deserves to be funded, diverting that money from direct grants to research institutions decreases the funds universities can be assured of receiving. And the greater the uncertainty of funding, the lower the level of long-term research undertaken. The more governments drive research towards competitive funding, the less curiosity-driven or 'blue-sky' research can be done.

For all the protestations of support for long-term research, the trend towards short-term research in universities is evident. The amount of money they directly receive from government for research is dependent on the income they attract, the number of students they graduate in higher degrees and the number of papers published. This encourages an increased level of research activity and performance. It also encourages short-term application of research to solving practical problems, at the expense of long-term accumulation of knowledge.

The bigger, research-based universities are pouring resources into collaborative problem-solving centres, attractive to business and government, both of which have horizons measured in years rather than decades. Melbourne University will open a $100 million Molecular and Biotechnology Institute this year, aimed at collaborating with companies and other research institutions in commercialising research. It has also announced the Centre for Water Research and signed a memorandum of understanding for joint research with Melbourne Water.

This investment and activity is admirable. But Archimedes is concerned lest we throw the long-term, 'blue-sky' research baby, out with the short-term, problem solving bathwater. The connection between American innovation, consumer products, and research, is clear. But in the flash and glitz of marketing, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that the US supports a strong academic culture and that American business and community invest heavily in non-commercial research. The Americans know that the lifeblood of innovation is the knowledge generated by curiosity-driven studies.

Australians have been brilliant at ideas, and poor at using them to practical purposes. In our rush to generate a more productive research culture, we must guard against cutting off the well-spring of ideas. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

new democracy: 'A better South Africa for all; A million real jobs; 150,000 new police; Ten years of unemployment is undermining the peoples' freedom.' These are the cries of the main opposition, the Democratic Alliance and those of the New Nationalist Party, the party once synonymous with apartheid; a system at the forefront of the national political consciousness even now.

During my stay in Soweto, I was cross-examined by local residents. 'What were the key issues and challenges I saw as an outsider for the "new" South Africa?' I suggested five: HIV/AIDs; crime and poverty; recovery from past injustices; the startling ignorance of the rich South Africa about the poor; and moving beyond the Mandela legacy. As long as South Africans retained their commitment to bridge gaps and rebuild their society, the new South Africa could be a model for other states—especially other African states—to follow.

'The apartheid museum just opened by your government says it all', I said. 'It makes no apologies, owes no apologies and embraces everyone in the Mandelian spirit of forgiveness.'

I left with one overriding question of my own. If the new South Africa had come with instructions, what would they be? The answer: the question. What better way is there for this nation to move into a new era than to be self-reflective; where asking the hard questions is not only accepted but expected? As South Africa heads boldly into its second decade of democracy, the collective act of questioning should be its chief source of pride. There are many places in the world, not least Australia, that could profit from such honesty. As a sign painted on a primary school in Cape Town put it, the new South Africa is moving 'from pieces to peace.' ■

—Matthew Albert

This month's contributors: **Kent Rosenthal** SJ is studying theology in Central America; **Ben Fraser** works for the International Rescue Committee, Kabul and wishes to thank Pauline Fowlie from CARE International for assistance with this article; **Matthew Albert** is the Kenyan correspondent for *Eureka Street*, a co-founder of the SAIL Program (SAILProgram.cjb.net) and the Caseload Co-ordinator of Spare Lawyers for Refugees (sparelawyers.com).

Winds of change

TOWARDS THE END of a bleak, mid-February Friday, the wind started to groan through the narrow, village streets. Shutters creaked and in the valley below a filmy curtain materialised over the vines and blurred the outlines of the farmhouses.

Through this gathering tumult, and with flicks of rain on the breeze, I was hurrying home, collar up, resolutely plunging past the Café Le Progrès into whose warm, smoky bar I was profoundly tempted to detour. As I'd emerged from the edge of the forest, I had felt something indefinably different in the shift of the air above me and the heave of the branches. I felt like a spy who had noticed a subtle change in the enemies' routines but couldn't quite pin down what it was. Something was going on ...

From what the patronne calls the terrace bar of the Café le Progrès, you can see in the middle distance, across regiments of knuckley vines, fallow fields and stone houses, whose earthy walls and faded tiles seem to hold on to the last light, the snow covered heights of Mont Ventoux. It's the highest point around here, but it has another notoriety. The summit is, reputedly, the windiest place on earth, because the dominant winds in this region—the mistral, the tramontane and the sirocco—all at certain times meet across the top of Mont Ventoux. It must be hell up there.

The mistral is a northerly, and in these winter months, when it gets down to serious business, feels as if it is surgically removing all sensation below the knees, let alone what it's doing to the bits of your face that are left exposed by the tedious necessity to keep breathing and to see where you're going. The tramontane comes across the Pyrenees overflying vast amounts of snow, so it's a chilly little blast but, hereabouts, reasonably rare. The sirocco blows in from Africa, and this, as the Monty Pythons used to say, is where the story really begins.

When I returned home, I heard new noises everywhere through the house. Boards creaked, a distant door banged, several shutters flapped loose from their locks. And when I lit the fire, billows of smoke erupted from what had been till then the highly efficient chimney as strange winds barrelled down it and rolled like gatecrashers at a party into the living room. All night the wind, driving intermittent rainstorms before it, thumped at doors and windows, rattled, shook, thrummed, screamed, as if, somehow, the house had drifted out to sea in a Force 8 gale. I didn't know it then, during a sleepless night, but this was the sirocco, and not just a wind. In the morning, though the sirocco itself has subsided to gasps and puffs, its gift is everywhere: red sand all the way from North Africa, transformed to mud by the rain. Windowpanes are mottled, doorways clogged; red streaks the street names—rue Kléber Guendon, 'victime du nazisme le 26 Avril 1944'—and lies in drifts on their pavements; red gouts spot the leaves and the lawn like an exotic disease in the meticulously tended 'Jardin Jean Moulin, unificateur de La Résistance Francaise, 1899–1943, assassiné par les Nazis'; russet mud clots the cobblestones of the Place Albert Roure, 'victime du nazisme le 28 Juin 1944'. At the end of the rue de l'église, the Church of Saint Luc, protected neither by its holiness nor its craggy stone, has taken a pounding: tiles are smashed and the porch is silted up with the heretical red invader. But in its 900 years, it can't be Saint Luc's first sirocco.

IN THE PLACE DE L'HORLOGE, Madame Gauguin paces round the square muttering and waving a broom, as if to say that she was in no doubt about the dimensions of the task—it was just a matter of where to begin. Above her, on the clock tower, the flag of the European Union and the Tricoleur are knotted together in a violent tangle—an ambiguous symbolism, as the Mayor wryly notes—while the local colours lie in a sodden, red heap against the Town Hall wall. On nearby rue Raoul et Raymond Sylvestre, 'victimes du nazisme le 26 Avril 1944', the pharmacie is closed for repairs. Not so the boucherie in Kléber Guendon, however, where Monsieur Leclos regards the striped window and sandy steps with a distaste from which only his permanent dream of 'le Roogby' (fired up that very morning by the impending Six Nations competition) could distract him. Not the boulangerie either, where Madame Rochard—formidable, aproned, testy—adds an edge and some volume to her sturdy morning barracking of her amiable son and her small, floury, baker husband as she mobilises her forces against the sand like a tank commander in the desert. And not the épicerie, where Mademoiselle Reynard, who serves customers one-handed while holding her mobile phone to her ear with the other and talking into it incessantly, has abandoned her phone in favour of an ineffective broom and hysterics.

And so it went. As their ancestors had done before there were Christian churches and long before the century of world wars, the philosophical villagers trooped out into the winter sunlight to sweep up after the sirocco on which, as ever, not history, not age, not monuments or memorials, or commerce had made the slightest impression. ■

Brian Matthews is a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Victoria University, presently living and working in France.

snap

Terms of endearment

In an age of modern communications styles of address have shifted. Communicating via email is also difficult when the gender and name of the recipient is unclear. There are some openings though that are crystalline. Recently, we received a letter with the opening volley, 'YOU IGNORANT BASTARD!!!'. While we empathised with the sentiment, few were willing to own the letter.

Anonymous letters often arrive from Disgusted, Disgruntled and Dissatisfied. Less frequent are those from Dismembered, Dissociated and Disorganised. And rarest of all are ones from Relieved, Reformed and Reconciled. Perhaps they are too much at peace to take up their pens.

Smashing idea

The best of our letters are brought to morning tea. This doubles as an unofficial editorial meeting, staff assembly, television and film review group, book club and neighbourhood watch.

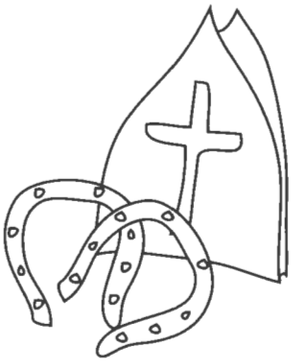
Instituted and most often hosted by *Eureka Street*'s publisher, the event is occasionally punctuated by the sound of smashing crockery. This is followed soon after by an expedition to the local IKEA in search of a replacement tea pot.

IKEA stores are houses of torment. Those who can control their panic as they search for an exit sign, clock or daylight, deserve a reward. Those who make it to the checkout without losing their temper, mind or child, deserve a medal. Those who claim to be able to assemble the object once at home, are lying.

Masochism, however, pays. The stores seem only to be growing in popularity. Swedish business magazine *Veckans Affarer* claims that IKEA's founder Ingvar Kamprad has unseated Bill Gates as the world's richest man.

Eureka Street is pleased to contribute in some small way to the meteoric rise of Mr Kamprad.

Tea anyone?



Back in the saddle

The Australian Bishops are just back from their five yearly accounting in Rome. Last time, they returned with lead in their bags—the Statement of Conclusions that seemed designed to nobble the Australian Church.

This time, they came back smelling of Spring Carnival roses, and bearing praise from John Paul II. He commended them for their advocacy on behalf of asylum seekers and of Indigenous Australians.

Fine fellows

We were surprised to hear prayers offered recently for peace in the Gangland community. Peace, yes, but community wouldn't have been the first word that came to mind.

The Gangland community certainly lacks some of the connotations of the Latin original, notably fellowship and solidarity. But words like community always become inflated in political contexts, and end up forgetting their origins.

Augustine, for example, did a job on the pretensions to glory and respectability of the Roman state. He took the current definition of this sacred word, and showed that it could apply equally to a band of robbers. This, he surmised, was also probably the most accurate description of the reality that underlay the myths of Rome.

So maybe in being located so surprisingly in Gangland, community and fellowship, too, have not forgotten, but returned to their origins.

Clean as a whistle

Remember Marge from the Palmolive ad in the 70s? 'You know you're soaking in it!' She is now passée. According to the *New York Times* single men are the new target for soap sellers. As the product wrappers change from pink to blue, and the stomach churning scents from pot pourri to ocean breeze, Procter & Gamble have hired a consumer psychologist to advise on the cleaning habits of men. Men, it seems, cannot distinguish between detergent and dishwasher soap, wash dusting cloths or determine when the sheets need washing.

Such earnest endeavour spawns acronyms. Tom McNulty, author of *Clean like a man: Housekeeping for men (and the women who love them)* confides that he has learned to work one room at a time, assisted by his MCU—mobile cleaning unit. This marvel of technology comprises a basket with dust cloths, Windex and Nifti 'that operates as his basic handyman's kit in each room'. Oh, pass me a bucket.

Letter from a Chinese restaurant

If Alistair Cooke were telling this story, he would start with the Chinese restaurant. He might then offer a false lead as to his intended direction by adding a worthy phrase or two about the diligence of those who have come to this country from someplace else and found acceptance only on the basis of their cuisine. But Cooke would soon zero in on the chairs in the restaurant, just as he was able, at his best, to create a world from a first hand description of the rocking chair that accompanied JFK everywhere, or his personal observance of the arrangements for getting FDR into and out of his seat without the public being reminded that their leader was paralysed.

Suddenly Cooke's pace would quicken. There are only four chairs for people waiting to take food home, nowhere near sufficient on a Saturday night. Then, for a moment Cooke would interrupt himself to parade the bi-lingualism of which he was proud, mentioning that what is known among the British as take-away food is take-out to the Americans.

But soon he'd be back to the chairs. There were not enough to seat the McGirr family. That was why, every week, on the way home from Mass, one member of the family, usually mum, went into the restaurant to get the evening meal on her own. The rest sat out in the car and listened to Cooke's *Letter from America*. Cooke delivered the sermons they never heard at Mass. They were harder to forget.

Alistair Cooke was born in Manchester, studied at Cambridge. He won a fellowship which took him to the United States in the 30s where he bought a cheap car and travelled the country until he fell in love with it. In 1934, he became the film critic for the BBC but returned to live permanently in America in 1937. It took him ten years to convince the BBC that a weekly 'letter' from across the Atlantic would be of interest to their listeners. In 1946, the organisation said they would try the idea for 13 weeks. *Letter from America* continued for 58 years, the longest running serial of any kind in any electronic medium. Cooke recorded 2869 broadcasts of uniform length, the last one going to air on March 6 this year. He died three weeks later.

Cooke projected an urbane combination of erudition and modesty. Radio is the most intimate of all media, the one that people attend to when they are alone in their cars or alone in their beds at night. Radio can enter your life when your eyes are closed. I'm sure this intimacy is one factor which contributes to the longevity of broadcasters: they are companions as much as informants or entertainers. In Australia, there is a list of personalities, from John Laws to John Cargher, who have been on air for a lifetime.

The intimacy of radio suited Cooke. He said that 'a broadcaster must be someone talking to two friends in a room.' The two friends, however, needed to be treated as if they would leave at any minute: 'broadcasting is the control of suspense.'

Yet Cooke was essentially a preacher. This was because he believed passionately in the Grand Narrative, in capitals, specifically the Grand Narrative of America. He relished stories such as those of Valentino and Gershwin. Both came from poor immigrant stock, both had meteoric rises to celebrity, both died young but both had lives with a lasting message. There were few ordinary people in Cooke's America. Every janitor was about to discover a taped door, indicating a break-in at the Watergate Hotel where they worked. Either that or they didn't rate a mention.

The essential element in Cooke's Grand Narrative was what he called character. Cooke subscribed to the Great Man theory of history. Indeed, they were mostly men. His views on feminism, as well as his appeals to the public to find ribbons to keep his ancient typewriter clacking away outside cyberspace, made his later broadcasts embarrassing. He remained a companion but became an increasingly unreal and frustrating one.

At times, his sense of character was illuminating. It helped Cooke explain why such a regal cold fish as George Washington was God's gift: 'it was the presence of nothing but character.' Other times, however, the drama of character was a bit silly. He once intoned 5.30pm on January 21, 1990 as if it was fulcrum of history. It was actually the moment at which John McEnroe was disqualified from the Australian Open for unruly conduct. McEnroe was not a gentleman. He had no place in Cooke's court.

If this were his story, Alistair Cooke would conclude with the Chinese restaurant and observe that most places home deliver these days. It is no longer necessary for a family to sit in the car listening to the radio. Nothing lasts forever. The Grand Narrative is episodic. ■

Michael McGirr's biography of the Hume highway, *Bypass*, will be published this year by Picador.

verse 

Doing the Housework with Brother Lawrence

Universe wrings down to kitchen size. Turning taps
loop round Saturn, silver basins glimmer,
soapsuds build a polar world.

Pegged to the line, sails swing
across a sea of couch grass.
Straw broom rudders over concrete;
there's a leaf spray storm to stern.

Vacuum Unit uproots coins and alien seeds
from a patterned forest. In the lunar colony,
the flags of a porcelain State are scrubbed for inspection.

Pack the spacecrafts into the holding room, send them
on a water blast mission. Place provisions in the white monolith,
to the depths of an iced inner world. Then come with me to Vulcan,
our departure lounge, sit down and drink brown juice
til the sails are dry. And the kids come home.

—Paul Mitchell

Blue

Morning light: arcs of the wind, its sightless paths.
This mirror gaping blue-eyed on a garbage heap
tacks up rain and refuse: grips the flare of a cloud, the ink of cypress needles.
Presence, then release. A thrush hovers in a bush.

Give me your whispers.
Give me howls like a bright wind furling through the rain.
Give me lines etched on copper plates with mortal acid burns.
Give me a promise you can keep.

This mirror won't tell me what you want.
This cypress, limbs grinding in the sky, say nothing of proximity, savagery, belief.
This thrush flees the nest a mouse has raided; she will not return.
This blindness is the pause as wind covers up the dead.

—Judith Bishop

The voices of the silenced

Anthony Ham looks at the national and international legacy of the bombings in Madrid.

THERE HAS NEVER been a time like this in Madrid.

Throughout Thursday 11 March, a silence reigned over the Spanish capital, long renowned as the most vibrant city in Europe. In part because of the devastating bombings which had caused it, but also because this is a city with a joyous disregard for noise, the quietness of this day was profoundly unsettling. Only in Madrid could silence be a violation.

Prior to the war in Iraq, daily street marches of up to a million people took place long after they had dwindled elsewhere in the world. On a cold March night in 2003, we joined almost the entire population of Madrid, banging our pots and pans in protest. It was a typically noisy Spanish way of saying that other people's freedom was as important as their own.

But on Thursday 11 March, the silence was broken only by the sirens of emergency vehicles and the sound of circling helicopters. As they laid out the bodies alongside the tracks at Madrid's Atocha station, emergency workers stood in anguish, trying to decide whether to answer the ringing mobile phones of the dead. At the makeshift morgue on the outskirts of the city, an emotion-filled voice read out over a loudspeaker the names, one by one, of those who had died, whereupon waiting families, finally knowing the worst, shuffled up the stairs and into the nightmare of identifying the body parts of their loved ones.

And then there was the sound of a million mobile phones, as Madrileños overloaded mobile networks trying frantically to track down family and friends. After a desperate hour or more spent trying to reach my wife's family—we knew that her father and sister had been close-by when the bombings took place—I finally got through. Suddenly, I found myself unable to speak.

