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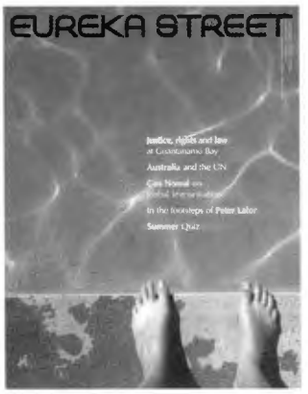


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EUREKA STREET
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Marilyn Warren

# On human leadership

In addressing the graduates of the 2004 Williamson Community Leadership Program—a program aimed at developing leaders in business, government and the not-for-profit sectors attuned to the needs of the community—Victoria's Chief Justice Marilyn Warren shared her views on leadership. As the first woman in Victoria appointed to the position of Chief Justice, her comments are especially apposite. The following is an edited text of her address.

From my perspective, the concept of leadership should be seen in context and that context is essentially the human experience. As I reflect upon leadership and my human experience, one of my first thoughts is that leadership has to be for something. It is not a goal in itself. It needs to be seen as an instrument, a quality or a set of qualities that enables a goal to be achieved.

This view of seeing leadership as instrumental, takes you initially away from the task of identifying the key qualities of leadership and directs your attention to what you want to achieve. Focusing on what you want to achieve eventually takes you into a greater landscape—how do your goals fit into a broader vision of the human experience, individual and community welfare and social good?

This raises the question of whether leadership is ethically neutral. Can a leader of a criminal gang display real leadership? Can a leader of a group hell-bent on ethnic cleansing be properly described as a great leader? We are repulsed by the notion that such a person could correctly and finally be described as a 'great leader'. I suggest that there is an ethical or moral core that resides deep within the heart of the concept we so much like to talk about, dissect and appropriate.

Leadership describes a human relationship. It is perhaps in the nature of this relationship that we find the moral and ethical connection.

What is the nature of this relationship and is it as simple as describing the reality of one person leading and other people being led? The reality is far more complex. There has to be a process of enlightenment, understanding, engagement, acceptance and approval for real leadership to be exercised. The question is: is it a relationship between equals or, by definition, a relationship between people who are not equals?

The teacher exhibiting clear leadership in the classroom will be a teacher who sees her students as young people with the same rights to education, opportunity and happiness that she has and has had. The parents who lead their children successfully will do so because they see their children as entitled to everything to which they could aspire. The manager who successfully leads her department, will do so because her view of where the group is going is clear and shared by the group. Most importantly her success as a manager will be built upon a clear perception by those she manages that each of them is entitled to the same human dignity, work satisfaction and feelings of success to which she aspires.

National and international figures will ultimately be judged as leaders on the basis of their contribution to the quality of the lives of the people they have been elected or appointed to represent.

Our initial thought about leadership is that it is a relationship between people who are not equals. The leader is the one who is ahead, the one who is wiser, stronger, faster, more knowledgeable, more creative, more innovative, braver, charismatic or just simply better.

As important as these qualities might be to particular leaders, it is a necessary condition of real leadership that it is exercised in ways which reflect the fundamental value that as human beings we are all equal.

Would we say that someone was a leader if his leadership betrayed the notion that people enjoy equal rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, equal rights to justice, education and good health, equal rights to live in a civil and humane society?

If this view of leadership is valid, what must follow about the way in which a leader relates to those on the other side of the relationship? If leadership functions within relationships that are built upon a notion of equality, the following might be key issues to explore:

How do leaders ensure that all members of their group understand and embrace the purpose or product of their joint labours?

How do leaders relate to those over whom they exercise their authority?

Where does this view of leadership sit with notions of trust, engagement, participation, vesting and delegation?

What obligations does this view of leadership entail in relation to information, communication and education?

And finally, what does this view entail about the relationship between leadership and the identification and pursuit of values which are at the heart of a civil, just and free society?

And as a post script, if I had a little longer I would like to explore the notion that leadership is not a quality of the few, but an obligation of all as we pursue in our various ways and in our various roles, a better world.

I am ending with many questions. However, I suggest that if my analysis thus far is correct, then, we have at least two guides for further analysis and understanding of this most sought after and admired quality.

First, a real leader will always act, always lead, in the ways which are consistent with the notion that leadership is exercised between people who see themselves (and others) as equal. Second, real leadership is not exercised in a moral vacuum. It is exercised in the pursuit of values that are aimed at adding to, and improving the quality of, the human experience. ■

The Honourable Justice **Marilyn Warren** is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria.


## Putting people first

Jack Waterford's article, 'Tough times ahead' (*Eureka Street*, December 2004) does not do justice to the impact of the historical, structural and institutional racism and oppression that Indigenous peoples have had (and continue) to experience in this country. Nor does it do justice to the many success stories in which Indigenous peoples have risen above this oppression, resisting passive welfare. To support the Liberal government's jump for quick fix solutions appears to once again blame the victim for their circumstances and for their cultural deficiency—a popular stance of all previous governments throughout the 20th century.

Indigenous people and their children will never be free to move forward in this country and fully partake in the education and economy until non-Indigenous politicians and governments of the day take into consideration the legacy and impact of the historical policies that have silenced and oppressed the First Nations Peoples. Politicians need to begin a process of listening to Indigenous voices, stories and experiences, handing over the reins by allowing Indigenous people to be the creators of their own freedom.

**Lynn Webber**
Hackney, WA

## Finding a meeting place

Jack Waterford's article 'Tough times ahead' (*Eureka Street*, December 2004) acknowledges, to some degree, the government's paternalistic, coercive and even discriminatory policy on Aboriginal Australians. However, he seems to support this policy for the sake of outcomes, rather than the 'long haul' option of empowering Aboriginal people in decision making for themselves. Punitive measures to force Aboriginal people to act on their children's behalf, in order to obtain welfare, will only further entrench dependency.

Community control is imperative for Aboriginal people in order to develop self-esteem and become more active in their health, educational and social needs. Decentralisation of bureaucracy and a focus on regional leadership would encourage Aboriginal leaders and community elders to negotiate what policies will work for their area or community. 'One size doesn't fit all' for Aboriginal communities. There are many different language groups in the country, each with their own network of relationships—not one single population that needs to be 'dealt' with. These relationships are paramount in determining the policies that will work for different communities.

Symbolism, apologies and reconciliation are vital in maintaining the awareness of Aboriginal issues. Michael Long's recent walk to Canberra to meet with the Prime Minister will be remembered, along with other symbolic displays, such as the march over the Sydney Harbour bridge. If Aboriginal people are to become more active in self-determination, punitive measures will only provide short term answers. The government must be prepared to develop sensitivity to, and relationships with, Aboriginal leaders and truly empower them. Only then will outcomes be altered from the grass roots in a sustained and integrated way.

**Anne Dooley**
Clifton Hill, Vic

*Eureka Street* welcomes letters from our readers. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters may be edited. Letters must be signed, and should include a contact phone number and the writer's name and address.
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**Omission**: In the last issue of *Eureka Street*, Michele Gierck reported on the services of Kids Help Line ('Phone a friend', December 2004). We neglected to mention that Kids Help Line is one of the many programs conducted by the Boystown charity, a work of the De La Salle Order. Our apologies to Boystown and the De La Salles for the oversight. —Ed.