On the platform of Atocha Station, EPA / J.J. Guillén.

Leonardo, a Madrileño friend, told me simply: 'I have never seen Madrid like this. This is a very special silence.'

By Friday 12 March, the silence had given way to the sounds of a defiant city. At midday, the demonstrations in support of the victims and against terrorism had already begun, despite not being scheduled to commence until 7pm. By early evening, central Madrid was filled with close to 2.3 million people (around 75 per cent of the city's population). Across Spain, some 11 million people (more than a quarter of the entire country) marched in solidarity. The crowds on the streets were not restricted to young Spaniards who regularly champion causes in public demonstrations. Young and old, lifetime Madrileños and newly arrived immigrants all marched or stood silently in the rain.

And every one of us had an uncontrollable desire to weep.

Alongside the very public expressions of grief, there was a palpable sense of anger. Cries started by a small group in the centre soon rang out across the mass of people: 'Asesinos!' (assassins), 'Hijos de Puta!' (sons of bitches), 'Cobardes!' (cowards), 'Esa gente era inocente' (these people were innocent).

ALTHOUGH THE CROWDS had already begun to doubt the government's premature assertions that ETA was responsible, some demonstrators needed an identifiable target. Others didn't care who had committed the atrocities, chanting simply 'ETA o al Qaeda, son la misma mierda' (ETA or al Qaeda, it's the same shit).

This was an anger like no other, an expression of outrage as vehement as it was without need of retribution. This anger was best expressed in the universal chant: 'Estas son nuestras manos, asi como luchamos' (these are our hands, this is how we fight), accompanied by thousands upon thousands of outstretched palms.

Nor was it a crowd which needed scapegoats. Placards carried by the young and the militant said, 'Vascos si, ETA no!' (Basques yes, ETA no). Just prior to the demonstration, the government announced that all illegal immigrants who had been injured, or the families of the dead, were to be immediately granted residence without question; the most popular thing that the government had done in years.

On through the rain we marched, bounced (a very Spanish form of protest) or trudged solemnly, past the wrought-iron balconies draped with Spanish flags, each tied with a black ribbon, weeping at all that had been lost, carried along by the pride in a nation. Above it all could be heard the cries of 'no estamos todos, faltan 200' (we are not everyone, we are missing 200), or 'Se nota, se siente, Madrid está presente' (you can see it, you can feel it, Madrid is here).

EVERYONE WAS TRYING to call friends in the crowd, this time not to know whether they were alive but instead to share this very special moment of life. Few succeeded and few cared because there was a sense of belonging; a sense that perhaps this night was the first real victory in the war against terror.

It took almost three hours to travel the 3km from Plaza de Colon to Atocha station. When this grieving crowd—whose march had taken on the quality of a pilgrimage—reached its destination close to where the bombs had exploded, we broke into spontaneous rounds of applause. And before the haunting silence of the Madrileños again took hold, there was one last cry: 'ibamos todos en ese tren' (we were all on that train).

Just two days after these demonstrations, the Spanish people sent shockwaves around the world by throwing out the conservative Partido Popular (PP) of José María Aznar and his hand-picked successor, Mariano Rajoy, in favour of the socialist Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) of José Luis Rodriguez Zapatero.

Within days a wave of criticism was unleashed in the international media. In the aftermath of 11 September 2001, there was dismay among Americans at how quickly worldwide sympathy for their traumatised nation had evaporated. Most galling was the extent to which the Americans 'themselves' were being blamed for their own tragedy. Barely a week after more than 200 people were killed in Madrid, the Spanish people could be forgiven for feeling similarly abandoned.

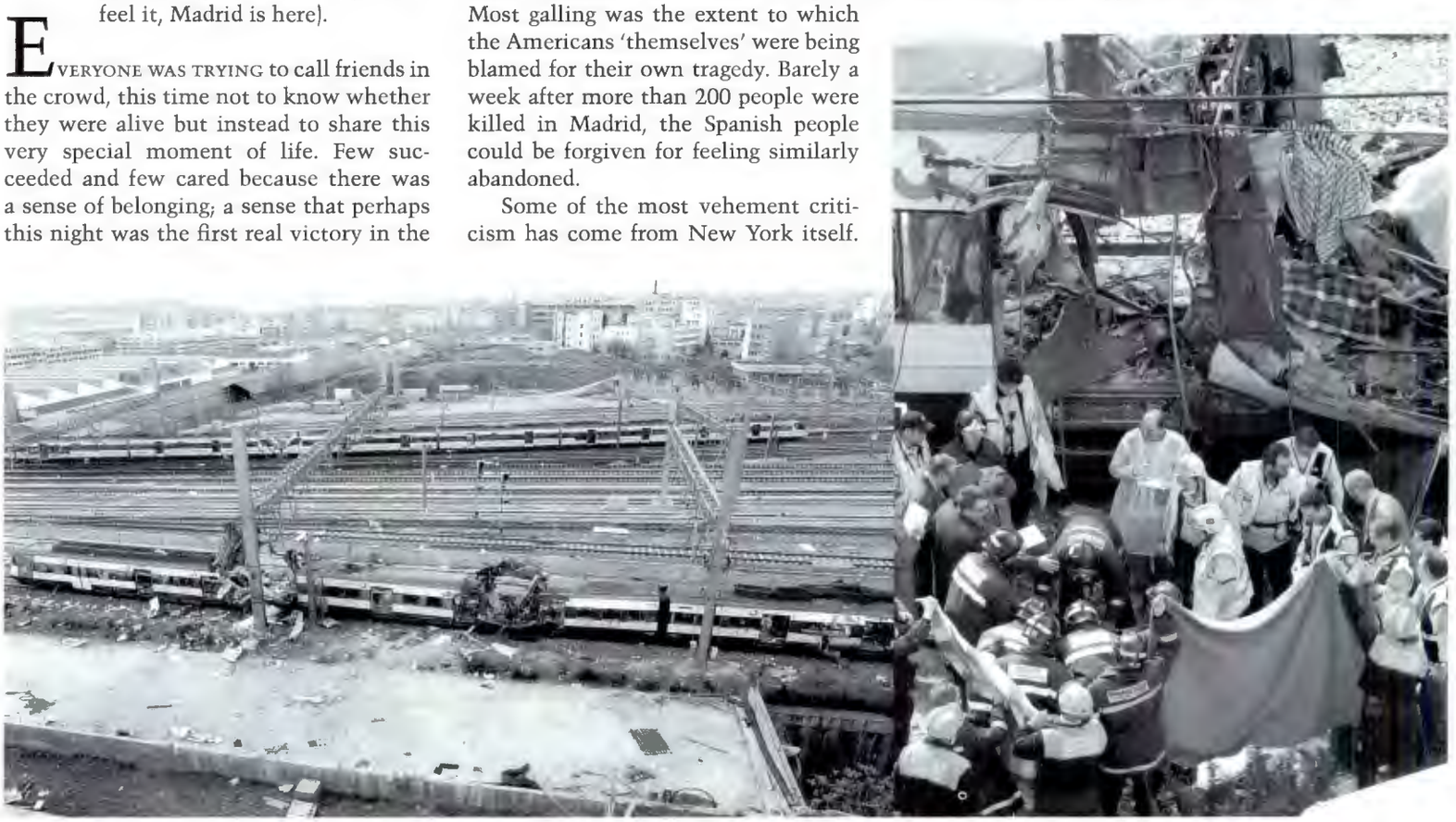
Some of the most vehement criticism has come from New York itself. Two days after the Spanish election, the editorial of the *New York Post* talked of Spain's 'abject appeasement of terrorists', before concluding: 'The plain fact is that the Spanish electorate displayed craven cowardice by electing the Socialists.'

The same day, Richard Schwartz, writing in New York's *Daily News*, discussed the response of New Yorkers to the Spanish elections in the following terms: 'they believe that saying "no" to terror is paramount. From this side of the Atlantic, it looked like Spain said "yes". They gave in.'

Such an opinion was not restricted to the tabloid press. David Brooks, writing in *The New York Times*, claimed that Spaniards had elected a government 'whose policies are more to al Qaeda's liking'. Thomas Friedman, in the same newspaper, attributed the result to 'a twitch of appeasement'. The *Washington Post* editorial similarly argued that the 'danger is that Europe's reaction to a war that has now reached its soil will be retreat and appeasement rather than strengthened resolve'.

It is difficult to imagine a more insensitive response to the grief of Madrileños, just days after the city had been plunged into mourning. More than that, to accuse the Spanish people of 'appeasement' (a word forever burdened with associations to Hitler's Third Reich) and 'craven cowardice' is at once deeply insulting and highly dangerous.

This is a country that, long before the events of 11 September 2001, has been accustomed to living under the shadow of terrorist threats. The Basque separatist group ETA has for decades



At the site of Atocha Station, rescue workers attend to victims (left) and the force of the explosions is clear (above). Photos EPA / Emilio Naranjo.

Fernando Gamero kneels at a makeshift shrine at Atocha Station, Madrid.
Photo AP / Paul White, © 2004 The Associated Press.

waged a campaign of violence in which more than 800 Spaniards have died. In recent years, Spain has been at the forefront of the European fight against al Qaeda, having arrested dozens of alleged al Qaeda operatives. This is also a country where dictatorship is a recent 30-year-old memory. To talk of craven cowardice for a people who have suffered from, and fought against terror long before the fight became popular, demonstrates extraordinary ignorance for the Spanish historical context, let alone the events of the past week.

When Spain voted for a change in government, they did not vote for terrorism. They voted against a government which had betrayed the trust of the Spanish people.

The PP government of President José María Aznar was one of the strongest supporters of the war in Iraq, despite the opposition of 90 per cent of the Spanish population. At the height of the anti-war demonstrations in early 2003, Aznar, who is known almost universally in Spain as el-bigote (the moustache), became a figure of fun, including the devastating graffiti epitaph to a waning political career: 'The new intern at the White House has a moustache.' In spite of this, the government remained ahead in opinion polls, riding a wave of economic prosperity that has transformed Spain into one of the most dynamic economies in Europe.

Less than 12 hours after the bombings, Spanish investigators were said to be '99 per cent certain' that the bombings were the work of al Qaeda. Yet, as the evidence mounted to the contrary, Spain's Foreign Minister, Ana Palacio, instructed Spain's diplomatic missions abroad to assert publicly that ETA, and ETA alone, was responsible for the attacks:

> You should use all opportunities available to you to confirm that ETA was the author of these brutal attacks, helping to dispel any kind of doubt some interested parties might try to foster over the responsibility of these attacks. If you deem it appropriate, you can explain these facts to the media.

President Aznar telephoned all major news organisations to assert that 'the terrorist group that is so well-known in our country' was responsible. The Interior Ministry stuck to the same line, denying contrary evidence from intelligence services. When the video in which an alleged al Qaeda military spokesman claimed responsibility for the bombings was discovered, the government-controlled television channel, TV España, was the only station not to broadcast the announcement live. The same station had incurred the wrath of Spaniards last year for inadequate coverage of the marches against the government.

Increasingly, the government was seen as evasive and authoritarian. Evidence of government deception and political manipulation at a time of national mourning (something which Thomas Friedman dismissed as 'fine print') re-awakened opposition to a government which had so blithely dismissed public opinion in pursuing the war in Iraq. In all likelihood, these factors decided the election.

It remains unclear just how many Spaniards changed their voting intentions as a result of the attacks. Unnamed sources within the two major parties conceded that private polling on the night of 10 March showed that the election was too close to call and that the PP and the PSOE were in a statistical dead heat.

Many of the pre-March 11 opinion polls also suggested that a significant proportion of Spaniards were not planning to vote. By the night of 14 March, more than 76 per cent of eligible Spanish voters had cast their ballots. More people than ever before, particularly young Spaniards, had been drawn into the democratic process.

Far from being seen as a reassuring victory for democracy at a time of national tragedy, however, the election results were condemned in international circles for having rewarded al Qaeda. It was as if the Spanish people had somehow voted for those who had killed their families and friends, as if the war on terror and the war in Iraq were the same thing.

The process of al Qaeda influencing political outcomes is not a phenomenon which began with the Spanish election. Whether we admit it or not, al Qaeda has been determining government policy since September 11. Some of those policies have been preventative, but just as many have been reactionary. The war in Iraq, has been like a gift to al Qaeda, harnessing anti-Western sentiment and providing a security vacuum from which terrorists can operate.

Some countries respond to terrorist acts on their own soil by going to war. Others respond by demanding peace. To accuse the Spanish people of appeasement for choosing the latter is to suggest that the war on terror demands some abnegation of political choice. Implicit in this view is the assumption that a people can only be said to be fighting terrorism if they support a policy opposed by 90 per cent of the population, or if they allow a government which had perpetrated a grave act of betrayal to escape punishment. These assumptions provide evidence of just how much damage has been done to democracy in the name of the war on terror. ■

Anthony Ham lives in Madrid and is a freelance writer.

Kate Stowell

Legal eagle

Julian Burnside does not believe in doing things by halves.

A veteran of the public-speaking circuit, Julian Burnside QC spends four nights a week addressing community groups about the Federal government's policy on refugees.

'Let us be absolutely clear about this: Australia treats asylum seekers abominably—we imprison them indefinitely, we torment them, we are willing to return them to torture or death', said Burnside recently.

The seasoned QC has impressive qualifications. Burnside completed a Bachelor of Economics and a Bachelor of Laws at Monash University. He became a barrister in 1976 before taking silk in 1989. Burnside defended Alan Bond and interrogated John Laws and Alan Jones as counsel assisting the Australian Broadcasting Authority's 'cash-for-comment' inquiry.

Julian Burnside at a community gathering to discuss Australia's treatment of refugees. Photo by **Pru Taylor.**

These credentials are simply a prelude to his pet cause; the rights of asylum seekers in Australia's detention centres. Burnside's name has become synonymous with refugee advocacy and the denunciation of government ministers and journalists.

'A careful analysis of the Australian criminal code [Section 268.12] suggests that Mr Ruddock and Mr Howard are guilty of crimes against humanity by virtue of their imprisonment of asylum seekers ... I think our Federal government has lost touch with basic human decency. They have simply lost their moral bearings altogether.'

Burnside accuses the Australian media of refusing to report the government's 'escalating atrocities'. But he knows that his antagonising of the Howard government makes him the kind of fodder conservative shock-jocks and tabloid media either rip to shreds or ignore altogether.

Burnside laments that the mainstream media largely ignores his cause. He has also become infamous for criticising those whom he considers to be journalistic underachievers, and consciously praises those reporters who share his political leanings.

'The media have been appalling on the asylum seeker issue. The misreporting and under-reporting has been shameful. The exceptions to this are journalists like David Marr (host of ABC's *Mediawatch*), Marian Wilkinson and Margot Kingston', says Burnside.

But Burnside is not worried that his overtly left tendencies will leave him subject to criticism.

'I can see the risk of being described as a bleeding heart leftie. But I'd rather be a bleeding heart than a stone heart', says Burnside with a wry smile.

Burnside demonstrates a certain considered flexibility in his political views. He openly admits that his current anti-conservative philosophy is not one that he has always subscribed to.

'In the 1996 election, I voted for John Howard and before then, I had voted Liberal my entire life. I grew up in a Liberal household. I was born in the year Robert Menzies came to power. I used to think governments were an uninteresting, benign, unnecessary feature of existence and it was only in 1998 that I began to wake up and realise that things were actually a disaster.'

So does the man who uncovers the problems harbour the solution?

At a packed suburban church at one of Burnside's more recent addresses, an Iranian asylum seeker asked 'When did Australia get such a cold heart?' It was a question on the minds of everybody present.

Burnside offered the response of a growing culture of xenophobia that has developed in Australia since the rise of Pauline Hanson in 1996. He believes that

this has 'hardened' Australians.

'Pauline Hanson set a kite flying which Howard then exploited. This set a tone in the top levels of government'.

However, he believes that ignorance is no longer an excuse. He contrasts the present experiences of asylum seekers with the experiences of those Indigenous people from the stolen generation.

'[At the time of] the stolen generation, the majority of Australians had no idea about what was going on and so they can't be blamed for the misguided social theories. But now most Australians, unless they live under a rock know what we're doing. They know that people kill themselves in detention centres. They know that we are putting innocent people on Nauru and locking them up until they go mad.' But Burnside realises the criticisms from political opponents will discredit those who advocate for open borders.

'WHEN A PERSON COMES to Australia to seek asylum and they come without papers, it is legitimate to detain them initially for perhaps three or four weeks for the purposes of security and health checks. After that, they should be released into the community on some kind of interim visa with reporting arrangements.'

'They should receive full Centrelink benefits and be permitted to work. That then would ... satisfy basic humanitarian requirements that any civilised country should recognise. Let's not play into the hands of the opposition by advocating for open borders.'

Burnside believes that there is hope for Australia yet.

'I think the High Court will have children out of detention by mid-year. As awareness of the refugee crisis grows, I think in time there will be more and more legal assistance for these people. Australia is an immensely privileged country and I do believe we will get there.'

A passionate patron of the arts, Burnside is also partial to tea, biscuits and a good old yarn. He is a classic crowd pleaser, insisting people call him Julian because '"Mr Burnside" makes me feel old'.

Despite his many pursuits, Julian Burnside has committed himself to the fight for human rights for the rest of his career. Determination and charisma are essential qualities for the crusader, especially when they feel they are fighting a losing battle.

The website of Julian Burnside QC is at www.julianburnside.com. ■

Kate Stowell is studying journalism at RMIT.

Joanna Leonard

The strength of diversity

The move to private education is not always what parents might hope.

In Australia over the last 30 years there have been steady increases in private school enrolments while state school enrolments have declined. It is likely that the enrolment trend towards private schools will be accelerated by government funding policies that undermine public confidence in the future of a strong and socially representative public school sector.

Anxieties about their children's futures means that many parents are looking for alternatives other than their local high school. Their choice of a more selective private education for their children is supported by Federal and State governments, the media and often the social groups in which parents move. Education has become a personal responsibility rather than a public service.

Relatively wealthy and middle income parents who send their children to the local public school, or whose children gain entry to selective classes and schools in the public system, are perceived to be taking advantage or 'parking' their child to save paying private school fees. This increases pressure on parents to choose private schools for their children even when this is not their preferred position, and implies that by paying for a private school, parents are giving their children extra or superior educational opportunities.

However, this is not always the case. We do not often hear about the parents and students who have chosen to change from a private school to a local state school. While the total number of students in this position may be small, it is not insignificant. Last year I conducted a small research project that provided some background information about such students and their families. This research examined the experiences of a number of secondary students living in areas of Sydney with higher than average private school numbers, who changed from a private school to a state school. In Mosman the proportion of secondary students attending private schools is double the state average, while in the inner west only one in two students attend state high schools.

Although most students in the study had attended their local state primary school, the parents interviewed had not seriously considered local high schools for their children's secondary education. Parents felt that local state high schools performed less well than local state primary schools and lacked the resources to deliver quality education.

According to Robert, father of two boys who now attend their local state high school, 'Three years ago, you could see that secondary state education in NSW was a mess. We went and saw various teachers and their comment was, "Go private. If you can afford it go private. Don't even think about it." There was a degree of despair about the state education system among people we respected.'

Parents often raised the issue of discipline as a key reason for their original preference for private schools. By discipline they seem to mean both hard work and the care and safety of their children.

Parents spoke of state schools as 'slacker' with a less insistent discipline than private schools. They mentioned problems with a minority of students disrupting learning in their children's primary schools. Parents were afraid of what was might happen to their child at high school and whether their child would 'go off the rails'.

However their children's experiences with private schools meant that parents' views had changed about this issue. Parents reported that their children reacted strongly against the day to day discipline based on school rules that the children did not share. Some parents also expressed a feeling that the private school did not respect their child. The parents spoke of an arbitrary use of authority by the teachers at private schools. One boy told his mother he was yelled at all the time but did not understand why. Another parent felt that while her son's private school had an official bullying policy, the school culture was really 'get tough and deal with it.'

Many of the parents and students interviewed saw private schools as being more interested in students who did well, and therefore reflected well on the school. According to one parent, when her daughter was at a private school, the teachers would apologise if her child did not do so well, 'Sorry, I had to give a low mark in this test'.

Other parents raised the issue of education being seen as a means of 'getting ahead'—as competition—in the private schools attended by their children. They felt students' performances were seen as an outcome for the teachers and that their children were not engaged with the school or with academic achievement. These parents could not see values of personal achievement and love of learning being reinforced by the schools.

Lesley is the mother of two children who are now in state schools and a third who remains at a private school. 'People think the more money they spend the better the education. The attitude is that private schools are better than public. If you go there you must be better, naturally, more successful, without having to work at it. Parents are buying a future for their kids, through networks, knowing people. Education is not about motivation,

talent and work. Kids feel they won't succeed unless they go to private schools.'

Parents are investing in private school education for the future of their children. However when their assumptions about private schools' superiority are challenged by their children's unhappiness, these parents gained a new perspective on the state-private school debate. As a result of their experiences they were able to identify some of the advantages and strengths of state schools.

Many parents mentioned the sense of local community gained when the students changed to the local state high school. Jane, mother of two children now at state schools said, 'David goes to a good local school. One really good thing is that he has an extensive social network. He even knows girls now who ring him up. At the private school the kids come from all over, parents have to drive them to friends' places. David just walks, his social life has exploded out of sight going to school with friends. He is comfortable and happy, he is more independent, and that's helped his self esteem.'

Other parents appreciated the diversity of the state system. Clare, whose daughter moved from a Catholic girls' school to a state girls' high said 'The state school system is really great. Very diverse, nice environment. Lots of kids with different values and religious backgrounds. A really bright innovative learning environment. At my daughter's new high school, the girls run the assemblies, speech days, they are allowed a bigger role in running school events [and] given leadership opportunities.'

Lesley felt that, 'Peter is happy about the change but he notices some differences [such as] a bigger variety of intellectual ability on the whole in the kids in his classes. He says it covers the range of kids, from the very bright to those kids who struggle with maths or English. At the private boys school we were told that they did not take kids with learning problems.'

Robin, her sister and cousins had all attended the same private girls' school. Robin had no experience of public school education and she had not even considered a public school for her two girls. When her financial situation forced a change in schools, Robin found that, 'It was a difficult move but I did not have a choice. I feel very lucky because the local school the girls now attend is superb. Their education is brilliant. I went to the same private school and I was personally devastated when I had to remove them. I grew up in this area and I was putting my daughters in the local high school my parents threatened me with.'

'Now my girls are at the local state high school I am fairly cynical about private school rules about uniforms. Why create problems? When the girls first changed school I remember being shocked about nobody caring what colour ribbon they wore. At the state high school they have the attitude that they save the fights [for] the important things: drugs, racial vilification, and truancy. There is a supportive attitude from the principal and the teachers. My girls are more relaxed, responsible and self motivated. That's what matters to me.'

Throughout the interviews I conducted parents remarked on the high degree of teachers' professional commitment in both state and private schools. While parents generally agreed that 'the facilities are better, the sports are better, and there are definitely better looking buildings at private schools,' they also confirmed what the *NSW Public Education Inquiry 2003* by Tony Vinson identifies as 'service before self' as one of the most important assets of the state education system.

Lesley's three children were all originally enrolled in high fee-paying private schools. Although Lesley and her husband were educated at state schools, they chose private schools so that their children 'would get a lot of individual care and attention. I thought they would be nurtured'. When her daughter, Jodie, transferred to a selective high school, Lesley says she realised that the state schools 'did it as well'. She has now moved her younger son, Peter to the local state high school but feels it would be too hard on her other son Michael to move him from his private school. 'The cost was a big factor, well value for money anyway. I didn't think I got value for money from the private school. The quality of teaching is similar in both. Teachers vary a lot anyway. Of course the physical resources are better—the extracurricular activities in private schools—if your child is bright they can take advantage of those things.'

This series of interviews with parents and students, about their experiences in a variety of private and state high schools, suggests that good local high schools are consistently undervalued and initially ignored by parents because of a lack of real information and false perceptions. The subsequent loss of a critical core of motivated students and parents in the school population results in a deterioration of community representation in state high schools. When local state high schools are overlooked or dismissed as high school options for middle class students, there is a loss of the egalitarian character and the social tolerance of diversity that are essential for building communities.

While a core group of parents will always choose private schools—preferring the social networks, religion, philosophy or teaching methods—others who choose private because of perceived shortfalls in local state schools can be enticed back through comparatively better funding and more specific information.

To challenge the idea that the choice of a private school is always a better choice, parents need to hear more about the many dynamic local state schools, responsive to change and in touch with their local communities. ■

Joanna Leonard is a research officer at the University of Technology Sydney.

Photo by **Bill Thomas**.

Don Gazzard

Grand masters

THERE IS A SCENE IN *Brideshead Revisited* when the two young men visit Lord Marchmain in Venice. When asked who is his favourite painter, Charles Ryder replies, 'Bellini'. The old man asks 'which one?' deflated, the young man has to admit he thought there was only one.

There was, of course, a whole clan of talented Bellinis and I wouldn't be surprised if Mario Bellini, the architect, is a descendent of those brilliant Venetians. He has designed very sophisticated, beautiful alterations to Roy Grounds' National Gallery of Victoria (NGV).

Bellini trained as an architect and became famous for his chairs—used in the gallery—and for the styling of industrial products. Bellini evolved into an architectural force over the last ten years, mostly for buildings in Japan. Italians are masters at exhibitions and altering old buildings to display works of art—after all, they have so many of both, and displaying things well is part of their architectural *bella figura.*

Carlo Scarpa was the master who started a museum trend continued by Bellini at St Kilda Road. Scarpa didn't design spaces just to provide generalised good conditions for viewing any sort of artworks, he designed them with particular works of art in mind and their precise placement, display and lighting within the space.

The best Italian design is in a totally modern idiom so one can always see exactly what parts of the building are original and which have changed. There are none of the false attitudes about 'keeping in keeping' that inhibit most Australian designers when confronting old buildings. Italians have no inhibitions about combining modern stainless steel and glass with the original, more traditional materials. Scarpa's renovations and museum installations in the Castello Sforza in Milan, the Castelvecchio in Verona and the Palazzo Abatellis in Palermo, for example, are now over 30 years old, yet they still stand as touchstones of elegant and beautiful museum display. Bellini has inherited these attitudes to display and aided by revolutions in glass and lighting technologies, has built on them.

Roy Grounds designed the St Kilda Road building in 1959 and it was opened in 1968. Grounds claimed that the design had been influenced by the Royal Palace (not a museum) at Capodimonte—outside Naples—and there are indeed strong similarities in the plan.

In his excellent guide, *Melbourne Architecture,* Philip Goad reminds us that, 'the project caused the 1962 split between Grounds and his erstwhile partners Robin Boyd and Fred Romberg. At the opening in August 1968, architectural critics alternatively praised and savaged this bluestone treasure house. Much of the controversy had to do with Grounds' quixotic and arguably brilliant design—a giant oriental Palazzo with a geometric plan, a city block in length, and with three square courtyards inside'.

Only 30 years old, it is certainly a building with good bones and as Mario Bellini has reminded us, 'Good architecture can have a series of new lives.'

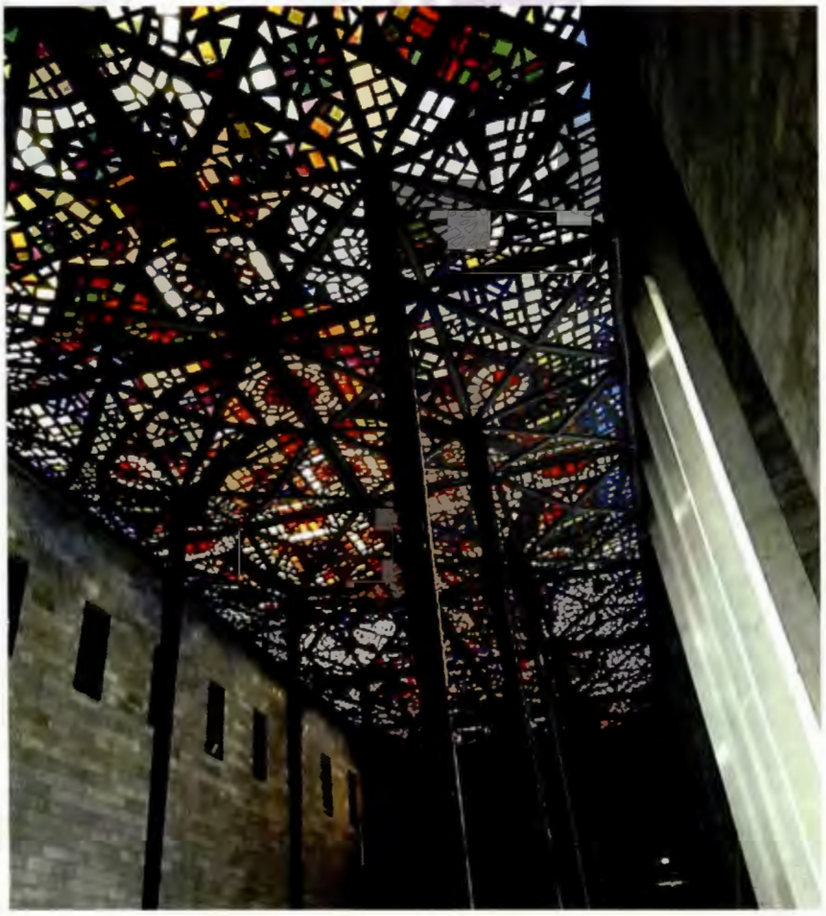
Time has made it a well loved Melbourne landmark, but time also exposed some of the flaws in the design that eventually needed correcting. As crowds increased more space was needed and the display, pedestrian compared with Scarpa, became progressively old-fashioned looking. The NGV's Australian collection has now been moved into the gallery at Federation Square, and the changes made by Bellini have increased the display space at St Kilda Road by 25 per cent.

Like all great designs, the basic changes made by Bellini are brilliantly simple. One can just imagine him explaining

the basic *parti* in 30 seconds on the back of a restaurant napkin—the way architects are wont to do.

The entrance remains behind the water wall, but originally, the circulation was constricted and the central courtyard was separated from the entrance by a glazed wall. It was viewed as too low and a bit oppressive—not enough of an architectural experience for a grand building like this.

BELLINI HAS RESPECTED the character of the Grounds' design externally but has made radical changes internally—getting rid of all the accumulated clutter, and opened the now glass roofed entrance directly into the courtyard by removing a wall. On the other side, the court opens directly into the great hall with its Leonard French ceiling and a glazed opening on the further side of the hall—Bellini's only exterior change—gives access to the garden which previously had been hidden. When visitors now enter the building the vista continues across the daylit central court into the rear garden. So simple, so obvious, but the sense of open space coupled with the increased daylight from the glazed roof has made entering the building one of those rare architectural events that lifts the spirits. Coffee shops and bookshop are now within easy reach and the central court also serves as a circulation device to disperse visitors easily to other parts of the building. This is aided by escalators hidden behind metal screens with artful slots inserted into the space. In particular, visitors can orient themselves more easily than previously, moving between the north and south courtyards. This is the most radical of Bellini's transformations of the 1968 design.



Rather than simply roof over the other open courts, Bellini has instead inserted boxes into them—'gallery prisms' the guidebook calls them—in order to create new exhibition spaces on each level. The square boxes are very slightly askew in the square courts and the space between the boxes and the bluestone walls has been used to contain glass-floored ramps which link the different levels and provide easy access for the disabled at the same time. Each of these courtyard towers has been clad in glass, which gives them a jewel-like quality and they fan out at the top to join a glass roof over the space. My description might sound a bit mechanistic—it is hard to describe in words—but these ramp spaces look wonderful with sunlight grazing and enlivening the original bluestone and the new glass walling in the late afternoon. Hence, visitors get visual relief while travelling up these daylit ramps before plunging back into the artificially lit galleries.

THE OLD HIGH 'SALON' GALLERIES remain as before, with new parquet flooring and painted walls in traditional colours, which change according to the period of the display—elegant 'doorways' connect the galleries. Bellini's subdued palette of materials compliments Grounds' bluestone and mountain ash. The lighting and the display have been carefully considered everywhere to great effect; the big Tiepolo *The Banquet of Cleopatra* for example, is viewed more successfully at a lower height. *Cleopatra* and all other artworks simply look much better under such sophisticated lighting; the collection is seen again with new eyes.

Bellini's skills in industrial design are revealed in the beautiful seamless glass and steel display cases. The concealed lighting of objects in the Asian Collection, the Egyptian Antiquities and the Pre-Columbian art is genuinely superb. The use of fibre optic cable lighting—with up to 16 cables coming from one light source—makes the display of objects in the showcases very complex with stunning lighting effects. One ceramic shepherdess, for example, has a separate light shining on an apple in her hand.

I have always thought of Rodin's sculpture—previously on a high plinth in the central court—not as Balzac, but as an irascible Roy Grounds brooding over his building. It has been moved out into the garden but Grounds has not been banished: I think he would approve of what Bellini has done.

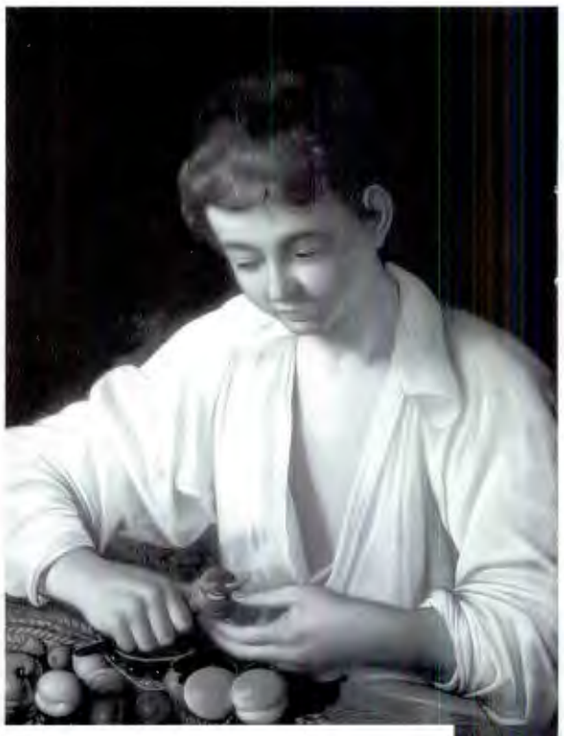
A postscript: It's convenient to talk as though Mario Bellini alone was responsible for everything in the building. He was, no doubt, the initiating creative and guiding light, but the final result was the collaboration of many creative architects from his Milan office, combined with the local Richmond-based architectural firm Metier 3, scores of engineering and lighting consultants, and not least the Gallery's own curatorial staff when it came to hanging and lighting. ■

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

Photos by **John Gollings**, 2003, courtesy of NGV.

Michael Magnusson

Dark visions



Boy peeling fruit (c. 1593/94), Caravaggio.

EMERGING AT A TIME WHEN the Roman Catholic Church was anxious to reclaim the territory it lost to northern Reformation, the church put its faith in a faithless, flick-knife wielding, brawling bisexual to illustrate their message. Despite the scandal, it paid off brilliantly.

Mysterious, violent, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610) was the original black clad artistic type who swung both ways in the bedroom and was dead at only 39. Caravaggio had as many brushes with the law as he had with canvas and his police record was as long as his artistic credits.

Caravaggio's talent was undeniable and before long he had attracted the appropriately high calibre patronage of Cardinal Francesco del Monte in 1595. Del Monte was one of the most cultivated collectors of the time. No sooner had he moved to Rome than he was made advisor to the Medici family and his own patronage of the young Caravaggio acted as a calling card to the Roman elite.