**November 2004 Book Offer Winners**:
G. Badham, Weston Creek, ACT; J. Brasier, Bendigo, VIC; S. Brown, Forrest, ACT; M. L. Cronly-Dillon, Townsville, QLD; M. Gaudry RSM, Castle Hill, NSW; K. Lewis, Doncaster, VIC; C.G. Nikakis, Red Hill South, VIC; P. Peyton, Preston, VIC; T. Pride, Paradise Point, QLD; M.N. White & A.M. O'Driscoll, Prospect, SA.

# snapshot

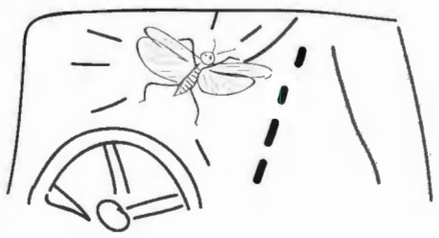

## Begotten

Christmas is a time of begetting. On the minor scale of begetting, hayfever begets sneezes. And sneezes beget blessings. But what begot 'bless you's' for sneezes? In one theory, kindness begets blessing: you bless the soul that is momentarily expelled from the body when you sneeze. Sterner scholars claim that fear begets blessing: you say a blessing to ward off the devil that wants to be sucked back into the body after you sneeze. More alarming, as usual, are the thoughts of doctors. They surmise that plague begets blessing. Your sneeze was the first indication you had caught the plague, and the blessing was for your coming death. Which suggests that there may also be a time to refrain from begetting.

## Mixed messages

German President Horst Koehler recently announced the world would be a better place if people wrote more love letters. A poor society, he thought, is one in which more hours are spent text messaging and emailing than in seriously amorous composition.

He is right, of course, but a president of the country that produced Karl Marx should realise that love letters are only the smile on the face of commercial reality. Appropriate remedies for the scourge of sms-ing must be devised at more commercial levels. We should insist, for example, that only eulogies with rhetorical amplitude may support the claims of the next Australian Idol. We should demand a gift for passionate polemic from those who would evict their Little Brothers. And would not the world be a better place if bills only became legal documents when accompanied by a touching evocation of the pitiful plight of parents, grandparents, children and cousins, should not the account be met?

## Of locusts …

The long drive is something of an Australian summer family tradition. A driver in country NSW, enduring the worst of a locust inundation, seems to have a head start on the rest of us. Phoning ABC radio the driver reported some early summer in-car research. Travelling at 90km/h locusts will bounce off the car windscreen. Cars travelling at 92km/h will cause locusts to splatter. Wonder if he's applied for a research grant?

## … and floods

And in further reports from the natural world, *Eureka Street* was amused to receive the following warning:

> THIS IS AN OFFICIAL WARNING! A huge 300ft high ocean wave is moving towards your continent. Your [sic] and many other cities are in real danger. Approximate wave moving speed is 700km/h.
>
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>
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summa theologiae

# Human dignity and democracy

Cardinal George Pell recently spoke to the Acton Society on the limits of liberal democracy. His speech was wide-ranging and interesting, but critics focused on a point marginal to his argument: his comparison between those in the West who now convert to Islam and those who had earlier turned to Communism.

His arguing partner was secular democracy, which he describes as an identification of democratic process with the belief in unlimited individual autonomy. This leads to unquestioned acceptance of abortion, euthanasia and genetic experimentation, and to the claim that opposition to such things is undemocratic.

Cardinal Pell argues that democracy is neither a value-free mechanism for regulating interests, nor a good in itself. Its value is to serve a moral vision.

To the individualist values espoused by secular democracy, he opposes 'democratic personalism'. By this he means a vision of human beings as centres of transcendent dignity whose existence and happiness are bound to mutual relationships. Democracy serves the flourishing of human dignity and of mutual relationships. He argues that to implement this vision we would need to change culture. That calls primarily for persuasion and not political activism.

He introduces Islam into his argument in order to illustrate the emptiness within secular democracy. Last century, the Western cultural emphasis on individual choice attracted people to communism because it was built on solidarity. Recent conversions to Islam in the West suggest that it might prove as attractive in our century for the same reason.

Cardinal Pell is right to identify the radical individualism of Western culture and to insist that any political system must be built on a strong respect for human dignity. That said, I doubt that our political system can be described as a pure form of secular democracy.

I disagree, however, with his claim that democracy is not a good in itself. Democracy is a good because it uniquely allows for human beings to take responsibility for the shape of their common life and makes them morally accountable for what governments do in their name.

This means that governments and citizens are judged by the values that Cardinal Pell commends—the transcendent dignity of the human beings affected by national policy and actions. For that reason, election success never justifies a government's policy. It does not render morally justifiable, for example, the destruction of Iraq or of the humanity of asylum seekers. What elections do is to make governments accountable for their actions, and citizens accountable for re-electing them. Because of this accountability, we may not move on from the disrespect for human dignity involved in our treatment of refugees and our participation in an unjust war, any more than from that involved in abortion, euthanasia and some forms of stem cell research. But, as Cardinal Pell says rightly, we are dealing here with a culture. To make the defence of human dignity central to our culture, we must change public attitudes by persuasion and better arguments. Direct action and heavying politicians to change laws are no substitute for public education.

I also agree that a democracy driven by the commitment to maximise individual choice contains a contradiction that, under pressure, will manifest itself. Where societies do not value human dignity and human relationships, such minorities as the citizens of Iraq or asylum seekers will be deprived of life and voice, and governments will act in authoritarian ways to resist accountability for torture and other forms of barbarism.

Cardinal Pell's comparison of conversion to Islam with the earlier turning to Communism is ambiguous, at least in the edited version of his speech. The ambiguity is unfortunate, because the position of Muslims in the Western world is precarious, and internationally the citizens of Islamic countries are at risk from the bombs of Western powers. Any comparison between Muslims and the Communists who were the object of fear and loathing in the West, therefore needs to be carefully defined and limited.

Cardinal Pell's comparison is ambiguous because it is not completely clear whether the converts to Islam to whom he refers are converts to a faith, or converts to establishing a political order in which adherence to the faith and practices of a religion are prescribed and sanctioned.

He would be right to say that some people in the West have been attracted to Islamic faith because they find secularism too thin a basis for human living. In Islam they find transcendence and solidarity. But other people have been attracted to Christianity and Marxism for the same reasons.

He would also no doubt be right to claim that some Western people have been attracted to a polity that prescribes the beliefs and practices of Islam. It is also true that Communists defended an analogously prescriptive form of government. But some Christians have also advocated and practised religious discrimination in government. These Christians should therefore be included with Communist and Muslim converts in cautionary tales about the defects of secular democracy, or the comparison not made.

Human dignity provides the standard by which all forms of government, whether led by Christians, Marxists or Muslims, are to be judged.

In order to defend human dignity, however, it is important to insist both that democracy is a value, and that democracies are judged by their respect for human dignity. If we insist, as Catholic thinkers sometimes do, only on the importance of the values that democracy serves, we may be tempted to argue that authoritarian forms of government that prescribe Catholic Truth might be better than democracies. That would involve the same kind of contradiction that Cardinal Pell points to in secular democracy. In the name of human dignity we would be infringing a value central to human dignity—namely, the citizen's moral accountability for public policy. ■

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

# Descent into chaos

INSTABILITY IN IVORY COAST

AFRICA IS A CONTINENT accustomed to sad stories but few are as tragic as Ivory Coast's.

Until the death of President Felix Houphouet-Boigny, who ruled the country from independence in 1960 until his death in 1993, Ivory Coast was a beacon of stability in a rough neighbourhood. Even as nearby Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and, to a lesser extent, Guinea seemed perennially at war with themselves and with each other, Houphouet-Boigny's country was prosperous and stable, seemingly inured to the region's problems, a poster-boy for a different way of doing things.

Houphouet-Boigny was hardly a democrat, at least not until his later years, and he was certainly an egoist. His $US300 million Basilique de Notre Dame in Yamoussoukro was modelled on St Peter's cathedral in Rome (only a personal request by the Pope meant that the dome is slightly lower than Rome's) and has 7,000 individually air-conditioned pews.

Yet Houphouet-Boigny's reign was characterised by an acknowledgment that outside expertise—from unskilled migrant workers to French businessmen and engineers—was necessary in building a thriving economy. Ivory Coast became a model for prosperity, friendship with former colonial overlords and coexistence with one's neighbours.

The president's model for a new African success story outlived him, but only just. A succession of presidents and edicts in the aftermath of Houphouet-Boigny's death divided the country between the predominantly Christian south and the Muslim north, between 'true' Ivoireans and 'immigrants' from neighbouring countries. It culminated in the country's first coup d'état in December 1999 which ushered in a period of intermittent violence, further coups and disputed elections in which opposition candidates were barred from standing.

By May 2003, after a brief but debilitating civil war, France had brokered a fragile peace which temporarily quietened the guns but left the country divided in two. Ivory Coast disappeared from the international headlines.

The world's attention moved elsewhere, and while Ivory Coast was no longer at war, nor was it at peace. Incendiary rhetoric from the government-held south was answered in kind by the rebel north. The rebels joined a coalition government provided for under the terms of the ceasefire, but former government ministers scarcely spoke to their rebel counterparts. It became a national unity government in name only and fell apart more times than it met.

Rebel forces—of which there are many—refused to lay down their arms until electoral and other laws which discriminated against immigrants (all immigrants, whether recent or third-generation, had been barred from public office) were repealed. President Laurent Gbagbo promised to repeal the offending laws, but then refused to do so until the rebels disarmed, a clear and provocative breach of the ceasefire. The ceasefire held, but only because French and West African peacekeeping soldiers occupied a buffer zone between the two sides.

George Packer, writing in the *New Yorker* on 3 November 2003, identified why Ivory Coast's problems had begun to seem intractable. 'Seen from a distance, Africa's man-made disasters look senseless. But to the participants, who tend to be young and poor, these wars have meaning. The war in Ivory Coast began as a struggle over identity ... the question of who gets to be considered Ivoirean.'

Young Ivoireans, rallying around the banner of a government-sponsored vigilante group, the Young Patriots, became the spokespersons for a whole generation educated at state expense but without work. They blamed the 'immigrants' and the French. Just across the lagoon in the commercial capital Abidjan, young men whose fathers were born in Ivory Coast but whose grandfathers hailed from Burkina Faso or Mali, lost the only nationality they had ever had in the only country they had ever lived.

The resumption of hostilities came suddenly, but was no surprise. Indeed, most Ivoireans wondered why it had taken so long.

In November 2004, the Ivoirean air force bombed rebel positions in Bouaké, Ivory Coast's second-largest city, and just north of the buffer zone. Dozens were killed, among them nine French peacekeepers. The French response was immediate with French planes destroying, in a single raid, the entire Ivoirean air force. French soldiers occupied the streets of Abidjan.

Anti-French, anti-immigrant riots erupted across the city. State radio and television fanned the flames with a hate campaign that screeched dangerously close to the dark invocations of racial violence which characterised the early days of the Rwandan genocide in 1994. The French, long suspected of pro-rebel bias, were the main targets and, at last count, more than half of Abidjan's Western population had fled the country.

Although the guns have momentarily fallen silent, conflict has merely been delayed. The rebels have vowed never again to discuss any settlement as long as President Gbagbo remains in office. In government-held areas, newly radicalised supporters of the president have vowed to retake the rebel-held north by force. And the French—former colonial masters whose intervention in November postponed the war and won the support of the United Nations and even regional African leaders—will no longer be able to act as honest brokers.

The Ivoirean dream is over. Once a symbol for Africa's diversity and its potential for good governance, Ivory Coast's government has retreated once again behind the rhetoric of xenophobia. Its defence—the time-honoured reflex of illegitimate governments—is to blame everyone but itself, lashing out at France as colonisers even as they themselves colonise the identity of 'immigrants' who had always been proud and loyal Ivoireans.

The prevailing, uneasy calm and a UN arms embargo on the country should offer the main protagonists one last opportunity to step back from the brink. But no one believes any more that Ivory Coast's problems will be solved without going to war.

**—Anthony Ham**

*This month's contributor:* **Anthony Ham** is *Eureka Street*'s roving correspondent.


# Galileo's legacy

An irony about scientists' traditional lack of interest in politics is that science is profoundly socially disturbing—especially for ideologues with a conservative point of view. Science refines our understanding of the world, leading to revolutions in thinking, and overturning convention.

Think of the problems Galileo caused when he proposed that the Earth was not the centre of God's universe. And there are still many in that social Darwinist country, the USA, for whom Darwin's concept of evolution is anathema.

The neo-cons of the Bush administration are well aware of the disruptive power of science, even if they are not always sure how science works. They want to use the results of research to their own ends—but don't want it upsetting their ideological view of a world of free enterprise, consumption, competition, American domination, and so forth. This is deeply worrying to the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), an organisation of more than 100,000 scientists and citizens which was founded in 1969 by staff at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to act as a lobby group to use science 'to build a cleaner, healthier environment and a safer world'.

Last February, the UCS released a report entitled *Scientific Integrity in Policymaking* about what it sees as the politicisation and abuse of science by the Bush administration. It claims that under President Bush, the US Government 'has suppressed or distorted the scientific analyses of federal agencies' and has stacked advisory bodies with political allies. It provided examples from areas such as forest management, countering HIV/AIDS, and particularly climate change research. In July, an updated report included more examples. An accompanying statement, decrying the government's actions and calling for greater openness, integrity and administrative reform has been signed by more than 6,000 scientists, including at least 48 Nobel Laureates.

UCS chairman, Kurt Gottfried was quoted in *New Scientist* as saying: 'The Founding Fathers [of the US] were children of the Enlightenment, of the Age of Reason. Today we are governed by people who do not believe in evolution. They have few qualms about distorting scientific knowledge when it does not conform to their political agenda. They speak as if they are entitled not only to their own opinions, but also to their own facts'.

Because of the way scientific inquiry works, it is easy for an ideologue to cast doubt on the knowledge it provides. Science is a perpetual debate. Everything is questioned, even (sometimes especially) the views of the majority. Every so often the dissenters, like Galileo, turn out to be right. So, you can almost always find scientific researchers who will back your particular point of view. The church did it with Galileo, the Germans did it with the Jews, President Mbeki of South Africa has done it with the viral cause of AIDS, and the Bush administration is doing it with climate change.

Greenhouse is a classic example. Despite the fact that well over 95 per cent of climate scientists support the idea that the human use of fossil fuels is responsible for global warming, plenty of scientists think that the current climatic oddities are part of a natural cycle. So, it is easy for conservative politicians, governments and business people to find 'experts' to support their case against climate change. They believe the kinds of changes demanded as a response to global warming are going to disrupt their society, be hugely expensive and bad for business, particularly the oil business. They are helped by a media which thinks that being 'fair' demands giving even weight to both sides in a lopsided argument. Consequently, many people think the human cause of greenhouse is still in dispute.

In Australia, things do not seem quite as bad. The Australian Government likes to paint itself as less idealistic and more pragmatic. For instance, it acknowledges the significance of climate change in its recent White Paper on energy, even if its methods of dealing with the problem appear lightweight and self-serving.