In 1545, the Pope had instigated the Council of Trent to counter the reforms incited by Martin Luther in northern Europe. To counter Luther's ideas that the individual's faith in God was the new measure, the Council decreed that Christ's passion and final suffering were the focus of religious devotion. The Council prescribed artistic reforms along these lines calling for depictions of the life of Christ and his followers and condemning the pagan themes that had emerged with the return to classical form that was the hallmark of the Renaissance. Depictions of nudity, erotic and homoerotic subject matter were also condemned although, especially in Caravaggio's art, they hardly disappeared from sacred or secular art.

Caravaggio had made something of a reputation with his combined still life and figure studies. By 1595 they had increased in their virtuosity and daring until he was able to capture the lustre of a ripe cherry, the split second of darting lizard in mid bite, the wince of a boy being bitten and combine them into a picture of stunning if somewhat homoerotically charged spontaneity.

The squirming *Boy bitten by a Lizard* was painted at exactly the time that Caravaggio entered the service of Cardinal del Monte while the cardinal was preparing to launch him into the right artistic circles. According to legend, Caravaggio was homosexual and most of his boy paintings certainly support that legend. Del Monte was also thought to have taken to him as a source of homoerotic paintings for his own collection. This is the first of the scandals and paradoxes in Caravaggio's rise to fame as one of the greatest of religious painters. As soon as he began to acquire religious commissions he merely continued working in his normal studio routine. Although he was now painting saints, he painted them in the nude using models plucked from the street during expeditions to taverns which invariably ended in a brawl.

Christ Crowned with Thorns in his famous cinematic 'spot lit' style were much admired during his lifetime and much imitated immediately following his death by 'caravaggists' eager to invest

Still life with fruit on a stone ledge (c. 1603), Caravaggio.

seemingly innocuous scenes with dramatic intensity. It is no surprise that the likes of Claudio Monteverdi and, further afield, William Shakespeare were developing and perfecting the parallel arts of music and drama with equally brilliant innovations. In Monteverdi's case the innovation was even a new style of combined music and drama that we now know as opera.

Although he was superseded as the new century gave way to the extravagant Baroque period, the drama and directness of his later paintings was re-evaluated in the 20th century for it's cinematic quality. His ability to capture a frozen moment of horror in the passion of Christ or one of the saints was even an influence on the sensuous horror in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. Gibson calls these moments 'Violent, dark, spiritual and with an odd whimsy to them' and instructed his cinematographer Caleb Deschanel to make the movie look like Caravaggio paintings. ■

Michael Magnusson is an artist, art therapist and critic.

St Francis in meditation, Caravaggio.

Chris Wallace-Crabbe

Dear Class

We are all floundering somewhat in the dark.
Whatever English wants from you and me
it cannot be your genius I mark.

Stumbling around like beasts on board the Ark
slowly getting used to the winedark sea,
we are all floundering somewhat in the dark.

I take a red pen. Then I make my mark
reproving syntax, pith or fluency:
it cannot be your genius I mark.

In fact my bite is no worse than my bark.
Write sweetly; emulate the honey-bee;
we are all floundering somewhat in the dark.

You may be born to music, like a skylark,
or grind out narrative relentlessly
but it won't be your genius that I mark.

A teacher is a licensed kind of nark
barking, 'Do this,' 'Do that,' intrusively.
Since it can't be your genius that I mark
we are all floundering somewhat in the dark.

—Chris Wallace-Crabbe

Rusty Stewart

Life in the West Bank

I made two trips to Israel and Palestine to document the implementation of the 'Road Map to Peace'. Life was far from peaceful for either Israelis or Palestinians. As a photographer, I try to use my cameras as weapons against injustice. It is impossible to stand by while someone's rights are abused. Photography should be beyond politics. These pictures are not about art or propaganda. They give voice to the people portrayed.

Clockwise from top:

1 A pregnant Israeli settler prays at sundown behind razor wire in a settlement near the West Bank town of Nablus. Approximately 140,000 Israeli settlers live in 145 settlements on former Palestinian land in the West Bank.

2 Aysheh J'umah Hasan Yousef, 86, a Palestinian woman from Hiafa. Aysheh fled fighting during Israel's 1948 war and lives with her son near Tulkarem in the West Bank. A refugee for 56 years, she still has the key to her old house, and hopes one day to return home.

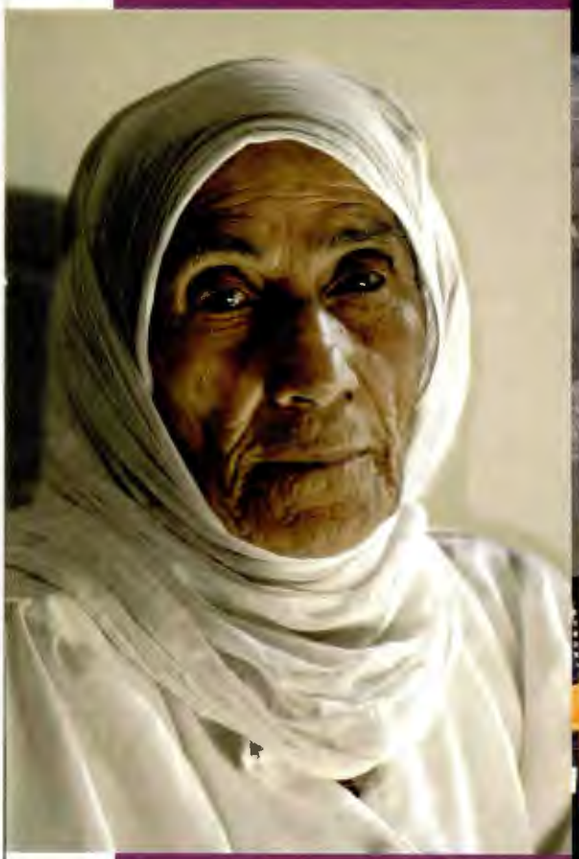
3 Orthodox Jews walk through Jerusalem's Givat Shaul cemetery, after a day of funerals for the victims of a suicide bus bombing.

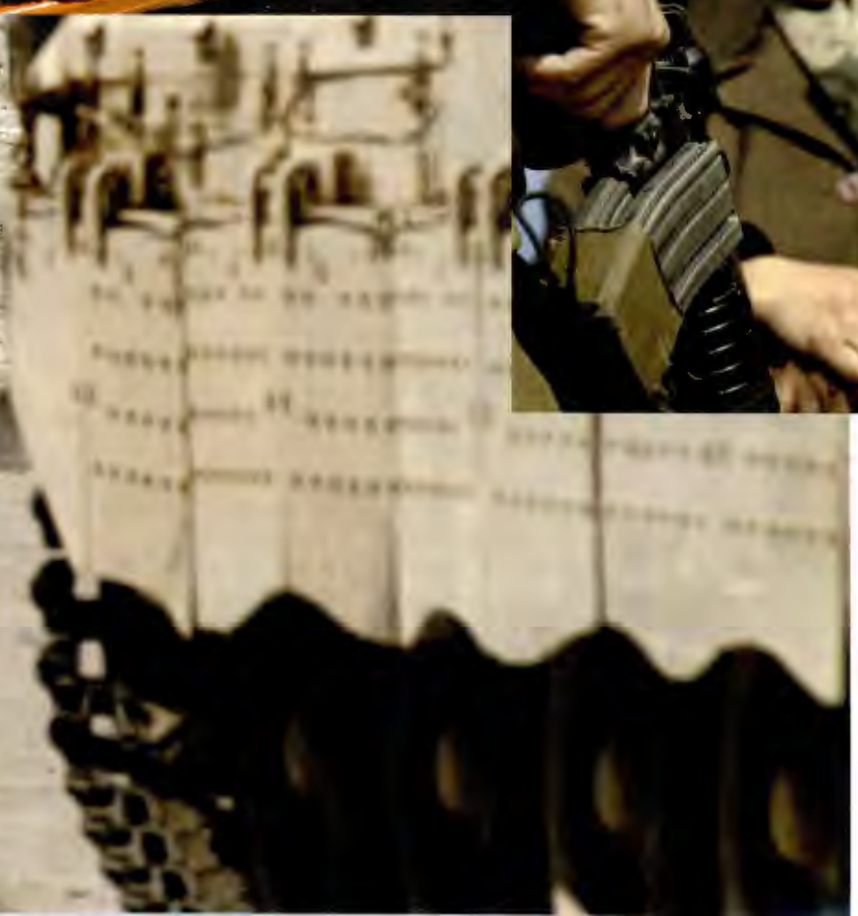
4 Paramedics evacuate wounded people after a Palestinian suicide bomber detonated a 5kg device packed with ball-bearings on a crowded bus in the Jewish neighbourhood of Shmuel Hanav. The bus was returning from prayers at Jerusalem's Western Wall, Judaism's holiest site. At least 20 people were killed and more than 100 injured, mainly Jews, in the attack, which was claimed by the radical Palestinian militant groups Islamic Jihad and Hamas.

5 An Israeli soldier manning a checkpoint asks a Palestinian for her ID card at the entrance to the West Bank town of Nablus. Some 3,883 people have been killed since the start of the Palestinian uprising in late September 2000, including 2,918 Palestinians and 896 Israelis.

6 School children run past an Israeli tank in Nablus, West Bank, on the first day of the new school year. About one million Palestinian students started the new school year in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

7 Orthodox Jewish men talk on mobile phones at Jerusalem's Western Wall.





Sara Niner

Guerrilla to President: Xanana Gusmão

This year's May anniversary of independence for Timor Leste is Xanana Gusmão's second as President and the country's fifth as a free territory. **Sara Niner**, looks at the current political machinations.

WAR IS A MONSTER that devours human lives. People may have died but they did not disappear; for behind them they left links of remembrance. This is the other side of sacrifice: the grief carried by those who did not die. Xanana Gusmão, Jakarta, April 200

Xanana Gusmão is one of those who did not die and who carries the grief of the past. He bears it for a nation. As a military commander he survived a war that cost more than three-quarters of East Timor's soldiers. Today, Gusmão is a man with few old friends left alive and fewer close associates, yet he attracts enormous popularity and the trust, and often love, of the majority of East Timorese people.

To survive the long war Gusmão buried his memories of the past; cauterised his emotions and kept his own counsel. Living with so much death and loss hardened Gusmão and made him stubborn and fearless. These habits are deeply etched and he often finds himself alone, in the middle ground of politics, trying to broker a fairer future for his people. He has chosen to look to the future rather than dwell on the difficult and invidious decisions of the past. This has sometimes meant a reliance on hope rather than realism, but it is just such optimism that maintained the struggle for Timor Leste's independence. Yet even these strategies cannot hide the exhaustion of the past 24 years of war and political struggle and five years of rebuilding a nation from less than nothing. He openly admits he is not the perfect leader.

From early obscurity in the remote and isolated colony of Portuguese Timor, Gusmão is now President of the world's newest nation and his name is known across the world. His habit of transcending conventional boundaries from an early age and an uncompromising determination to follow his own unique vision have remained strong elements of his personality and were essential in leading his people to freedom against overwhelming odds. His charismatic style of leadership characteristically emerged during a time of crisis when traditional paradigms were being obliterated.

A CRUCIAL TRAIT OF empathising with those on all sides fostered a focus on conflict resolution and establishing consensus. This translated into a moderate and inclusive style, attracting an ever-expanding circle of colleagues and supporters. A weakness of this 'middle-way' inclusiveness is that it all hinges upon the central leader. Another negative trait of such leadership is a substitution of the leader for representative institutions, in the belief the leader knows intuitively what the people want. A tendency toward unilateral decision-making fitting to a military commander during a time of war, has not been so welcome in the new democracy that Timor Leste is now struggling to develop.

This dynamic sits uneasily upon an historical legacy of the Timorese independence struggle of deeply felt ideological divisions within the leadership. Gusmão comes from the moderate centre while Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri comes from the radical left. Their experiences of the political past have resulted in irreconcilable differences between them as to how the current democratic pluralist system should work.

By the late 1980s Xanana's leadership of the resistance was firmly established within Timor Leste. After many years of conflict with the majority political party—the uncompromising, left-oriented Fretilin (Frente Revolucionaria de Timor Leste Independente)—he disassociated himself and re-established the resistance movement on a national rather than political basis. This stymied Fretilin's leadership of the movement. Since then Gusmão refused to acknowledge any privileged status for Fretilin within the nationalist movement. Fretilin, who had become the central, and they believed, only, driving force of the resistance, found the re-organisation hard to accept. Some never did. Mari Alkatiri, Secretary of Fretilin, sees the past differently to Gusmão and believes Fretilin has always been the 'true representative' of the Timorese people, allowing other political parties or organisations no place. In a society where political membership is often based on loyalties to the sacrifices of the past and family and clan allegiances, commitment to political groupings are passionately felt. Fretilin

A widow at the sewing cooperative in Dili. Many women are the sole providers for their family.

takes full advantage of such emotions and their historical role, sometimes stirring up past divisions to their own advantage. Although in reality their policies are not so different, this legacy is reflected in the distant relationship between Alkatiri and Gusmao today.

To the credit of the whole movement, such differences were put aside during 1999 when the discipline demanded by Gusmão was accorded. Everyone followed Xanana's leadership throughout his negotiations with the Indonesian Government, the military and its proxies and also with the UN in organising the people's ballot to decide Timor Leste's future. They remained in sorrowful and tragic unity through the horrors that followed. The resistance army Falintil showed enormous restraint obeying Xanana's orders to remain in cantonment while Indonesian soldiers killed thousands and deported tens of thousands of Timorese. On his return to Timor, Xanana acted as a charismatic healer to his new nation in powerful scenes of public grief. No other leader could have played this role, and most Timorese will be forever loyal to him because of it, no matter what his actions.

Yet the split between Gusmão and Fretilin had never been resolved, and when the political leaders were reunited in Timor late in 1999 they had been estranged for 12 years. Political rivalries soon resurfaced. When Fretilin gained control of the national parliament after the 2001 elections they put in place a constitution that located executive power in the Prime Minister and Cabinet, knowing Gusmão would win the up-coming Presidential election. This semi-Presidential system creates an institutional rivalry within the national leadership. In the Presidential elections of 2002 Xanana offered a counter-balance to Fretilin's domination of the parliament. He has been outspoken, occasionally publicly delivering blistering recriminations about government policies and decisions. His powers of conciliation seem to fail him where Fretilin is concerned.

TIMOR LESTE IS IN a desperate financial situation: it is the poorest country in south-east Asia, heavily reliant on foreign aid. Nearly one in ten children die before the age of one and just over four in ten children under five are severely malnourished.

An East Timorese girl holds a flower during a memorial service for the 60 people killed by pro-Jakarta militias, during the violence that followed the vote for independence from Indonesia.

The Australian Federal Government does little to dignify its position by depriving the Timorese of their rightful profits from the oil and gas reserves in the Timor Sea. International awareness created by the events of 1999 is slowly dissipating and the UN peacekeeping mission is winding down. Creation of employment opportunities, business and industry is a priority of the new government, yet it struggles to manage the most basic social services for the country. Australia should be doing much better by its closest neighbour and a groundswell of Australians are beginning to lobby the government to give the Timorese a fair deal over the oil.

As UN peacekeeping forces pull-out of Timor, internal security is one of Timor's most urgent priorities: poor ex-guerrillas, civilian resistance, and youth are disaffected and disappointed with life in this independent country that promised so much. The present reality is nothing they dreamed it would be as they resisted the Indonesian occupation. Ex-militia and criminal elements are focused around the volatile border area with Indonesia. Little of substance is being done to address these problems. The UN transitional administration oversaw the establishment of a national defence force of Timor Leste. This is commanded by ex-Falintil officers loyal to Gusmão and protests of political favouritism have been made. There are indications that the National Police of Timor Leste (PNTL) has emerged as a rival agency to the army. The then Minister for Internal Administration (now Minister for Interior) Rogério Lobato (a man with a chequered past who represents an alternative faction in Fretilin to Alkatiri), has at times cultivated disaffected ex-guerrillas within the community and favours former veterans or 'politically reliable' members of the police force. Gusmão called for Lobato's resignation, for his lack of attention to local government issues. The PM restructured his government transferring responsibility for local government away from Lobato.

XANANA'S ATTITUDE TO reconciliation with Indonesia has also been a sticking point with many Timorese. The opening quote comes from a speech delivered in 2001 in Jakarta at a conference alongside one of the greatest enemies of Gusmão's past, General Prabowo Subianto. Xanana embraced the unrepentant General and spoke of peace, tolerance and reconciliation. The elite crowd in Jakarta loved it but Gusmão was roundly criticised in Timor Leste. Gusmão's actions resulted in the emergence of a political lobby opposing his reluctance to bring Indonesian generals to justice before international courts. Gusmão has preferred to pursue reconciliation with Indonesia. While he may be able to cauterise the past and look

to the future, concentrating on creating consensus, many Timorese cannot. He was recently accused of, but denied, meeting General Wiranto in secret in Bali. As the Indonesian Defence Minister in 1999, Wiranto is one that both the Dili courts and many Timorese would like to see take responsibility for the massacres in that year. Some believe Xanana attempted to cut a deal with Wiranto, offering him amnesty if he gave up some of the lesser generals. This could have been in response to the fact that Wiranto is unofficially heralded as a serious contender for the Indonesian presidency later this year. It maybe an instance of Xanana substituting himself for representative institutions, believing he knows what is best for his people in the long term.

XANANA FINDS HIMSELF once again alone and in the middle, brokering a future between his people and their old enemies. As the new President of Timor Leste he wooed his reluctant Indonesian counterpart, Megawati Sukarnoputri, into attending the 2002 independence ceremony and has been attentive to huge and powerful neighbours who hold the key to Timor's future. Gusmão's actions comprise a degree of diplomatic pragmatism and can be seen as the natural inclination of a 'middle-way' leader dedicated to negotiation and compromise. His style may also be viewed as the actions of a man who has fully appreciated the worst people can do to one another, and has decided to embrace its opposite.