As a pragmatic administration which pays attention to science, it should know better than to slavishly follow the American line on some things. Ask Australia's stem cell scientists who were recently confronted by what they see as contradictory policy on the regulation of their field. Although there is a government-supported national stem cell research institute—the Australian Stem Cell Centre—at Monash University, Australia has joined an unusual alliance with the US, Costa Rica, and some Latin American and European countries to support a motion at the UN which would ban therapeutic cloning—producing embryonic tissues for the purposes of research and the potential treatment of degenerative diseases. Whether or not you believe therapeutic cloning to be ethical, banning it would put a huge roadblock in the way of stem cell research, an area in which Australia likes to regard itself a leader and which the government has chosen to support.

It seems clear that the nation's scientists need to get their political act together. Come next July, they may end up as one of the few effective oppositions to a rampantly conservative Australian government. ■

**Tim Thwaites** is a freelance science writer.

# Tally-ho!

Well, I see that the Brits are at last about to bite the quirt and outlaw fox hunting. It might seem a trivial preoccupation in these iron days—only in England would the pursuit of the old *Vulpes Vulgaris*, the common fox, threaten to divide the nation. If Hitler had twigged this soft, foxy underbelly of his enemy, who knows what might have happened? Like many other things in English life, fox hunting has become so much a part of the cultural picture, even among those who wouldn't know a stirrup from a surcingle, that attacks on it not only bounced off but contributed further to its institutionalisation. Oscar Wilde's definition of fox hunting as 'the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uneatable' was certainly witty but, in a sort of reflex way, it conceded to the importance, the institutional status, of fox hunting. As if it was the kind of essentially British cultism that deserved the best possible satiric *bon mot*, even from a stroppy Irishman.

But what is not well known, even in Britain, is that the main thrust behind the ban has come not from animal rights people—though, of course, they have been very much to the fore—but from MI5. British security realised some time ago that groups like the Crutchley Hunt Club or the Groigne View Halloo were ideal covers for spies and, more recently, prospective terrorists.

It was happening like this. Men 'of Middle-Eastern appearance' would move legitimately to Britain and, donning pink or scarlet jackets, tight white jodhpurs, shiny black knee-high boots, chic riding helmets and blowing a loud, dissonant horn or shouting 'Tally-ho' or 'Yoicks', would merge seamlessly into the fabric of English society. Years later, established and respected in rural circles, individuals like Sir Mohammed Gormley-Gormley Vere Alahhwi Rasheed would be ready and fully trained 'sleepers', as they are known in the trade, capable of being triggered for terrorist activities by a secret code published as the clue for 14-across in *The Times* crossword.

This particular example refers to a real event in which the conspiracy was cracked wide open by Scotland Yard's Chief Superintendent Ali Shoab O'Brien. He noticed that 14-across—'Ram New Scotland Yard entrance with truckload of explosives on 20 April at 11am' should have been the clue for 14-*down*. His complaint to *The Times*—signed 'Puzzled of Greys Inn Road'—led to the whole imbroglio being uncovered. That very same Gormley-Gormley Vere Alahhwi Rasheed was stripped of his knighthood and expelled from the Ockendene and Quorn, which, along with the Crutchley Hunt Club and the Groigne View Halloo, was disbanded. *The Times* crossword man was demoted to 'A Word-a-Day' and carefully watched. When, three weeks later, his word for the day was 'Semtex', he was sacked. But still watched.

In Australia, of course, fox hunting is neither so popular nor, despite animal rights concerns, so sacrosanct. If you don't count foxes, rabbits, blackberries, Christmas dinner, the Anglican Church, public schools, anti-republicanism, reverence for the Queen and the conviction that she is 'radiant', cultism about the late Princess Diana, and so on, it is fair to say that we are reasonably free of British hangovers. And this freedom, combined with our temperamental differences from our Head of State's sceptred isle subjects, makes it difficult to imagine an equivalent conflict in this country that would arouse the sort of passions visible on both sides of the fox hunting debate in Britain. Remarkably, Australians did not in general become distressed or riled by the lies and deceptions that, it is now clear, accompanied our entry into the Iraq war, unlike our British and American counterparts, so, given that level of apathy, an upheaval over something as ephemeral as fox hunting seems unlikely.

No doubt the investment of English fox hunting with pomp, ritual, social éclat, and elite trappings—you need a costume, a horse, riding gear, time, land or landed friends—has encouraged hunters to have aristocratic pretensions, which in turn makes them some powerful friends. But all this finery and frippery runs against the Australian preference for what you might call the backyard foundation of sports and pastimes. You can't have a bit of a fox hunt in the backyard the way you can kick a footy or hit a ball. Try blowing that hunting horn and shouting 'Goooone to earth' and 'Hallooolooolooo' in your backyard and the bloke next door will turn the hose on you, his wife will call Neighbourhood Watch and every dog within five kilometres will howl and whine well into the night. The Waugh and Chappell brothers famously played backyard cricket, but who among our hunting luminaries rode to hounds across the geraniums, the Grosse Lisse tomatoes and the bit of lawn round the Hills Hoist?

Out in the Australian wilderness and the wide-open spaces, the only equivalent to a fox hunt that I can think of is a kangaroo shoot. But anyone who has gone spotlighting roos in the backblocks knows that this event—a nightmare of swirling dust, blood and entrails, blinding lights, crisscrossing utes and coarse language distilled through stubbies—looks more like something out of *Terminator 2* than a folk or cultural event with traditions and rituals.

Meanwhile, various craggy denizens of the House of Lords are squirming and scratching to save the hunt: the unelectable in defence of the unacceptable. ■

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# Time to make history

Has John Howard ever been so much in charge of affairs? He has won four elections, several against initial odds. He has complete primacy within his party, and, while some expect, and others pray, that he will leave office in the not too distant future, there is no pressure upon him to do so, even from Peter Costello. He has a complete ascendency over a defeated, demoralised and directionless Opposition, which is preoccupied either with its own struggles or its own leadership to be much trouble to the Government. With a Senate majority in hand, John Howard is able to look forward to getting his agenda through parliament few concessions to minor parties. Indeed, he will probably make inroads during the first six months of 2005, before he actually has a Senate majority, as Labor will find it hard to resist the idea that Howard has a mandate. The bureaucracy is under the thumb. The economy is in fairly good shape. So is he; Howard has never looked healthier even after a long and tough year. Now perhaps is the time for the history books, or at least some deeper projects.

Howard is a clean-desk man, and, for all of his micro-management tendencies, he has learnt to put his personal focus on only a few issues at a time, even if his chronic pessimism means that he has a weather eye on everything. As Parliament rose for the year, he had little in his in-tray, apart from the pleasure of overtaking Bob Hawke as Australia's longest serving Prime Minister on December 21. The few saucepans on the stove—Aboriginal affairs and regional economic relations—were simmering away nicely, ready for testing when duties resume.

At the end of the year Howard made a very successful trip to Asia, even as he seemed to be modestly under-estimating his achievement. Australia secured a better continuing place at the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) meetings than ever before. If this owes as much to the retirement of Australia's old antagonist Dr Mahathir as to any diplomacy of Howard's, it seemed to undermine the argument that Australia's supine following of the United States had put it out of sorts with the region. Australia was not the only neighbour present, and was really the least important, with China, Japan and India hovering about and discussing wider trade relations. Australia has a stronger trading relationship with each of these, and Korea, than with all of ASEAN put together. The total ASEAN economy is somewhat smaller than the Australian economy, and while there is both investment potential and trade opportunities, the fit with ASEAN is not exceptionally good given the lack of progress of most ASEAN members in repairing their economies. Moreover ASEAN deeds are more important than action and vague commitments to free trade are not redeemable at the bank. There are better opportunities in wider Asian free trade blocs and focused bilateral deals.

John Howard has never willingly made a move or said a word which is capable of being seen to adopt the agenda of his political enemies, least of all the much despised Australian intellectual elites. His resistance to pressure to sign a treaty of amity and friendship with ASEAN countries is a reflection of that obstinacy, but also of a belief in a reasonable proposition. The treaty is fairly meaningless, with no legal, binding or, some might say, moral effect. It is full of the sort of empty phrases he despises and signing it may be seen as some sort of concession, as those Australians arguing he should sign it are of Labor or the elites. The vague words about not interfering in other countries' domestic affairs are not objectionable because he is attached to his pre-emption policy. Nor do they have anything to do with his desire to continue to pressure other countries—Burma, say—about their appalling human rights records. Howard is fairly indifferent about human rights. But he does want Australia to have the capacity to maintain pressure on its neighbours—particularly Indonesia—about continuing economic reform, and more transparent and accountable government and commerce.

This same obstinacy has taken him, in less than six months, further in Aboriginal affairs than ever he has gone before. Aboriginal leaders are coming to him. They are not only willing—indeed desperate—to negotiate on his terms, but ready to accept not only that his appreciation of the situation was more right than wrong, but that their appreciation, and devotion to symbols, to rights and entitlements, and to a continuation of things as they have been this past 35 years, has proven wrong. The surrender is by no means whole-hearted, and the anxiety to work with the Government remains suspicious and fretful, but a revolution is underway. Howard means to take it much further than the attachment of welfare benefits to sending children to school, or keeping children healthy and well-fed. He means to completely change the structure and nature of the delivery of services to Aboriginal communities. And he means to change the economy of Aboriginal communities, not least away from petty socialism to petty capitalism. Nor is he proposing it simply so as to withdraw money from Aboriginal affairs. Indeed the short term prospect is that there might be more around, if less under the control of Aboriginal organisations.

John Howard has never been in a greater position of strength from which to push change in this field. There are many who would think it ironic if it came to be one of his greatest achievements, but there was never a time in which this was more possible. All the more so because Labor, which once claimed some sort of moral primacy in this area, has completely forfeited any standing in Aboriginal affairs.

John Howard always surprises his enemies more than his friends. The way he is travelling, he looks likely to continue. ■

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

Hugh Dillon

# Liberty and justice

**Hugh Dillon** unravels the challenges of justice in Guantanamo Bay.

SO USED ARE WE in the Western democracies to the nostrums of our political system and the cycles by which that system operates that the notion that liberal democracy is not a natural state of affairs is difficult to comprehend. Yet it is so. It was only in the last decade of the 20th century that democracy finally reached across Europe. Terrorism poses the greatest dilemma for believers in the rule of law since World War II.

Some argue that it is one thing to apply the rule of law to those who recognise such a concept, but when dealing with terrorists the gloves are off, that it is necessary to fight dirty opponents with the same techniques or with the same ruthlessness. For example, Ted Lapkin of the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council, writing in *The Australian* on 25 August 2004, contended:

> 'In combat, there is no legal requirement to read the enemy his rights before shooting him from ambush or calling down an artillery barrage on his head. Thus, it is self-defeating folly to apply peacetime legal standards to a wartime environment where they are utterly irrelevant ... It would be absurd to allow those who violate the laws of war to benefit from the protections of the international treaties that they themselves systematically flout.'

On the other hand, American legal scholars have often used the story of Ulysses and the Sirens as a metaphor for their Constitution's role in keeping short-term political impulses from imperilling the nation's long-term, historical commitment to a free society based on the rule of law. The United States Constitution prevents presidents and governments from following the siren song of authoritarianism, the very evil against which the American colonists revolted.

The first duty of all nation states is the protection of its citizens. If it cannot provide it, the very existence of the nation is endangered. This is self-evident. One of the chief predicaments for governments in liberal democracies is striking the appropriate balance between national security and the maintenance of the civil liberties that characterise such societies. What is apposite will depend on circumstances but if a liberal democracy is to remain such, there must be a line beyond which its government will not follow the siren call of national security.

Few have expressed the value of the rule of law more eloquently than Robert Bolt in his famous play, *A Man for All Seasons*, when he has Sir Thomas More reprove his flighty son-in-law for his bold claim that he would cut down every law in England to get after the Devil: 'Oh? And when the last law was down and the Devil turned round on you—where would you hide, Roper, the laws being all flat? This country's planted thick with laws from coast to coast—Man's laws, not God's—and if you cut them down d'you really think that you could stand upright in the winds that would blow then? Yes, I'd give the Devil benefit of law, for my own safety's sake'.

DESPITE THE ENORMITY of the crimes of al Qaeda and the Taliban, and the understandable horror and repugnance they provoke, the establishment of ad hoc military commissions to try alleged al Qaeda and Taliban members of war crimes has provoked grave concern and enormous opposition not only from the usual suspects—civil libertarians and human rights activists—but from mainstream law groups, such as the American Bar Association, and even conservative commentators such as William Safire (who described them as 'Soviet-style'). Predictably too, criticisms have come from Muslim societies that the Guantanamo prisoners, all Muslims, are being treated to a second-class system of 'justice' that would be unacceptable for others.

They contend, in more prosaic language than Bolt's, that the commissions are inherently incapable

of fairly trying accused prisoners and that reliance on them undercuts the rule of law in the US, the administration's campaign to persuade others of the benefits of liberal democracy and endangers captive American and Coalition troops. Major Michael Mori, the US Marines' legal officer appointed to defend the Australian David Hicks in a military commission in March 2005, has argued that in using an unfair system, which he contends the military commissions are, the US risks not only convicting the innocent but providing the guilty with a valid complaint with which to attack a conviction.

THE VERY MANNER IN WHICH the military commissions were established was unusual. President Bush acted on his own authority as US Commander-in-Chief rather than on a statute passed by Congress. More troubling, however, was his assertion in his Military Order that: 'Given the danger to the safety of the United States and the nature of international terrorism, I find ... that it is not practicable to apply in military commissions under this order the principles of law and the rules of evidence generally recognised in the trial of criminal cases in the United States district courts'.

While it is not clear why it is 'not practicable' to try alleged al Qaeda terrorists according to general principles of criminal law, even in ordinary courts martial, the shortcomings of military commissions are abundantly plain—so much so that Major Mori has said that the system does not provide 'even the appearance of a fair trial'. Mori is not a maverick in this regard. A number of other military lawyers appointed as defence counsel in the military commissions have made similar complaints and gave support to the Center for Constitutional Rights in its US Supreme Court action against the US Government in which it argued that Guantanamo Bay was subject to US law. (In June 2004, the Supreme Court upheld that claim in *Rasul v Bush*.)

Even Ted Lapkin, who justifies the use of military commissions, concedes that 'a conventional trial in a civilian courtroom would certainly do much to quell the wrath of the Bush administration's detractors'. He claims, however, that 'a normal criminal proceeding would erect serious obstacles to the effective prosecution of the war against radical Islamist terror that could very well cost innocent lives' because intelligence sources would be jeopardised or compromised. That is simply wrong—in ordinary criminal proceedings, the government is entitled to claim a privilege against revealing information that may compromise, for example, criminal investigations or intelligence operations.