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN tortured and sacrificed their lives in order that Gusmão survive as leader of the struggle for Timorese self-determination. He, in turn, has made bold and perilous decisions on their behalf—hard-hearted decisions—like the one to continue with the 1999 ballot that demanded such a huge loss of life. The unity of the Timorese at that historical moment is testament to their ability to courageously come together for the common good and for their human rights. The leadership the East Timorese invested in Xanana gave him the power not simply to survive, but to overcome.

Gusmão believes he is of the people and knows their desires intimately. His charismatic style of leadership has not quite made the difficult and perhaps impossible transition from mythologised leader of a guerrilla army and clandestine resistance to the legitimate presidency of a new nation state. His unilateral leadership style has created tensions within the more rigid environment of a new democracy. Gusmão is also intolerant of government policy with which he does not agree. This has caused friction and has the potential to cause instability. His effusive and relaxed manner grates against the reserved and taciturn personality of the Prime Minister. Nevertheless both men share an extraordinary commitment to the people of Timor Leste and their struggle for freedom and a decent life. They appear to be getting better at working together, meeting weekly, for the sake of the people they have fought all their lives for.

The transforming and revolutionary impact of charismatic leaders is also why Xanana's Presidency succeeds and why his central message of unity, forgiveness and reconciliation, may prevail in the cultural and political context of Timor Leste in 2004 and beyond. A society living with the enormous grief and trauma of the past is still in need of transforming leadership and the kind of unity that saw them overcome a tragedy for which they have not yet seen justice. ■

Sara Niner is the editor and publisher of *To Resist is to Win: The autobiography of Xanana Gusmão* (2001). She has just completed Gusmão's biography as a PhD thesis at La Trobe University and is a Director of the Alola Foundation, supporting Timor Leste's women and their families, sara@alolafoundation.org.

Photos by **Rusty Stewart**.

An East Timorese man watches over his prized possession, a tethered fighting cock, in Dili.

Tom Mann

Educator **Tom Mann** recalls his experiences of working with children in detention.

View from within

MICHAEL, AN 11-YEAR-OLD Iranian boy, arrived at the Woomera Detention Centre in April 2001. He was the best gift any teacher could have. Keen to learn, bright and studious, full of promise in our November compound classroom.

When my teaching contract finished I could not believe children like Michael could last much longer than six months without succumbing to the culture of despair which pervaded the centre. In my eight months as a teacher at Woomera, I could see that children started to go downhill after about six months. The children were however, more resilient than their parents who would often show signs of distress after three months following the rejection of their case for refugee status. In the end, though, how could the children not be affected when parents became depressed and dysfunctional, and when they witnessed acts of violence and self-harm?

In my first six-week contract in late 2000 one of my students was Shayan. His parents had fled political persecution in Iran. With some coaxing Shayan joined in with the activities. I had no idea of the trauma that would befall him.

In August 2001 I watched the ABC *Four Corners* program on six-year-old, Shayan who by then had been in detention for 17 months, first at Woomera and subsequently at Villawood Detention Centre where he had completely withdrawn from life. I barely recognised him. Aamer Sultan, a medical practitioner (also an Iraqi refugee) had identified Shayan's condition as immigration-detention stress syndrome.

Shayan's experience was not uncommon. As time progressed, children would stop coming to classes or were more listless. Two sisters, Nola, aged 11 and Sandra, aged nine, came to class initially and then withdrew. I tried to encourage them but they preferred to play in the dirt surrounding the classrooms. Their brothers, Alan and Matthew responded similarly. They showed great potential in the classroom at first and then 'switched off.'

SARAH, AN AFGHANI GIRL, was unsure of her age. At the beginning of her detention stay she was enthusiastic and always arrived with a smile and headscarf faithfully in place. Soon, she became withdrawn. There were occasions when she returned to her former self but again the detention syndrome prevailed. About a year later, in the Easter protest of 2002 the outside world caught a snapshot of her emotional distress as one of the Australian protesters hugged her outside the razor wire. Sarah and her three brothers were quite animated before the Refugee Review Tribunal rejected their application. From that time the whole family showed signs of depression. Their once expectant faces became lifeless in a sea of despair. Sarah's mother suffered arthritis and couldn't function properly as a parent. Sarah assumed that role. Sarah was angry and would often say, 'Why are they doing this to my family?'

Sarah and her family are still in detention at Baxter and so are Anita, a 14-year-old Iranian girl, and her brother, Samuel 16, who arrived at the same time as Michael. Anita and Samuel were a chirpy duo in the classroom, always happily engaged in any school activities. From recent reports of a social worker at Baxter detention centre, Anita, like Sarah, had also become angry and despondent as their case

was rejected at each stage of processing. After my teaching contract had expired Anita wrote to me following their family's first rejection:

> Mr Tom hello,
> Excuse me that I have nothing that I send you. I don't think I can come to see you again very soon because we have [been] rejected. I miss you and I still remember your face. Never forget you. I would like that I had something to send you good teacher but if God we can get visa and we will see [you] very soon. Thank you for your picture. Anita.

Studies now show that the danger zone for children in a detention centre environment is six months. This was not clear at first, the distress for children was like a benign tumour, burning inside but not devouring. The children progressively became more listless and angry.

TWO TYPES OF BEHAVIOUR, described by Family and Youth Services (FAYS) staff, relevant to asylum seekers in detention included: isolation (cutting the child off from normal social experience) and corruption (teaching the child socially deviant patterns of behaviour). Woomera was a breeding ground for such behaviours. Unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan were also susceptible to emotional abuse. With no family support, Qadir, a 16-year-old with a traumatic past, was detained in a psychiatric hospital in Adelaide when the state public advocate intervened to prevent him being returned to Woomera.

I met with the Immigration Detention Advisory Group on 17 May 2002 to discuss the improvement of facilities for the new Baxter detention centre. I then wrote to Ray Funnell, chairperson of the Immigration Detention Advisory Group, and said:

> I believe the overriding concern is still the processing of applicants' claims in a reasonable time. In conjunction with this, is the need for applicants not to be held in limbo without communication on the progress of their cases; the need for independent legal representation; and the need to provide a category of visa, such as a humanitarian visa, that allows the asylum seeker into the community pending the outcome of their cases if not resolved within a specified time period, say three months. If we are just improving the environment for asylum seekers in Baxter then I think we will ultimately face the same problems as we have had up to now.

Ray Funnell replied on 4 June 2002:

> We continue to work at improving the lot of those being held in detention and we remain hopeful and, we trust, realistically hopeful of being able to bring about some changes in policy that will result in a much better system of processing asylum seekers.

After nearly two years in Baxter nothing has changed for the better. The condition of the children has declined. Many reports from psychiatrists, other health and social workers, and from Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission investigations support this. According to a social welfare worker at Baxter, Michael who showed so much potential when I first met him in Woomera, had joined his parents in various dysfunctional and self-harming behaviours. 'They are like caged animals, with the father going crazy and the mother going under. They are so far gone as a family,' she said.

Can anything be salvaged from the wreckage of families like Michael's? The Government refuses to intervene to save children's lives. I spoke to Neil Andrew, Federal Member for Wakefield and Speaker of the House of Representatives in January this year and he informed me the 'Government was stuck between a rock and a hard place'. At least he conceded that families were suffering in detention.

If we are going to have a system of mandatory detention, I would suggest that three months be the limit. Otherwise we risk irreparably damaging children's lives. Detention doesn't work unless we are interested in making people suffer. To justify detention as a preventative measure designed to deter people smugglers casts us as torturers.

Concerned groups of people in Adelaide are mounting an operation requesting that those families remaining in Woomera be brought into community detention settings and allowed a chance for the healing process to begin. ■

Tom Mann is the author of *Desert Sorrow: Asylum Seekers at Woomera*, Wakefield Press, 2003.

Mary Manning

Felicity in love

THE ENGLISH NOVELIST, Salley Vickers, author of *Miss Garnet's Angel, Instances of the Number Three* and most recently *Mr Golightly's Holiday* is an analytical psychologist who lectures on the connections between literature, psychology and religion and has worked as a university teacher of literature specialising in Shakespeare. This background is apparent in her novels, particularly *Miss Garnet's Angel* and *Mr Golightly's Holiday*, with their focus on issues of spirituality and belief in the contemporary world.

Vickers sees belief in God as a central feature of life today, even wars being fought over matters of belief, so that whether or not people believe in God they cannot ignore the idea of God. She says, 'I think human beings are naturally spiritual ... we live in an age where even if we are not participating in organised religion we are looking for something.'

She suggests that belief must evolve in the 21st century and that new forms and symbols must be found to represent belief if it is to have any meaning today. This is what she attempts to do in the stories of Mr Golightly and Miss Garnet.

Mr Golightly's task while on a writing holiday in a Dartmoor village is to revise his unidentified 'Great Work' so that it will appeal to a new age of readers for whom 'human nature hadn't changed ... but custom had, and the times.' He concludes after watching an episode of *Neighbours* that 'the characters in his original drama were only apparently unlike those of the present day', and that it is the idiom and episodes that need to be made relevant, not the essence of the work itself. His IT advisors, Mike and Bill whose real names turn out to be Michael and Gabriel help him find his way around one aspect of modern idiom, using email on golightly@golightly.com. There he communicates with the mysterious nemo@nemo.com, someone who doesn't wish to be known but with whom he finds he has 'an ancient language in common'.

THIS NOVEL PRESENTS, through the actions and thoughts of the central character, the idea of an evolving God, one who is recreated, redefined and reappraised. As Mr Golightly evolves and changes in response to events, so do the people around him become less alienated and unconnected as their daily lives connect with his. In his dealings with his neighbours Mr Golightly lives out the advice given in Robert Orage's epigraph for the book: 'Take hold tightly, let go lightly; this is one of the great secrets of felicity in love.' In the long run his involvement with his neighbours causes him to reappraise the need to rewrite his book and he decides that this task is no longer necessary as the work 'seemed to have found its own way of

We live in an age where even if we are not participating in organised religion we are looking for something.

Although these things, like love, are real we have no everyday vehicle for them so they must always be disguised as angels, ghosts or miracles

reproducing itself'.

Johnny Spence is one of the most alienated characters in the novel. He is presented as a kind of parallel to Mr Golightly's long mourned and, in his father's thoughts neglected, son. The loss of this 'young man with a piteous face' whose photo he keeps in a travelling frame comes frequently into his thoughts. Perhaps he has this son in mind when he finds Johnny has broken into his house and is playing his Elvis records. His reaction is to treat Johnny as an invited guest and a fellow Elvis fan and to set him to work as his research assistant. It is not surprising that it is through respect, not nagging that Johnny Spence starts to get his life together. Nor is it surprising that it is Johnny's research notes that explain the puzzling emails from nemo@nemo.com and Mr Golightly's responses to them.

Julia Garnet, in *Miss Garnet's Angel* is as alienated and unconnected as Johnny Spence although it takes a number of experiences, some of them painful, for her to recognise this. She comes to Venice after her retirement and the death of her companion and like Mr Golightly gradually becomes connected with a web of interrelated people who lead her to explore ideas outside her experience and, as a result, counter her alienation. Her struggles parallel those of Tobias whose story she sees in Giovanni Guardia's paintings in the Chiesa dell'Angelo Raffaele, and despite being a devout communist she finds 'something reassuring about Tobias' guardian, the Angel Raphael.' Just as Tobias can neither visualise the outcome of his journey nor understand the identity of his companion which is revealed only at the end, so does Miss Garnet unknowingly embark on her journey of self-discovery.

VICKERS SAYS THAT the outcome of both novels is influenced by 'the comic outlook' of authors such as Dante, Shakespeare, and the authors behind the New Testament, comic in the sense that 'ultimately they saw life as more powerful than the forces which conspire against it'. This 'implies a particular slant of vision, one which sees the potential, deep in the core of human affairs, for misfortune's alternative—a view which may in fact encourage just that possibility'.

With his many glimpses of misfortune's alternative Mr Golightly does not regret leaving Dartmoor without fulfilling the purpose of his holiday. We last see him being escorted out of town in his 'Traveller' by Michael and Gabriel on their motor bike leaving Mary Simms leaning over the gate chatting to Joseph the gardener. Miss Garnet's story also reaches a satisfying ending which is linked to the Tobias story which ends with the angel Raphael who has travelled with Tobias under the guise of a mortal being finally recognised by the young man and his father. The last of the series of paintings shows the angel flying heavenward, his job done, while Tobias and his father look up in amazement and prayer and Raphael's faithful dog barks as if unable to understand why it is being left behind. Like the angel Miss Garnet is no longer needed and can leave without regret the people whose lives she has enriched. She does however leave them symbols of herself like her hat and her books—small things that speak for the larger truths they represent.

Vickers says she does not start a book with any aim although her training in psychology has led her to be 'always on a wave length of unconsciously working with the unconscious ... trying to work with what is going on in the collective unconscious.' So her next book will be about the same sort of themes: 'the other dimension, the invisible, intangible, yet fundamental truths like love. Although these things are real we have no everyday vehicle for them so they must always be disguised as angels, ghosts or miracles.' ■

Mary Manning interviewed Salley Vickers at *Writers Week* at the Adelaide Festival.

interview

Juliette Hughes

Religious freedom

Juliette Hughes interviews Fr Joseph Nguyen Cong Doan SJ.

WHAT TO DO WHEN in jail? Joseph Nguyen Cong Doan SJ could probably write the book of that title, having had ample time to think about it during the years he spent as a political prisoner in Vietnam, from 1980 to 1990. Now as the East Asia and Oceania Regional Assistant to Peter Hans Kolvenbach, the Rome-based Jesuit Father General, his is one of the most visible and powerful positions in the order. For the Jesuits, being a political prisoner can be something very like paying one's dues as a blues musician: survivors of the process come out with something special to offer the rest of the world.

How did he survive? It was a dangerous time and place to be an active Catholic, in a post-war Vietnam scarred and suspicious of Western influence. In the 1980s most of the people of his generation were rebuilding families and lives. In the rest of the world it was the time when affluent baby-boomers were raising their families, buying their houses, building careers. Vietnam, the big noise of the 60s and early 70s, the icon for Western dissent and Western youth's claiming of personal freedom, was all but forgotten as marriage, mortgages and material aspiration took over. As Doan served his sentence for 'anti-revolutionary propaganda' the world was changing; when he was released there would be work of a different kind, with tasks infinitely more complex, with a materialism more insidious than the idealistic kind that imbued his captors.

INSIDE JAIL THERE WAS prayer: he prayed seven hours a day. At times the prison was crowded, with up to 12 people in one small cell. It meant that Fr Doan effectively became the chaplain; there were seven other Jesuits, a Dominican and four lay people to attend to. Later there was farm work, an arduous but welcome respite from confinement. Talking with Fr Doan you can easily recall the stories of martyrs under the Tudors: Edmund Campion (the first one), and others of that ilk, called to account by Jesuits' various enemies of the past. At times he was interrogated up to three times a day in two-hour blocks. One day the chief of the investigators, after having confiscated all the documents of the Society, focused on a section that was to do with fighting atheism. Doan tells it quietly, but you get the feel of an epic battle of wit: the challenge to speak honestly without causing more trouble than was sensible.

'He said, "You are fighting against *us*." I replied "*Your* atheism causes us to reflect. Capitalist atheism is far more dangerous".'

Doan's words were possibly prophetic: the work that faces him now is extraordinary. His area of responsibility includes his homeland, (where there is increased tolerance of religion by the Vietnamese government) the hugely diverse societies of South Asia—and us, the privileged Anglo First World outposts of Australia and New Zealand. Obviously the tasks differ widely, and Doan has been visiting Australia recently to see how we are. As far as passing on the message of the gospel from a Catholic perspective, the prospects are, as policymakers so often say, challenging.

He talks about the spiritual famine that can face First Worlders:

'Life becomes a closed circle,' he says. 'So many things to buy! People with two, three jobs to make money to buy more. Everything becomes commercial. And with TV, newspapers, and [being] constantly entertained, there is no time to think, to reflect on what you are watching, how you are living. People are caught in a spider's web, closed to other needs.'

It might be simplistic to draw out the paradox of our spiritual prison and physical freedoms against Doan's experience of their diametrical opposites, but while he is speaking I have a sudden image of his utter felicity in those seven hours of daily prayer, bearing in mind the old catechism definition of prayer as 'lifting up of the mind and heart to God'.

I THINK TOO OF THE difficulty of passing on the message to the next generation: the children of First-World baby-boomers are more afraid of wearing the wrong brand of shoes than they should be. Their spiritual hungers have been catered for by the global merchants, who provide them with a level of entertainment that would exhaust a Roman emperor. When they need to feel connected with their fellow humans they go clubbing, drink very hard, take a few 'E's and have sex. How can the voice of God be heard through all that noise?

I tackle him about it: 'why don't Jesuits go to that part of society, the vast mass of middle-ranging people who need something more than consumerism? Why do they focus on the very top and very bottom of society?'

He isn't fazed: he's survived interro-

gation before. He refers me kindly but firmly back to Ignatius, as so many Jesuits will do. He reminds me that Ignatius had a principle of knowing how to choose what to do, and it seems to be very close to the current wisdom of not spreading yourself too thin, to focus hard in one or two areas. From the time of Ignatius, Jesuits have been trying to influence the powerful to treat the poor better. Knowing fully that that is a very big ask, with mixed success at best, Jesuits also have to be helping the poor at the same time. It occurs to me some time after the interview that there wasn't much of a spiritually needy and materially insecure middle class in Ignatius' day, but I am sure Fr Doan would have an informative answer for that too.

IT HAS OFTEN BEEN the fate of Jesuits to be in the firing line simply because they take the fight up to where they see the most action: the most obvious adversaries are poverty and oppression, and the glossy, well-fed, confident elites who cause the trouble. The needs are glaring, with clear-cut tasks: improve this, argue against that, work with this, fight that. It keeps the recruits flowing in, particularly in places like Vietnam, where there are 16 first-year novices among their five million Catholics. (In Australia, there are four novices, two of them first years. We also have about five million Catholics.)