The more likely explanation for the establishment of military commissions is to be found in the comment of Justice Scalia in *Rasul v Bush* that 'the Commander in Chief and his subordinates had every reason to expect that the internment of combatants in Guantanamo Bay would not have the consequence of bringing the cumbersome machinery of our domestic courts into military affairs'. This suggests that he believes that the military commissions are more about securing convictions than ensuring fair trials. One is irresistibly reminded of the old joke about the newly-captured rustler in the Wild West being told he would be hung after receiving a fair trial.

So far the military commissions have not conducted any trials. Once they have, however, it is inevitable that their very legality and their processes

and decisions will be challenged in the Supreme Court. The principal defence argument is likely to be that the commissions are so fundamentally flawed as purported instruments of justice that any accused person could not receive a fair trial before them and that review or appeal process following such trials is inherently unfair.

That argument rests on a number of grounds. First, every aspect of the process is controlled by the Pentagon and the White House. An accused person is prosecuted by the military, defended by the military and tried before a group of military officers. Hence Major Mori's complaint that there is not even the appearance of a fair trial. In October 2004, the Pentagon itself acknowledged some of the flaws in the system when it dismissed from the commissions three of the officers designated to sit as judges on the ground that they lacked impartiality. An impartial judiciary is the bedrock of any system of justice worth its salt.

Allied with that basic requirement is a system of appeal to a superior court. The second major flaw in the military commission system is that there is no right of appeal to a court. The only appeal is to the Secretary of Defense and then to the President. In these circumstances, no one could conceivably regard the Secretary of Defense or the President as independent or impartial, let alone judicial.

The third vice in the system is that the ordinary rules of evidence, designed specifically to ensure fair

trials and to prevent wrongful convictions, will not apply. The commissions will be entitled to take into account any evidence they regard as relevant, including hearsay evidence from unidentified informants, forced confessions or admissions and even evidence kept secret from the accused persons. In an ordinary criminal trial or court-martial, an accused person has a right to test the evidence of, for example, an informer by cross-examination and by calling evidence to contradict the allegations of the witness.

merits of the view that war silences law or modulates its voice, that view has no place in the interpretation and application of a Constitution designed precisely to confront war and, in a manner that accords with democratic principles, to accommodate it'.

It may be that the officers appointed to try David Hicks and others in the commissions will be as conscientious and honest as the courageous Major Mori but it is asking much of them effectively to face down their own President and Secretary of Defense by giving the accused a fair trial in the true sense.

The American Civil Liberties Union contends that this is the first time in American history that a court or tribunal would be allowed to use evidence not revealed to the accused or his civilian lawyer to establish guilt in a criminal proceeding.

Defenders of the tribunals point to the fact that certain rights are guaranteed by the rules of the commissions: the right to representation by defence counsel, a presumption of innocence, a standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt, the right to obtain witnesses and documents to be used in their defence, the right to cross examine prosecution witnesses and the right to remain silent with no adverse inference being drawn from the exercise of that right. These rules, however, can be altered at any time at the whim of the Pentagon and the White House.

In 1943, Justice Felix Frankfurter of the US Supreme Court famously remarked that 'the history of liberty has largely been the history of observance of procedural safeguards'. It is, however, misleading of the supporters of the commissions to claim that their rules are procedurally fair when an impartial judiciary is not available to apply them. The Soviet Union under Stalin had an impeccable set of constitutional rights for citizens but the judiciary were, of course, mere apparatchiks.

More recently, in a case dealing with the indefinite detention of an American citizen in a Navy prison, the very conservative Justice Scalia commented trenchantly on military justice and the historical distrust of it in American constitutional law: 'Many think it not only inevitable but entirely proper that liberty give way to security in times of national crisis—that, at the extremes of military exigency, *inter arma silent leges*. Whatever the general

In any event, any convictions secured in the commissions will inevitably be tainted by the process and, unfortunately, will be likely to further undermine any claims the US has to leadership or moral authority in the struggle for democratic freedoms in the Muslim world. This seems a high cost to pay for the convenience of securing the convictions of a few minor al Qaeda foot-soldiers in an unfair manner.

If Justice Scalia's rumblings are any indication, the US government may also face embarrassment when the military commission cases—as they assuredly will—come before the Supreme Court. ■

**Hugh Dillon** is a Sydney magistrate.


## Untitled for a man

Out of the bus window, the sky is like beaten tin.
Her body is a hammer,
it drives the nails into him.
The rain is coming down.

They place white lilies and a solitary tiger lily on the coffin.

Last night
in the hotel lobby the bellboys ruffled their feathers
But no one was around when he started to change,
from a pale creature, into a wolf.
Trains were breathing in the subways.
Above the silos the time flashed on and off

The priest is standing in the street.
She can smell the earth
burnt by the bombs.
Angels wear old coats, and wristwatches.
The trains flow down the artery.
The sky's rib bones arch over her.
At home she keeps his picture on the windowsill.

In the dance club,
she's talking to a man with antlers, hooves.
They're talking about the news.
From the roses and tulips on the stage, comes the scent of sweetness and decay
The moon is made in China.

They buried him in the side of a hill.
He is on the cover of a rolling stone, now
Smelling of cradle moss.
She walks along the underpass and past the torn posters.
She hurries home—a flash against the darkening night

At home, an angel climbs her fire stairs
An angel she'll call buttercup and feed sugar cubes, apples
She remembers the day he died,
It was the last day the sun was in Scorpio.

She watches the funeral on television.
Everyone seems poised on the edge,
wizards leaning forward to cast magic spells.
Inside the cathedral,
it's like being inside the gut of an animal.
Wooden beams become vertebrae.
The organ and pipes become heart and lungs.

In the park,
children are running up the stairs of the silver rocket.
Superman is in a phone box,
changing into his costume.

**Peta Edmonds**

essay

John Langmore

# Replacing neglect with engagement

**John Langmore** reflects on the relationship between Australia and the United Nations

THE PREAMBLE to the UN Charter sets high aspirations for the organisation and its member states.

> We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights ... to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom ... have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims.

Four purposes are identified for the UN: peace, human rights, the rule of law, and social and economic progress. It is striking that the first paragraph of the UN Charter contains a commitment to respecting treaties. Failure to honour this commitment was the central political reason for opposition to the American-led invasion of Iraq. Rejection of international law by the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia threw the international system into disarray.

In the General Assembly in September 2003, UN General Secretary Kofi Annan said that 'We have come to a fork in the road'. He rejected the doctrine that states have the right to use force pre-emptively, without the agreement of the Security Council. The international community has to choose whether to accept this deviation or to continue on the formally 'agreed basis'. He made another powerful statement in the Assembly in September 2004 on just one theme, the centrality of complying with the international rule of law.

Since Australia was one of only a few countries to send troops to support the US during the invasion of Iraq, the decisions of the Australian Government during the next year on these issues will be unusually important. By discarding international law and denouncing international institutions Australia has become less secure, as has the US. Similarly, our condemnation of other countries and of the UN has antagonised not only our neighbours in Asia but also the Europeans.

There has been great anguish in being an Australian working at the UN in recent years, and hearing the assertive self-righteousness of Australian speakers, and the gentle criticism of other delegates in response. Our country has become an impediment to the effective work of the UN. Obsequious support for American unilateralism, opposition to control of greenhouse gas emissions, denigration of the Human Rights Commission, and neglect of the UN's work on economic, social and environmental policy has disappointed developed and developing countries alike.

Two of many possible examples illustrate the problem. In March 2002 the Australian Government sent a parliamentary secretary to head its delegation to the International Conference on Finance for Development in Mexico. In contrast, the US delegation included President Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill. Australia was the only developed country other than Portugal not represented by a minister, and deceitfully described its representative as the Australian Minister for Development Cooperation.

A VERY RECENT EXAMPLE was the failure of Australia to be represented at the meeting on Action against Hunger and Poverty called by Presidents Lula and Chirac at the UN on 20 September 2004. That meeting was attended by over 50 heads of state or government and by

cabinet ministers from many other countries including the US. But there was no nameplate for Australia. It was reasonable that the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer not attend because the meeting was during the election campaign, but the Australian Ambassador to the UN, John Doath, should have participated.

There have been positive policies also such as advocacy of international support for the independence of East Timor and participation in the UN peacekeeping force, support for the International Criminal Court despite intense US opposition, and engagement with the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. But these activities are not what Australia is now best known for internationally.

MANY ADDITIONAL constructive policies are possible and feasible. Seven practical possibilities follow. First, Australia needs a more mature strategy for contributing to global security, and reaffirmation to a rules-based international order is a vital component of that need. One of the principal requirements is for international society to reaffirm preferences for peaceful conflict resolution rather than violence, negotiation rather than confrontation, and the rule of law rather than domination by the US.

The high-level panel established by Kofi Annan released their report in December, 'A more secure world: Our shared responsibility'. There will be intense debate about their proposals in the early months of 2005, and there will be major input to the global summit planned for the start of the UN General Assembly in September 2005. That summit will be an opportunity for all countries to make a new commitment to a rules-based international system. Will Australia be ready by then to reaffirm a prime commitment to a multilateral order?

Second, the Australian Government needs to renew Australia's traditional commitment to multilateralism through improved accountability. The Minister for Foreign Affairs could make regular statements to Parliament on Australian action at the UN, and other ministers could report on action at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization, UNESCO and so on. Such statements should include a record of how Australia voted.

Third, there is an urgent need to put terrorism into perspective, if only because it can generate exaggerated fears: for example, there have been no deaths from terrorism within Australia. This is despite the fact that we all know Australians have become more vulnerable when overseas, not least because of the Government's support for the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

A sophisticated, multifaceted strategy is required for tackling terrorism including: homeland defence; pursuit and punishment of terrorists; action within countries of origin, supported, whenever sought, from outside; addressing the political repression and exclusion that causes grievances; tackling injustice, poverty and despair through major upgrading of programs for social and economic development.

Increases in military spending contribute little to such a campaign. In fact, they add to the dangers. It is clear that the military dominance of the US adds to the risk that it will take improper military action. US military expenditure has grown massively, doubling annual military research and development to $70 billion in the last three years. This is 50 times the annual UN budget of $1.4 billion. America cannot at once be as powerful as it boasts and as vulnerable as it fears.

Fourth, Australia would do well to reconsider planned increases in military expenditure. There are more cost-effective ways of reducing risks and assisting development. Restraint of military expenditure could release funds for desperately needed economic and social assistance to other countries.

Fifth, the world is richer now than ever before in human history and has unprecedented technological capacity. Yet, despite the opportunity such global wealth creates, half of humankind still lives on less than two dollars a day, in or close to poverty. They are certainly suffering from deprivation, often severe, of many kinds, and insecurity is widespread in poor and even in rich countries. Inequality of income, wealth, and power, between and within most countries, is high and commonly growing.

The Special Session of the General Assembly held in Geneva in June 2000 set the first global target of halving serious poverty by 2015. These targets have been summarised into the Millennium Development Goals, which the UN system and most countries have adopted. But Australia has not so far.

So sixth, we must restore Australia's fine record of well-judged contributions to international peacemaking and peacekeeping, economic and social development, environmental conservation, and human rights. It is vital that we build on those past achievements, by sharply increasing aid from the current and pitiful 0.26 per cent of national income, and by seeking other additional sources of finance for development such as joining with the growing number of countries supporting the introduction of a currency transaction tax.

Seventh, nuclear weapons, not terrorism, continue to be the major threat to global survival. Yet the Bush Administration has both abrogated the treaty limiting anti-ballistic missile systems, to facilitate research on missile defence, and revived the idea of developing nuclear weapons for first use rather than for defence. This resumed research into 'bunker-busting' nuclear weapons reverses a ten year ban on research into weapons with a yield of less than five kilotons. The very existence of the Non Proliferation Treaty is under threat. The review conference next year is vital.

THREE UN CONFERENCES during 2005 that will provide opportunities for expression of commitments to a better world are the summit meeting at the start of the General Assembly in September; the review conference of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty; and the high-level segment of the General Assembly on Finance for Development. 2005 could be the year in which the global community returns to an orderly approach to international relations and strengthens effective commitment to international peace and justice. Australia could contribute to that effort to renew the international system and strengthen the possibility of peace and justice. ■

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Madeleine Byrne

# More than a cure

## Sir Gustav Nossal is passionate about the lives of those the world often ignores

'FATE OFTEN TAKES A HAND in these things', says the eminent Australian immunologist, Sir Gustav Nossal when describing the way he landed on his professional feet after more than 30 years at a Melbourne research institute.

'My biggest bit of good luck was that my retirement coincided more or less with the time Bill Gates was building up his foundation', he says.

As chairman of a group of experts advising the US$2 billion Bill and Melinda Gates Child Vaccine Program, Nossal is at the forefront of a renewed campaign to immunise children across the Third World. A major initiative that Nossal says came about through a conversation.

'One day a person in the WHO Secretariat in Geneva said, "Look, my sister lives in Seattle and I'm going to see her for a holiday, while I'm there is there any point in going to see the Gates Foundation?"' Struggling to raise funds for immunisation programs within the UN system, Nossal immediately said yes.

Two factors prompted a positive reception with the Microsoft chief and his wife, Melinda, Nossal suggests. The 'tremendous cost-effectiveness of vaccines' but also, the couple's personal circumstances: 'the fact they had started parenthood late'. But, of course, there is more to this story than fate.

In the early 1990s, many within the global vaccine community were starting to feel that the global immunisation push had stalled. Some countries were suffering 'donor fatigue', while others were either unable, or unwilling to lift their immunisation rates.

Moreover, there was a widely held belief that the 'bottle-neck' reflected an under-utilisation of those drugs already available.

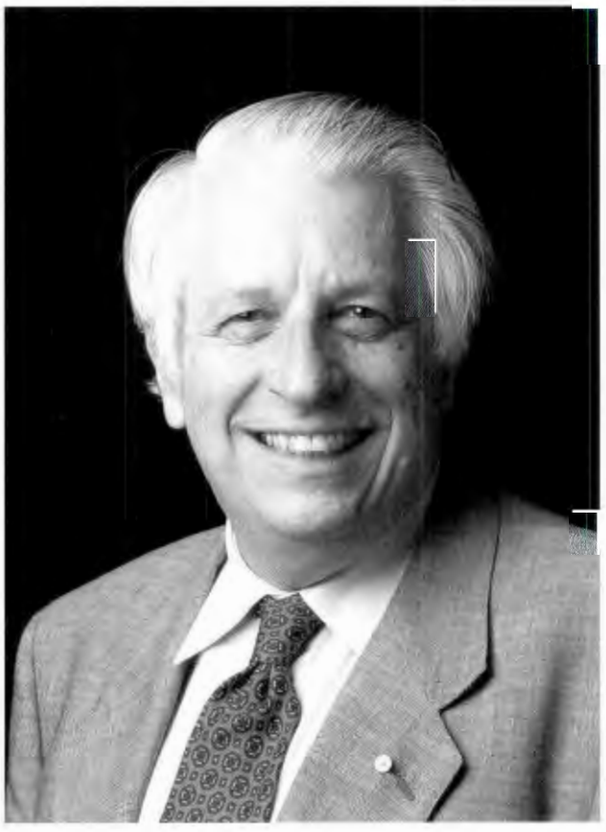
At the São Paulo meeting of the Children's Vaccine Initiative (CVI) in 1997, Gus Nossal gave voice to these concerns. Talk of a crisis in the area is no exaggeration. Of the 130 million children born each year, 91 million are born in the developing world, according to WHO figures. One third of these newborns will never be immunised.