It is a tantalising prospect: soon, certainly within a generation or two, most orders will be finished, their special flavour of Catholicism lost, except in the Third World. The still mainly Anglo-European First World countries will be non-Christian, their schools secularised, their cathedrals little but items on tourists' itineraries of monuments and past glories. Into this will come, I'm willing to bet, missionaries from places like Vietnam, the Philippines, India, Africa. They will be bearing the message that was taken to them centuries ago, and doing the job with more compassion and enlightenment than was done with them. Fr Doan's ancestors were among the very first converts to Christianity in Vietnam in the 17th century. His spiritual children will be needing to convert the West back. If anyone can organise it, he will. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer.

architecture

Anna Griffiths

Soaring angels

Anna Griffiths marvels at the beauty of Los Angeles' Our Lady Queen of the Angels Cathedral.

LOS ANGELES HAS BEEN secularised as far from its original function and title as one could imagine. Its floridly reverent original name, El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles, has shrunk to the briefest vernacular LA. A madonna is a mega celebrity, angels abound in new-age book shops and the word spiritual might have something to do with billboards for bourbon. Many see it as a soulless city, but those who enjoy it do so for its energy, its diversity, its institutions and its hip confidence.

The part of the city I have become familiar with is associated with the cult of eternal life, the life of the body and face rather than anything which might lurk deeper than the skin. You can't take your wealth with you; it seems to be saying, so you might as well spend it all on your present self. Perfect teeth, skin and nails are the norm, created and assisted by an army of associated professionals. This is exemplified in the recent motion picture *Cold Mountain* which tells of the incomparable suffering of men in the American civil war and the incomparably perfect beauty of our heroine, at one stage scrabbling around on her farm in the mud and gore, her Jessica's Nails and her blue eye liner just perfect.

It therefore comes as a surprise—though, given its huge Latino population and its Spanish origins, it shouldn't—that LA has a brand new cathedral, a striking monument in a sprawling city whose few grand buildings tend to be hard to see, let alone find and visit. Add this masterpiece by Spanish architect Jose Rafael Moneo to Richard Meier's Getty Center and Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall just across the road to any list of LA must-sees.

Our Lady Queen of the Angels stands on the crest of Bunker Hill, higher and grander than its predecessor, the Cathedral of St Vibiana, which was destroyed in the 1994 earthquake. She rides her site, a slope leads up and the steep side drops down to a river, as the great cathedral of Chartres rides hers; but this lady towers above the hard materials of downtown

rather than open fields, and a torrent of traffic replaces the gentle River Eure.

This comparison sets the tone of the building and its great forecourt; you are comfortably at home here, the cathedral does all the right things, yet it constantly tells you that it is a modern building for modern life, not a safe, symmetrical neo-neo gothic or Spanish revival-revival container of symbols for an unquestioning faithful.

It has it all; scale, volume, carillon, campanile, big bronze doors, forecourt, side chapels, crypt, organ, choir, baptistery, lofty windows, light filled interior, huge nave and east-west axis.

But you enter from the side front, not the centre, straight into a sloping ambulatory from which you can access side chapels or step down through narrow sloping entrances to the nave. This is raked, auditorium style, and paved with curved Spanish limestone tiles which follow the contours and fan out from the altar. The acoustics are perfect, fed through trumpet shaped loudspeakers in the centres of the light pendants. You can see and be seen from all points, hear and be heard in this vast pillar-less space in which both symmetry and right angles are hard to find.

THE MATERIALS ARE simple and unified in warm earth tones evocative of the region's early adobe mission churches—translucent alabaster windows, limestone, smooth concrete, cherrywood. Underneath, though, its supporting columns rest on steel and rubber bearings and stainless steel sliders to withstand the sudden lateral motion of a severe earthquake.

This is a building which welcomes the casual visitor as well as the worshipper. In a city with little open space, the forecourt serves as a town square. You could come just for morning coffee served from an outdoor kiosk, and enjoy it under umbrellas by the olive and palm groves in the forecourt. Your kids could play in the children's garden amongst life-size cast animals of the bible—the camel, hare, lion, donkey—and they can hop along bits of text which acknowledge man's indebtedness to his non-human companions. You could come to solemn mass and a full choir, in Spanish or English; you could come here to take refuge from the next earthquake or to listen to the 37-bell carillon and the big bells in the campanile on Sundays.

This is California, though, and not far from Hollywood. You almost certainly arrive by car, so you park in a spacious crypt of a car park, come up via escalator, walk past a symbolic pool and water wall, across the forecourt to the bronze doors. A red carpet would not be out of place. Though there is a high wall and colonnade along the freeway edge, its purpose is to dampen sound, not to deny the existence of the rushing traffic below; glass panels lightly etched with flying angels who beckon or wave to the traffic and remind you, in case you feel displaced, where you are. In the burial crypt below, vaults are available for many decades hence, their sale providing funds for the cathedral's ongoing costs. Appropriately, the first occupant is a screen idol.

Scenes from the cathedral, at left: the meditation garden, top: sanctuary, and above: detail from the tapestries of John Nava.

There is something of Hollywood too in the most visible of the art works in the interior, John Nava's 25 tapestries lining the nave walls. On each, a group representing part of the Communion of Saints gazes entranced towards the altar. There is no attempt at chronological classification; Nava places an apostle with an early Christian martyr, a modern saint, a medieval pope and a small group of tough LA street kids. Their faces are photo realistic, having been selected from the files of a casting agent and digitised by Nava's collaborating artist, John Farnsworth. Nava treats their clothing and the flat backgrounds as if they were of peeling fresco, bridging one of the oldest art mediums with one of the most modern, then taking it all off to the electronically operated jacquard looms of Bruges for quick production.

This is a building in which the architect's ego lies low, but his solutions to the complex challenges and problems of the task are quite resolved at both the grand and the finely detailed ends of the scale. Though bold, angular and plain, it is far from minimal. It expresses and invites emotional responses without resorting to corny symbolism. In a city where showiness is expected and the cringe meter can be revving high, it is dignified and purposeful, embracing the new whilst respecting and incorporating the familiar.

Above all, it is a place for people. ■

Anna Griffiths is a NSW art consultant.

Michael Furtado

Richer or poorer

THE RETURN OF Federal Parliament signalled a year in which both parties will need to stake out their education funding policies en route to an election. Labor's forays into education have been confined to softening the image of its leader with an emphasis on the importance of parents reading to their children.

Messrs Howard and Nelson have adopted positions critical of the educational values of state schools ensuring that the next four-year funding deal will deliver continued support to a constituency in favour of parental choice in education. Labor's riposte has been to promise to redistribute funding from rich to poor non-government schools. In general terms the direction of school funding policy will continue to follow student enrolments.

In the wider debate about tertiary fees and boys' education, not much attention has been paid to the position of the Catholic school sector, apart from a handshake and a shared cup of tea between the Prime Minister and Cardinal Pell as they signed the latest funding deal. Closer scrutiny may be in order.

The Coalition's focus on the cancellation of a nativity play at a state school as the rationale for why parents enrol their children in the private sector, does not address the compelling Christian message of room for all at the inn. Inclusive enrolment policies and practices add authenticity to the role of religious values in the life of the Catholic school.

There is currently no Commonwealth requirement for private providers to make their schools more accessible by lowering fees. This means that access to inter-systemic educational choice in Australia still depends on one's capacity to pay.

Open enrolment policies are at present absolutely honoured only in state schools. This is evident in the findings of the Melbourne Catholic Education Office, whose recent research through the University of Melbourne shows that its schools are becoming too expensive for some parents.

The history of state aid has hitherto ensured that Catholic schools, which cater to a quarter of Australian students, have been most reluctant to enter the state aid battle. The Catholic sector has preferred to restate its position only when pushed, remaining publicly mute on the ethics of overall current funding policy trends for apparent fear of splitting public opinion, as in the 50s and 60s, on questions of state aid.

The Catholic Church, as Australia's second largest employer, is one of the largest non-profit, fee-for-service providers in the health, aged care, employment services and education fields. As economic deregulation leads to a winding back of public services, the legislative search is underway to ensure greater public accountability from non-government providers of such services. The Church cannot avoid addressing this complex and perhaps inevitable trend.

As the logic of deregulation bites hard into Catholic educational fund sharing arrangements designed to counter economic rationalist trends, state wide Catholic intra-systemic agreements—aimed at redistributing funds between rich and poor Catholic schools—are under threat.

SEVERAL LONG-ESTABLISHED Catholic girls' schools across Australia are well advanced in their plans to reopen preparatory and middle schools, irrespective of the devastating effect on surrounding parish schools. Some Catholic boys' colleges have been doing this for years. The driving force behind this campaign is that, barring a fees hike, attracting more students is the only way of ensuring a school's viability.

The emphasis on improved educational outcomes has attracted the uncritical support of some Catholic schools, concerned with conserving market share, and consequently committed to a reintroduction of policies of selection and streaming.

Such solutions, discredited in the 70s and 80s, are contrary to prevailing educational ideas on inclusive values, diverse teaching practices and classrooms. Such practices pose a particular threat to the mainstream integration of disabled and Indigenous students.

Melbourne University's Dean of Education, Professor Brian Caldwell, has called for public and private schools to be brought into one national framework of equally funded, equally accessible education. This would mirror the education systems of New Zealand and the Netherlands, among other countries, where all schools meet stringent public accountability standards, while demonstrating greater independence and accessibility than in Australia. This proposal has drawn no response as yet from the Catholic sector.

The current position of the Catholic sector—formerly based on a rejection of New Zealand's model—has drawn criticism from some Catholic parents. The needs of Catholic parents clearly cannot be satisfied by a system which is committed to charging fees and which fails to educate the majority of Catholic Australians.

Moreover, the social justice ethos of Australian Catholics is increasingly at odds with the practise of syphoning public funds to private schools, many of which have no commitment to the inclusive and egalitarian practices of a public education system.

It should be a matter of concern to all Australians that Catholic schools have now taken out full membership of the private school club as part of a Government-induced strategy to regulate and contain their former unique identity as neither state schools nor private ones.

When Professor Judith Sloan of the Centre for Independent Studies argued against the separate treatment of the Catholic claim to school funding, no public defence of the Catholic view followed. A fuller debate, focussing on the diverse needs of non-government providers of schooling, is sorely needed. ■

Michael Furtado's recent doctorate is on education funding policy and its impact on Catholic schools.

Juliette Hughes

The good people of Young

This story of one asylum seeker portrays the best and worst in our nature.

Don't miss *Molly and Mobarak*, a documentary in SBS' excellent Storyline Australia series. It will screen on Thursday, May 6 at 8.30 pm. It is distinguished by the fact that it was initially banned last November from being shown at Parliament House. The Speaker, Neil Andrew, changed his mind, however, and the film was shown.

The story is a poignant one: Mobarak, a young Hazara man from Afghanistan, had been on a temporary protection visa (TPV) that expired in June 2003. He arrived in Australia as a boat person because, like all Hazaras, he is a refugee in danger from Afghanis committed to ethnic cleansing and the chaotic conditions of the area where his family try to live. He is now on a bridging visa and awaits the decision of the Department of Immigration.

The documentary's director, Tom Zubrycki, got to know Mobarak and his fellow asylum seekers in the small rural town of Young in NSW, where they work in the local abattoir, which needed workers. Some of Young's residents are welcoming, especially TAFE teacher Ann Bell, who organises local people to provide English tuition for the men, who are otherwise ineligible for this and many other benefits under the terms of their TPVs. Despite their good work ethic and willingness to adapt, the men are still targeted by racists. The manager of the abattoir finds himself in a difficult position; anything that he does for the 90 men is regarded with suspicion by Young's racists, and he is subjected to personally libellous pamphlets and a lack of support from others in the industry. Viewers will follow his fate with interest too, and might just applaud when he takes on one of the racists inhabiting the local pub.

Mobarak, director Tom Zubrycki and Molly. Photo courtesy of SBS.

Mobarak has been separated from his family for three years when we first meet him. His isolation and insecurity is not hard to imagine. He is befriended by a maternal woman, Lyn and is drawn into her family circle. Lyn's 25-year-old daughter Molly helps him get his driver's licence. She is pretty and kind and he of course falls in love with her. But there are complications: she does not want that kind of relationship with him and he is once more bereft of this new family. The film follows this developing crisis sensitively; letting us notice the small mannerisms of rejection in the women that undercut all their gushing friendliness. Eventually Mobarak moves to Sydney, but his fate, and that of his friends, depends on something quite rare: a compassionate change of heart on the part of those who hold the lives of these young men in their hands.

Few Hazaras seem able to convince the government's flunkies that their lives would be in danger if they were returned to Afghanistan. It seems the place is supposed to be safe now. If that is the case, our politicians should be queuing to send their children on student exchange, or perhaps to book their family holiday trip there this year. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer.

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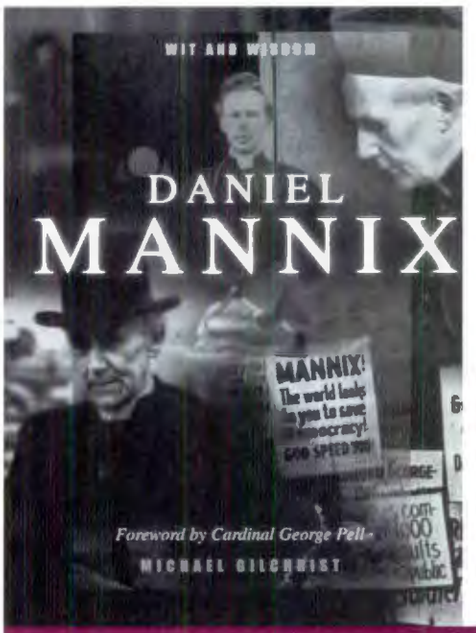
The Irish legacy

Wit and Wisdom: Daniel Mannix, Michael Gilchrist.
Freedom Publishing, 2004. ISBN 0 957 86826 x, RRP $24.95

A SIMPLE SET of numbers preyed on the mind of Daniel Mannix when he began his long association with the Catholic archdiocese of Melbourne in 1913. In the 1840s the population of his native Ireland topped eight million. But in the wake of famine and misrule Ireland's population sank over the succeeding decades to barely four million. These figures bred unhappy thoughts.

Mannix's resultant turbulent priestly life in Australia is the subject of an easy to read biography by Michael Gilchrist. First published in 1982 and now issued in a revised and expanded edition with an approving foreword by Cardinal George Pell, it tracks the sparks that flew when Mannix aroused conservative hostility in Australia at a time when national grief, ennobled by Gallipoli, put a premium on loyalty and conformity. Gilchrist's account also traces Mannix's equally stormy retreat from anti-British disaffection.



Truth, for Mannix's generation, was not relative.

Gilchrist presents Mannix's career as a study in conviction politics. Despite hostile pressure the archbishop would not compromise where matters of justice or conscience were involved. Truth, for Mannix's generation, was not relative.

The enforced Hibernian diaspora of the 19th century darkened the outlook of Mannix's Australian flock at the start of his incumbency. The archdiocese had an embattled Irish-Australian hue. There was a Protestant ascendancy to be fought in the antipodes just as there was in Ireland and the struggle took many disparate forms. Mannix embodied resistance on the official denominational front just as his parishioner John Wren, a man with whom he had little in common outside the noxious ambience of sectarianism, masterminded the struggle against the excesses of Protestant morality by conducting illegal totes and investing in the racing industry.

Mannix was already advanced into middle age and serving as President of Maynooth College in County Kildare when the Melbourne archdiocese headhunted him to lead a campaign in support of state aid for its parochial schools. A bold pressure group strategy to secure state aid was devised and pursued using legitimate democratic methods but soon proved to be counterproductive.

The state aid campaign ratcheted up sectarian animosity in Melbourne during the Great War as did the Easter Rebellion in Ireland. The tension energised wartime opposition by Mannix, now enthroned as archbishop, to attempts by Prime Minister Billy Hughes to introduce military conscription for overseas service.

Mannix hoped to see the end of the murderous link between Ireland and the embattled British Empire. He supported the establishment of a united and independent Irish republic. Billy Hughes labelled him, angrily but, it seems, correctly, as an unwavering friend of Sinn Fein.

NOTORIETY, FOR MANNIX, was a means of promoting political ends. He was, as Gilchrist amply documents, a shameless 'media tart' who always waited to see if a newspaper reporter was present before providing his audience at a church bazaar or speech night with pithy comment, devoid of ecclesiastical jargon, on state aid, Ireland, conscription or the war. He used his eminence to disturb the status quo because it embodied discrimination and prejudice against his flock.

Mannix's recalcitrance led his more bigoted Protestant opponents to conclude that a sinister anti-British plot, concocted in the Vatican, was afoot. But Gilchrist demonstrates that any priestly plotting that did occur was intended to muzzle Mannix rather than egg him on. Rome was keen to ensure that the undiplomatic Irishman was a one off. It set out to immunise the local hierarchy against Fenian charm by upholding a policy of Australian-born Roman-trained archiepiscopal appointments wherever possible. Archbishop Justin Simonds was later appointed as Mannix's coadjutor in line with this policy and as a result Mannix treated him as persona non grata for the next two decades.

Mannix's Fenianism lost its sting as the 1920s progressed. In theory he always refused to accept the partition of Ireland in 1921 but increasingly a new enemy demanded his practical attention. In the 1920s communism replaced Australia's colonial Protestant ascendancy as the target of his wrath. By infecting it with atheism, communists threatened to deprive him of his working class audience.

What Gilchrist fails to make clear

is that Mannix, while deploring it, undoubtedly helped to facilitate the Marxist impact on post-war Australia. Communism gained a toe-hold in the context of the shattering of the strong consensus, based on late 19th century liberalism, that dominated Australia in 1914. During the Great War and its aftermath this consensus floundered as unsettling echoes from war-torn Europe ('the Romanoffs, the Syndicates, the Boyne', to quote the contemporary socialist poet Frank Wilmot) became ever louder. The divisive Mannix helped to subvert the pre-war progressivist consensus during his Fenian and anti-conscription phase without realising that by doing so he was helping to clear the way for a far worse foe to emerge.

Mannix sought out new associates once the crusade against communism became ever more insistent. He was sympathetic when, in the wake of the Spanish Civil War, Bob Santamaria began to organise resistance to the communist presence in the trade union movement. But careful political calculation was never one of the archbishop's strengths. Santamaria's zeal was fatal to the cosy Irish-Australian world in which Mannix was so at home. Arthur Calwell, who enjoyed years of familiarity with Mannix based on shared anti-conscription experiences, felt suspicious and resentful when Santamaria superseded him as Mannix's principal adviser on anti-communist matters.

ANTI-COMMUNISM WAS a mainstream attitude in the post-war labour movement and so Mannix's position on the issue did not necessarily presage a 'split' with the ALP. The archbishop agreed with Labor's Dr H.V. Evatt when he contended that communism was best combated through political rather than legal means and as result he did not support the 1951 referendum to ban the Communist Party.

There was to be no lasting association between the two men though. The erratic Evatt's decision, in October 1954, to repudiate Santamaria incurred Mannix's wrath. He supported the schismatic Democratic Labor Party which directed its preferences to the previously suspect (because Protestant) non-Labor parties led by Robert Menzies. An embittered Evatt was forced to bemoan 'the Menzies-Mannix axis.'

The Catholic vote was up for grabs following the split with Labor. Prime Minister Menzies, who years before had privately described Mannix as 'cunning, sinister and a national menace', was ready to make a deal. Just before Mannix died in 1963 he learnt that the Prime Minister planned to announce limited aid for independent schools.

A believer in rule by charisma rather than bureaucracy, Mannix left few documents behind for Gilchrist to consult and critics have suggested that he did not consult all the manuscript material that does survive. Mannix's countless media 'grabs' form his principal source. But within these limits Gilchrist does provide enough information for anyone wishing to reflect on the abiding significance of a unique Irish-Australian saga. ■

Santamaria's zeal was fatal to the cosy Irish-Australian world in which Mannix was so at home.

Archbishop Mannix. Photo courtesy of MDHC, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Stephen Holt is a Canberra writer and historian.

Andrew Hamilton

On record

***Quarterly Essay*, Sending them Home: Refugees and the new politics of indifference**,
Robert Manne with David Corlett. Black Inc, ISBN 1 863 95141 5, RRP $12.95

It is easy for refugee advocates to be caught in despair. They know what Australia does to asylum seekers and are outraged by it. When asked why Australian policy should change, they describe what lies before their eyes. But few of their listeners see the indecency, feel the outrage, see the need for change. Asked for more evidence, more convincing arguments, they are tempted to use the words of the parable, 'if they don't see what is in front of them, they would not be convinced even if someone were to rise from the dead'.

Robert Manne's *Quarterly Essay* reflects the tension between the need to record what asylum seekers suffer at the hands of Australian refugee policy and the need to urge changes that, in all decency, should not need to be pressed. He writes with a barely controlled passion about the treatment of asylum seekers, while arguing that those currently in Australia should be granted permanent residence. With some heroism he restricts his arguments to the reception of asylum seekers, leaving aside the morality of the devices by which Australia now excludes anyone arriving by boat from claiming protection here. His arguments are persuasive, although like any arguments for common decency, they are unlikely to persuade those who call loudest for argument.

Manne uses well the more substantial accounts of Mares, Brennan and Wilkinson to tell the story of recent changes to Australian immigration policy and the pressures that led to them. The arrival of the Tampa was the catalyst for brutal measures to turn away the large numbers of refugees arriving from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. Manne shows that detention in remote places, harsh living conditions, and limitations on the protection awarded to refugees, have been conceived as a deterrent. He also acknowledges that the interdiction of vessels by sea, the excision of Australian territory from the immigration zone, and the transportation of asylum seekers to Nauru have made it impossible for refugees arriving by boat to engage Australian obligations to protect refugees.

Of particular interest in Manne's narrative is his account of the deceitful and intimidatory devices by which Immigration Department officials have tried to send back to dangerous situations both asylum seekers and refugees on temporary protection visas. The indecency of these dealings supports his argument that decency requires that they be allowed to remain in Australia. It also shows how great the obstacles are to arguments based on decency.

The most notable and moving feature of Manne's essay is his use of the stories of asylum seekers provided by David Corlett. These allow us to see the battered human face of refugees in Australia—the despair, human diminishment, anger and unmanning of young asylum seekers. The stories counterpose this face to the inhuman face of those who administer the policy. The brutality, denial of responsibility and cynicism on display evoke the world of Kafka and Goya.

Manne's arguments for decency in the treatment of asylum seekers and of refugees given temporary protection visas may bear some fruit, if those responsible for making policy judge that the greater indecency of Australia's exclusion of boat people is secure. He argues that the moral claim made upon us by those who are closest to us is inescapable. These claims cannot be traded against our professed concerns for those distant from us. I find this argument cogent. In Christian terms it echoes John's mordant question, 'How can we say we love the God whom we cannot see, if we do not love our neighbours whom we can see?'

The more lasting effect of this essay, however, may be as a record of what asylum seekers have suffered in and from Australia. It is an exercise of public memory, the building material of civilisation. In a more modest way, it reminded me of Chaim Kaplan's scroll discovered in the Warsaw ghetto. His manuscript begins with the commitment to record and remember. Anna Akhmatova also celebrated the importance of memory in her cycle of poems on the Stalinist purges. She reassured a woman waiting outside the prison for news of a disappeared son with the words, 'I can describe this'. Manne records and describes.

In recording what has been done in Australia, by Australians, Manne engages with what he describes as the politics of indifference. He sets out to reassert the claims of decency, of a moral centre by which future Australians will respond to the asylum seekers whose human dignity has been so abused. By the standards of decency they will also judge the politicians, officials and commentators who have devised, executed and defended this policy. He establishes this moral centre by appealing to ordinary human feelings confronted with stories of abuse. He also appeals to the tradition which we share with other Western cultures through the epigraphs which precede each chapter, each assuming an assured moral perspective on issues of justice and injustice. His essay is a text to which our grandchildren will refer when they ask us what we did in the face of such a great evil.

Manne's account of the indecent treatment suffered by asylum seekers in Australia is stark and confronting. But like all art and description, it can offer only a limited account of their suffering. It cannot represent the ways in which time registers the torment entailed in the erosion of personality and the deconstruction of character and spirit. Visiting asylum seekers weekly, one notices the initial bright eyes of those who have against the odds completed a dangerous journey from persecution. Week by week, the eyes become dull,

and time hangs slow and heavy with memories of trauma escaped, with inactivity in the present, and fear of a future which they cannot influence. Self-mutilation and despair that are so harrowing to hear described, are a natural response to a world in which time is an instrument of torture. Why might anyone think that Australian policy could end in any other way?

THE ONE POINT AT which I am ambivalent about Manne's essay is the point at which it is most effective. When he counterpoints the experience of asylum seekers with the unfeeling words of Australian government representatives, he naturally gives preference to the words of Immigration Ministers, and particularly of Mr Ruddock. In a record of the shameful treatment of refugees in Australia and in providing a basis for subsequent judgment, these quotations are rightly chosen. Like the words of Neville Chamberlain, they should be preserved as signposts to a place where future politicians will not want to go.

Nor do my reservations about Manne's use of quotations come from political charity. Australian public life will surely be the better for it after every politician on both sides of parliament who has devised, defended or connived at what has been done to asylum seekers in Australia is returned to private life, and after every officer who has administered the policy goes to work less harmfully in the private sector.

I hesitate about this juxtaposition because I fear that the outrage which the stories of asylum seekers properly arouse will be directed too quickly and exclusively against individuals. This would distract attention from the larger and more crucial issues raised by the subtitle of the book—the politics of indifference.

Clearly, this topic can be touched on only marginally within the limits of a *Quarterly Essay*. A fuller treatment of the political context would reflect on the part played by the Office of Prime Minister and Cabinet in shaping immigration policy. It would also reflect on the broader culture of indifference, including the moral vacuity of public political commentary. But it would also give full weight to the antidotes to indifference, most notably to the initiatives taken in rural Australia where community institutions and conversation are still relatively strong.

But this broader conversation, to which Robert Manne has elsewhere notably contributed, cannot distract from the more urgent need to find a decent ending of the abusive treatment of asylum seekers. We are in debt to Manne for the vigour with which he presses that urgency. ■

Andrew Hamilton SJ is the publisher of *Eureka Street*.

Beth Doherty

Cultural rites

I, Safiya, Safiya Hussaini Tungar Tudu. Pan Macmillan, 2004. ISBN 1 405 03599 4, RRP $30

NIGERIA IS DESCRIBED in *I, Safiya* as being like two separate nations. The rich Christian south, and the poor Muslim north. Tungar Tudu is a village like many in the north, characterised by straw huts and a village well, devout followers of Islam and a penal code called sharia—a punitive system based in part on the Qur'an and the local customary law.

Tungar Tudu is a place where Western journalists are unlikely to venture, particularly when facing more pressing matters of international concern. But there was something unique in the case of Safiya.

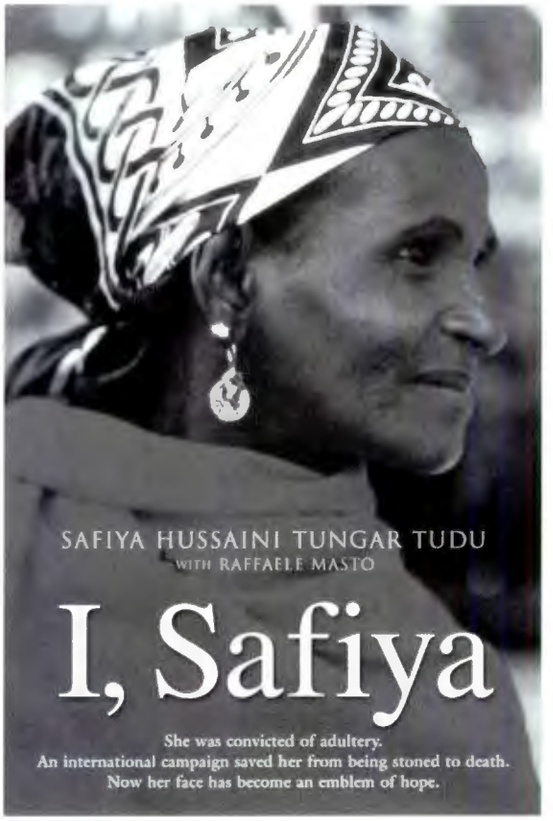
I, Safiya is the story of a girl growing up in an observant Muslim family. Her childhood is spent eagerly awaiting the day where she would start Islamic school, fetching water daily from the well, looking after her younger siblings, and anticipating a comfortable future of marriage and children.

In her descriptive story, she discusses cultural norms such as circumcision—both male and female—and how at 13, she is married for the first time to a man of 50.

After the death of two children, including that of her son from a mystery fever, her first marriage ends in repudiation; a custom which allows a man to divorce his wife for little or no reason.

Safiya returns to her family, broken hearted and with her honour extinguished in line with their tradition. In a cruel turn of events, Safiya is married then repudiated three more times, making it unlikely that any man would ask for her hand again.

Yet, another man does pursue her but refuses to ask her father for permission to court and marry her.



Eventually, she succumbs to him, believing his promise that he intends to speak with her father. As it becomes evident that this is not the case, Safiya realises with initial joy that she is pregnant with his child. He again refuses to marry her and Safiya returns to her parents' home, shameful and expectant.

AS HER PREGNANCY progresses, the local authorities come knocking, and a trial begins under sharia law—the legal system of most northern Nigerian states. Initially, the father of her child comes forward supporting Safiya's account, but he later retracts his story and is acquitted without further questioning. Safiya is convicted of adultery and sentenced to death by stoning.

Through the efforts of an international campaign, a wave of media attention and a cunning lawyer Safiya is spared.

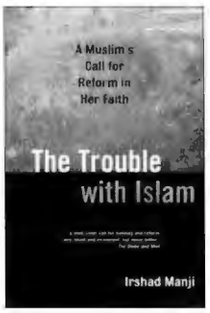
The book provides a rare view into the tradition, tribal culture, religious fundamentalism, and the interpretation of the Qur'an that ultimately saved Safiya's life. It highlights the invidious position of many in the West concerned about human rights abuses in cases of those like Safiya. Action to protect the rights of such women is often viewed by local governments as Western interference at best and imperialism at worst.

In the case of Nigerian woman Amina Lawal accused of adultery and facing a sentence of stoning, recipients of an international email campaign were invited to petition the Nigerian government on her behalf. The ill-conceived campaign placed Lawal at increased risk according to local women's rights agency Baobab. As Anthony Ham reported in *Eureka Street* in July-August 2003, Baobab had evidence from other cases where sentences were brought forward precisely to defy international pressure.

The sharia legal system has been adopted by various countries, most notably Nigeria, Afghanistan and Iran, where harsh penalties exist for those who breach its strict code.

This book is a timely reminder of the clash between Western notions of human rights and the norms and values of other cultures. Can the two worlds coexist and why does it take such a case to bring such barbaric practices to light? ■

Beth Doherty is the assistant editor of *Eureka Street*.



The Trouble with Islam, Irshad Manji. Random House, 2004. ISBN 1 740 51292 8, RRP $32.95

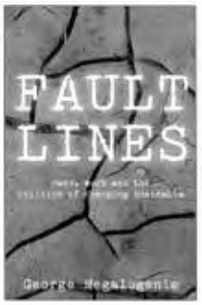
From his cell in Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King Jr wrote of society's need for 'non-violent gadflies', people to stir up 'constructive tension' in order to bring about social change. Using this line as inspiration, Irshad Manji, in *The Trouble with Islam*, sets out to become a gadfly for the global agents of Islamic atavism and slack Western liberalism.

Manji accuses Western liberals of toeing a politically correct line in the discussion of mainstream and fundamentalist Islam. She also surveys the history of Muslim-Jewish-Christian interaction with an eye to countering what she says is a culture of credulous self-pity within mainstream Islam. Some of her claims against the Western academy seem facile and glib, and at times she is overly reductionist in her historical analysis. But as a gadfly, she is certainly effective.

Manji's best ideas come in the form of what she terms 'operation ijtihad', a revival of an ancient Islamic spiritual practice to bring about reform from within. The economic empowerment of women and the Western free press also play key roles in her plan for the reformation of the Islamic world.

Although Manji's (a self-confessed 'Muslim refusenik') book is addressed to her fellow Muslims, the relevance of the subject matter, and her incisive and original approach makes *The Trouble With Islam* an univer approachable contribution to an ongoing global debate.

—Tom Rigby



Fault Lines: Race, work and the politics of changing Australia, George Megalogenis. Scribe, 2003. ISBN 1 920 76905 6, RRP $30

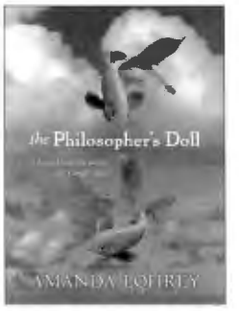
George Megalogenis' *Fault Lines* gives hope to those who trust that voter discontent and social change is about to usher in a new government and social agenda.

Megalogenis argues that the time of Generation W has come which (simply) includes assimilated immigrants, successful women and the metrosexual (or post-macho) male. *Fault Lines* addresses the views surrounding the more contentious issues of Australian politics and public opinion including working mothers, the 'three r's' (refugees, reconciliation and the republic) and a curious examination of the Sydney/Melbourne rivalry.

In a country with a monarchist prime minister, his treasurer and possible successor a republican, and polls that suggest the public can't make up its mind, dividing people neatly along fault lines is fraught with difficulty. Megalogenis' use of statistics and poll results is extensive, however those who question the usefulness of such information will be left unimpressed.

Megalogenis reminds us that politicians tend to be a bit behind the rest of the country when it comes to changing attitudes. Whilst he may have become overwhelmed with the task of dividing the nation along lines of opinion, Megalogenis certainly creates a convincing picture that the general mood of change is about to catch up with those who sit in parliament.

—Nathan Kensey



The Philosopher's Doll, Amanda Lohrey. Penguin, 2004. ISBN 0 670 04050 9, RRP $29.95

Marriage, domesticity, animal philosophy, infidelity, the struggle to conceive. These are just some of the topics deftly woven into *The Philosopher's Doll*. None of these topics interest this particular reader in the least, but I was utterly immersed in the book in its entirety and consumed it with greed.

The reason for my unexpected pleasure in this book is Amanda Lohrey's voice. Her writing is velveteen, cloaking the reader throughout.

Different characters assume a narrative role, from Lyndsay the beguiling university lecturer, to his fiery yet vulnerable wife Kirsten. We are led through the final paces of the book by Mona, who either suffered from a pathetic infatuation with her lecturer Lyndsay, or was a participant in sexual trysts with him, depending on whose voice we choose to believe.

The little world that Lohrey's characters inhabit is neither dazzling nor particularly happy. Sometimes it feels like a story about mundane lives, replete with unresolved marital tension. But each time, I was wooed back into their world by the writing that created it.

—Emily Millane

Corrupting the Youth: A History of Philosophy in Australia, James Franklin. Macleay Press, 2003. ISBN 1 876 49208 2, RRP $59.95

In most cases to describe a book as 'highly readable' is probably not much of a compliment. It may be a prelude to pointing out the many unsatisfactory elements in the author's work. This is not such a case. Franklin's *Corrupting the Youth* is hugely readable, and, considering the subject matter, this is a major achievement.

Part of its appeal is that it is relentlessly idiosyncratic—there is no doubt that Franklin is presenting his own view of the personalities and movements which have characterised the spread of philosophical ideas throughout Australian life. But another element is simply his skill in explaining philosophical concepts and their origins in an engaging and comprehensible way, and tying that explanation to the extraordinary characters who have populated the philosophy scene in this country. The chapters dealing with John Anderson (Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney, resident of Sydney's upper North Shore and sometime adviser to the local Communist Party) are nothing short of fascinating; there is an excellent section placing the activities of Dr Harry Bailey (of deep sleep therapy infamy) in the context of the development of the philosophy of mind.

That said, there are certainly interpretations and perspectives with which I would want to quibble, such as Franklin's treatment of the decision of the High Court of Australia in Mabo. But this, again, is one of the strengths of the book. The reader is given Franklin's views on a range of philosophical and social issues and freedom to disagree or to take objection to what is presented. In a way he has achieved the unthinkable; a thoroughly entertaining and engaging history of philosophy. One cannot ask for more.

—Tom Riemer SJ

Opportunity lost

Monster, dir. Patty Jenkins. Aileen Wuornos, like many other women who have murdered, has now been inflated into myth. In an Academy Award-accelerated process, the much abused prostitute who killed men on Florida's desolate motorways and who was executed by lethal injection in 2002, has been anatomised and dramatised. But the woman herself seems to have given us the slip.

Watching Jenkins' sympathetic version of Wuornos in *Monster*, I kept thinking that maybe Shakespeare's King Duncan was right about Macbeth: there *is* no art to find the mind's construction in the face. Certainly, much art was expended to give actor ('the beautiful', 'the brave') Charlize Theron the face and body of Aileen Wuornos. Yes, the makeup job (by Tony G) was spectacular. Yes, Theron bulked up for the role. Yes, her acting is arresting: she struts and swears like a cowboy, and she has range (surely a legitimate expectation from an actor, even a beautiful one?). But she has no mystery. By film's end I still had no clearer sense of Wuornos herself, or why she did what she did. A problem, perhaps, of quasi-documentary filmmaking: the audience will have expectations that a feature film, with its narrative imperative, can't meet. And there is the further, perennial problem of the dramatisation of evil. Film can do violence—easy. But evil needs a script, and a director, and actor, of something like genius.

Director Patty Jenkins, who wrote the script as well as directing, is modest in her claims. 'Based on a true story' the credits declare. Jenkins quite deliberately limits her focus to a particular episode in Wuornos' life, a time when she met and fell in love with a young woman, Selby Wall (Christina Ricci), who had been sent south by her father, to 'cure' her of homosexuality. Jenkins' script does justice to the neediness of both women, and to Selby's sad, banal betrayal of Wuornos. Jenkins is also restrained—and thus more disturbing—in her treatment of the killings. And, in intermittent dialogue, she provides a sketch of extenuating cause and effect. The 'monster' out there on the motorway is a monster of tabloid creation. Her Wuornos is a tall scrag of a woman, crouched in profile, alone on a steep verge above the relentless Florida traffic.

Yet she killed, over and over. The film only begins to penetrate the horror of that fact—and its psychology.

Oddly, the mute face of onetime US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, caught so powerfully by Errol Morris' documentary camera at the end of *The Fog of War*, is more terrifying than anything Charlize Theron or her director could conjure. The mind's construction—just out of reach.

—Morag Fraser

Seuss slayer

The Cat In The Hat, dir. Bo Welch. Dr Seuss was a great mind: clear, concise, unconventional, decided and utterly insane. The creator of ill-coloured breakfast dishes, politically inspired worker turtles, perfect word contortions and beasts that could balance a cup of tea on a blade of grass in a rain storm, changed everything about literature for children. He is responsible for a whole genre of word and line manipulation that has tied tongues and saturated minds entirely—infant and ancient alike. Important national events might be all the more harmonious if we banged out a rousing chorus of 'I do not like Green Eggs and Ham, I do not like them Sam-I-Am!' rather than stuttering about with *girt*, *toil* and *abounds* (in fact a few Australian football codes would do well to replace *Advance Australia Fair* with *The Cat In the Hat's* more edifying anthem, 'It's fun to have fun but you have to know how').

But while it is true Dr Seuss may be good for many things, it is equally true cinema should leave many good things alone. Dr Seuss is one of them. The beauty of his books is found in the electrifying instability of the drawings and their delightful brevity. They ain't epic novels for long train journeys anymore than they are the shells for feature film scripts. They are quick fixes—verbal gymnastics for hungry little minds.

The film of *The Cat In The Hat* fails its namesake in so many ways. While the book pings around your mind like a rubber band the film lumbers under the weight of so much commercial spit and polish you can almost see the executive producers reflected in the whites of your eyes.

And why, oh why, does every second

Selby Wall (Christina Ricci) and Aileen Wuornos (Charlize Theron) in *Monster*.

Hollywood breath have to reek of clever-dick-ironic-self-aware commentary on American suburbia. We know strange things happen behind picket fences—*The Simpson's* is on TV ten trillion times a week. We GET IT already.

What I don't get is what Mike Myers (the Cat) found funny about this flabby script and how he settled on that ridiculous walk for the hatted cat? Where is the rickety genius of *Wayne's World* or the cumbersome sexiness of *Austin Powers*? There is no doubt he is the cleverest comic in the picture, but what a waste. Alec Baldwin is gross and despicable in a false teeth kind of way, but his character adds nothing to cinema's growing canon of false suitors. The children (Dakota Fanning and Spencer Breslin) pass muster and single Mom (Kelly Preston) could almost certainly have acted the buttons off her twin suit if given half a script.

I didn't expect *The Cat in the Hat* to be Shakespeare but should they, would they, couldn't they ... have failed attempting something at least a little closer to Seuss.

—Siobhan Jackson

Mike Myers as *The Cat In The Hat.*

Mature art

The Barbarian Invasions (Les invasions barbares), dir. Denys Arcand. The film industry is full of clever people. Armies of smarty-pants, making vast sums of money investigating the post-modern ironies of 70s TV or the engineering subtleties required to successfully flip a car over a baby pram but under a truck chassis. I do not jest. There is quite clearly an excess of cleverness in the film industry. But how grown up is it?

Arcand's new film, *The Barbarian Invasions*, is certainly clever, but not via any gee-whizz-bangery, but because it is serious about the life and death of the people it puts on the screen. It is grown up.

Cars may drive at the speed limit but *The Barbarian Invasions* puts more at risk, emotionally and physically, than you are likely to experience in most picture theatres this year.

Remy (Remy Girard) is dying of cancer. Arcand surrounds him with friends and family and simply lets them talk. They talk about everything—love, fear, betrayal, death, marriage, futures markets, terrorism, US imperialism, health care, video games, heroin ...

Witty, wise dialogue (a little too witty at times to be frank) provides the backbone of this picture, but Arcand is also a master of story structure. *Barbarians* unfolds with a pace so human and unimposing it takes your breath away. When the simple device of fading to black at the end of a scene can pull a tear, you feel pretty humbled by the beauty of the art.

All the performances are spotless. When Remy's daughter (who is sailing in the Pacific) sends a video/e-mail farewell to her father, the emotion is so perfectly raw, you are shocked.

There were also things about this film that drove me mad. But it was all complex anger that I would choose to experience again and again. Like a family Christmas argument, it made me crave life just that little bit more, by making it that little bit harder.

—Siobhan Jackson

Still life

Capturing the Friedmans, dir. Andrew Jarecki. Andrew Jarecki's documentary is an extraordinary, and extraordinarily troubling film, on many levels. Arnold Friedman and his son Jesse both pleaded guilty to several hundred cases of child abuse in 1988. Arnold died in jail (an overdose of antidepressants, possibly suicide), while Jesse was released in 2001 after 13 years in prison. Jesse now claims that these crimes did not occur, and has filed a motion to overturn his conviction, to a large extent based on information uncovered by Jarecki's film. In essence, the basis for Jesse's motion is that the investigative methods used by the police have since been proven to produce unsafe or untrue testimony (for example, interrogating a child fifteen times, until they provide the 'right' answers). Jarecki certainly gives the viewer cause to wonder about the facts of the case. He by no means sets out to exonerate the Friedmans—which would indeed be a difficult task, given Arnold's collection of child pornography, and his admission that he was indeed a paedophile who had abused children on other occasions—but not those for which he was charged along with his son.

David, Jesse, Elaine and Seth Friedman.

It is the level of doubt that the film generates in the viewer's mind that is so troubling, and so gripping. Various reviewers have claimed that the film 'proves' their guilt, their innocence, and everything in between. For me, the film cast an overwhelming shadow of doubt over everything, and everyone, it touched. Even the incredibly voyeuristic, and compelling, home video footage taken by the Friedman sons as their family implode offers nothing but a window into a family wracked by conflicting doubts, loyalties, and convictions. (The scenes where the sons turn viciously on their mother for not unquestioningly supporting her husband, despite his admitted paedophilia, are quite horrifying). What was most disturbing for me is that one is left doubting even the film itself. The DVD version apparently contains material omitted from the film which provides much stronger support for Jesse's claims of unsafe conviction. The filmmakers cut this in order to produce a more 'balanced', and therefore believable (and possibly more dramatic) film. The ethical implications of such a decision are troubling at best.

—Allan James Thomas

watching brief

Territorial television

I'M FINE NOW, REALLY. The nightmares are receding, the rash is responding to aromatherapy and I've cut back the shrink to once a day. It was a near thing just before Easter, however, watching all that shite on the telly and not having a gun. My Uncle Frank would have known what to do; he was the one who shot the telly to demonstrate the principle of implosion to his kids, but I think really it was because he was fed up with *I Love Lucy*.

My old dad used to shout and thump the floor with his walking stick, which doubled as a remote control after he and Mum got the new telly with push-button controls instead of those circular dials. It channelled his energies into something more creative, because he got quite nifty with it: even though the stick's black rubber base was wider than the buttons, he used to sort of angle the edge of it and push. Worked a treat, but when Mum got her own walking stick I regret to say that there were occasional spats, involving much combative poking and prodding of the set, which was starting to lose all the chrome edging from the buttons. Dad used to object to sex on the screen, being a good old-fashioned Puritan. Also rock music and poncy religious commentators who weren't Catholics. When his favourite wildlife documentaries started to get all jiggy he was devastated, seeing his beloved animals turned into porn stars. 'I turned on that one about zebras', he said, 'and I was bloody disgusted. Can't the buggers give the poor beasts a bit of privacy?' Mum would oppose him on general principle, and sometimes we had to distract them with tea and buns.

I felt I was channelling Dad when I watched that damned silly Henry VIII thing on the ABC, with Henry as an East-Ender bovver boy. And although I'm not what anyone would call a historian or an authentic Early Music Fascist, the use of Elgar's 'Enigma Variations' as the end credits rolled was about as meaningful as using 'Like A Virgin.' Given its total lack of historical cred, it was a surprise and a relief to find no hobbits had been added, but that's about all I can say in favour of it. Where was David Starkey when we needed him?

The same goes for those unspeakably crude and silly cod-documentaries *Who Killed Jesus!* and *Did Jesus Die!* These beauties were perpetrated by writer-producer Richard Denton, who is ex-BBC Religious Affairs, and is on record elsewhere as saying that anyone who believes in religion is sad, lonely and inadequate, though not of course in the script of either program. His examples of Christians who believed in the resurrection were Filipino crucifixion re-enactors and loony Canadian charismatics. Tom Wright, Anglican bishop of Durham, and Peter Stanford were trotted out from time to time, but the whiz-bangery and weight were all given to legends that were far sketchier than the gospel and historical accounts which he strained to breaking point with speculation. He recycled a patchwork of the Knights Templar legend and hedged the bets by saying that Jesus was drugged with hyssop, woke up a bit afterwards and scooted off to Kashmir, because he was really a Buddhist. Which of course would be cool.

INSPIRED BY SUCH FLIGHTS, I have written my own series, called simply *Vicky*. I think it will shed new light on the life of Queen Victoria, the well-known Cockney matriarch.

Let's have Pauline Quirk, or better still, Barbara Windsor, in the lead, with Sean Bean as Ed, because he turns up in all of these efforts.

Opening scene

Queen Victoria bustles into the morning room at Balmoral:

Q. Victoria: Oy! Eddie! If yer don't stop shagging Lawd Ponsonby's wife we'll give yer such a clip round the ear'ole! We ain't bloody amused, yer little barstid.

Edward, Prince of Wales: Aww, turn it up Ma, you're no angel yourself, innit? Wot abaht John Brown eh?

Q. Vic: Yer cheeky devil, come 'ere an' we'll belt yer one. Johnny the Scot ain't none er yer business. And have yer bin pinching the royal ciggies?

Ed: Nah. Don't like menthol do I? Ere, 'ave one of mine.

Q. Vic: Oh orright then, we know, we was young ourself once; yer old Pa useter say we was a real little raver. But yer gotta be careful luv, cos the way yer goin it's gonna drop orf.

Ed: Yer a legend, Ma.

Q. Vic: You allus could get round yer old ma, yer little devil. 'Ere, garsong! Pass us a rum & whiskey fer our royle stummick, cos those bleedin' kippers made us fart sumfink awful lars night. See youse all termorrer then, cos we're goin out ternight wiv Johnny the Scot fer a bit of the other. Nudge nudge wink wink.'

Exit mother and son, smoking and arm in arm.

End credits roll with Donna Summer's 'I Want Some Hot Stuff Baby Tonight'.

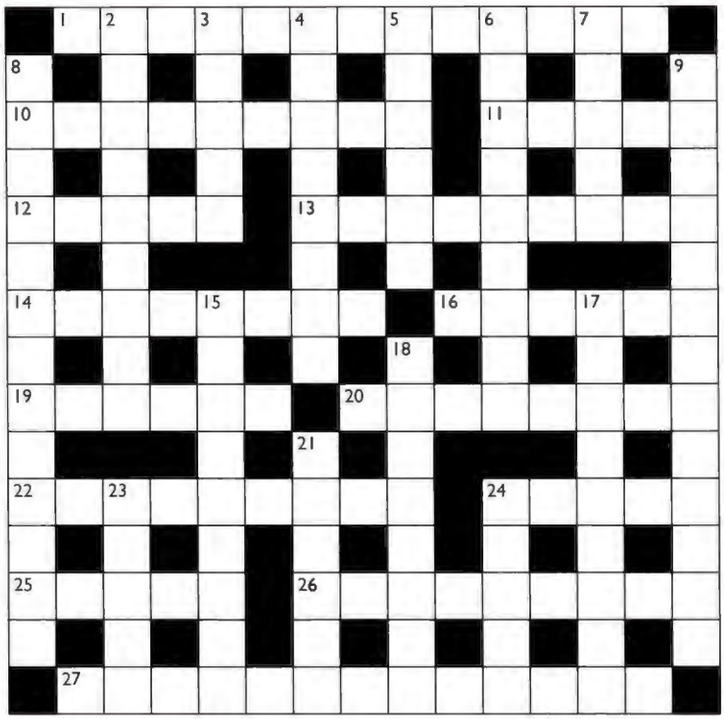
Pass me the hyssop. I want to forget. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer.

puzzled

Devised by
Joan Nowotny IBVM

Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 123, May 2004



ACROSS

1. Some remuneration, maybe, for thoughtfulness (13)
10. Harvest festival for some, cost pence with small change of character and order (9)
11. May, possibly, not Her Majesty (5)
12. Richard or Christine? Bet nothing on it. (5)
13. Left inside, surrounded by many directions. How silly—lacking taste, for one! (9)
14. Could be our price that is found attractive by the dealer. (8)
16. Cavort around and have a flutter, we hear. (6)
19. March regularly like this, using part of foot? (2,4)
20. Explosion waiting to happen! In the old car, perhaps. (4,4)
22. Time for hard work—or celebrate a holiday. (6,3)
24. Brief overture in main troubadour's music? (5)
25. Spiced drink for George, the Emperor? (5)
26. Barely perceptible border on the gate. Fined possibly for intrusion. (5,4)
27. French team on unexpected trip processed with a sense of shared purpose. (6,2,5)

DOWN

2. Former pupil with harmful attitude, perhaps becomes offensive. (9)
3. The rump can be inflexible! (5)
4. Perhaps rise with word of rebuke for those who are more lethargic. (8)
5. Sailor gets a dressing down. (6)
6. In a bad mood, consumed greedily. Is that immoderate? Quite the reverse! (9)
7. Weight of a cat. (5)
8. Terrifying to be sick with backbone both cold and hot in gripe at first. (5-8)
9. One who informs an umpire. (7,6)
15. Right PR course for the forerunner, such as the Baptist. (9)
17. To be stood up unexpectedly is hardly the way to have one's confidence increased. (7,2)
18. Possibly ill, Kylie is of delicate appearance. (4-4)
21. Strange suit when garments don't match. (3,3)
23. Prevent you and me from making progress—that's phoney! (5)
24. Divide something thus—let's go halves! (2,3)

Solution to Crossword no. 122, April 2004

■	E	A	S	T	E	R	T	U	E	S	D	A	Y	■
S	■	L	■	O	■	O	■	N	■	E	■	P	■	T
H	O	L	Y	W	A	T	E	R	■	N	O	R	T	H
O	■	I	■	E	■	A	■	E	■	T	■	I	■	O
E	A	G	E	R	■	T	H	E	T	I	L	L	E	R
R	■	A	■	■	■	I	■	L	■	M	■	■	■	O
E	X	T	E	N	S	O	R	■	R	E	S	E	A	U
P	■	O	■	O	■	N	■	P	■	N	■	L	■	G
A	R	R	A	N	T	■	F	O	R	T	I	E	T	H
I	■	■	■	P	■	R	■	L	■	■	■	V	■	F
R	I	G	M	A	R	O	L	E	■	T	I	A	R	A
I	■	A	■	R	■	U	■	S	■	E	■	T	■	R
N	E	R	V	E	■	B	E	T	E	N	O	I	R	E
G	■	B	■	I	■	L	■	A	■	T	■	O	■	S
■	S	O	U	L	S	E	A	R	C	H	I	N	G	■

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