Two years after Sir Gus Nossal spoke at the São Paulo conference, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) was launched. Its objective is to ensure every child in the world is protected against vaccine-preventable diseases, regardless of where they are born. Operating as a financial lever behind the new alliance was the Gates Foundation's Global Fund for Children's Vaccines, which was established with an initial grant of US$750 million.

Sir Gus Nossal says this renewed effort is motivated by three objectives. First, to improve the human and physical infrastructure in the developing world, which usually means training health workers giving out the vaccines, but can also include buying new refrigerators to maintain the cold chain.

Second, to increase the delivery of the so-called 'workhorse vaccines' that have long been available, but for whatever reason have not managed to penetrate the high Third World death rates from diseases largely eradicated elsewhere.

This is no small aim. Five million lives are saved annually from vaccines for preventable diseases such as whooping cough, diphtheria and measles. And yet 40 per cent of African children are still not immunised against measles, despite the disease killing one child across the continent every minute.



Of great importance too, Nossal says, is the acceleration of vaccines that are almost ready to be used—the so-called 'low-hanging fruit' vaccines.

Seventy-four of the world's poorest countries--countries with a GDP per head of less than US$1,000—have been targeted by the scheme. Within four years, it has reached 70 of them. 'Of the 30 percent of the world that wasn't immunised with the standard childhood vaccines, about a third have now been immunised', says Nossal, which equates to 'an extra eight to ten million kids'.

Under the Gates' program, a country receives US$20 for every extra child immunised, on the proviso that it will only get access to new vaccines when 80 per cent of the nation's population is covered. 'The carrot was giving money for extra immunisations', says Nossal while 'the stick is you can't get the new vaccines until you get to a reasonable number'.

Reaching diverse populations in the Third World is often fraught with complications. 'In some situations there have been civil wars', Nossal says. 'For example, Nigeria is very unstable and that's been a problem for us.'

However, Nossal remains convinced that today's outlook is better than 30 years ago. 'You have to take progress in small bits', he says before adding: 'We haven't done so well in the prevention of wars, but that's not really the doctor's fault'.

DESPITE THIS VERY real progress, Gus Nossal writes that lifting global immunisation rates remains a 'millennial challenge' especially in an era of shrinking aid funds and expanding need.

What is needed, he says, is a re-assessment of where health sits on the international aid agenda. In some cases it is also a matter of shifting government attitudes, especially in developing countries where 'the Health Minister is relatively low in the pecking order' and overshadowed by an emphasis on economic development.

The irony is that the two are inextricably intertwined. If polio is eradicated by the target date of 2005, there will be an estimated US$1.5 billion saving on immunisation costs alone.

Moreover, the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, headed by US economist Jeffrey Sachs, has found that the implementation of a US$34 billion health reform program in developing countries would generate a US$186 billion saving.

'A six-to-one cost benefit ratio, simply because of the better health', Nossal says. 'The more capacity kids have to go to school, the less time parents are spending at home looking after their desperately sick child dying of malaria and so on.' That's not forgetting the eight million lives saved in the process.

To get an idea of the enormity of the task, consider the longstanding drive to eradicate polio. 'Five or six countries still have endemic polio', says Nossal. 'Whether one is actually going to eradicate it as totally as small-pox is still finely balanced.'

More than three million volunteers are needed to immunise 120 million children on a typical national immunisation day in India. Despite the mass mobilisation programs designed to target those people Nossal calls 'hard to reach' (nomads, or the children of itinerant workers), ten million children still miss out.

NEVERTHELESS, MOST OF THE world is now polio-free. The Americas recorded their last case in Peru more than a decade ago and Asia in 1997. This is in part because of a WHO–Rotary partnership, Nossal says. 'Rotary have been absolutely generous, amazingly generous, not only with money, but also with volunteers.'

And yet sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia remain problems, despite renewed efforts to stamp out the deadly disease. Some African nations call 'Days of Tranquility', or ceasefires, so that immunisation work can proceed.

Misinformation can also get in the way. Gus Nossal recalls a recent scare campaign in the Uttar Pradesh border region in northern India. 'The polio deaths had been going down, down, down, then someone started a rumour that the polio vaccine was a plot by the Hindus to give it to all Muslim babies (and kill them).

'This got enough currency for the vaccination program to be seriously impeded there. All of a sudden in 2002, we had a mini-epidemic, about 2000 cases of polio.'

In response, medical teams entered the territory for a massive 'mop-up' campaign. The teams identified cases and re-immunised children and families. The next year, cases fell by a sixth and then the work of immunisation resumed.

'The aim is to have the last case of polio in the world on the 31st of December, 2005', Nossal says, 'but I don't think we are likely to get there'.

Surprisingly perhaps for the immunologist who has written five books and more than 520 scientific articles in the area, Nossal says improving the health of the world's poorest populations depends on an understanding that it is 'not just vaccines'.

'What about nutrition?' he asks. 'We have two to three million children with defective vision because of a lack of vitamin A.'

Ever the optimist, Nossal proposes a simple solution. 'In some countries it is common to give a dose of vitamin A with the polio vaccine.' The vaccine has enough vitamin A to last the patient another six months. 'There has been some progress', Gus Nossal says. 'But I'd like to see more.' ■

**Madeleine Byrne** is a former SBS journalist. She is a fellow at OzProspect, a non-partisan public policy think-tank.

Christine Gillespie

# Echoes of Eureka

'Good luck', said the aunt, 'Cousin Richard might be difficult. Visitors turn up at the Lalor house all the time. He's sick of it by now'.

I was throwing things in a bag, for the trip to Ireland, under the huge replica of the Eureka flag tacked on my living room wall, to go to Dublin and Tenakill in County Laois where my great-great grandfather, Peter Lalor, was born.

My mother was a Lalor and I was the first of the Australian branch to go back. What if Cousin Richard shouted at me and ordered me off the place? It wasn't just Peter who attracted the tourists. He was just one of three family patriots—the others were Honest Pat, Peter's father, an MP, and his brother, James Fintan, known in Ireland as a radical and a revolutionary. The day trippers annoying Cousin Richard at Tenakill are usually descendants of the two million emigrants, the great diaspora to Canada, the US and Australia, fleeing their homes after the 1848 potato famine.

I had written to Cousin Richard (third cousin once removed, the aunt said). He didn't reply. Why go? What was it to be a Lalor?

There has been little talk about the Eureka forebear until this year. Maybe my rebellious outbursts at school were more leniently dealt with by the Irish nuns, who had experience of resistance in their youth. (She's a Lalor, you know.) There was little discussion of it in my family. Although, my grandmother told me sternly 'remember you're a Lalor', when I fell over on the path and started blubbering one day. I wiped my nose on my sleeve and looked up at the oil painting of Him, hanging on the wall of her modest weatherboard in east St Kilda, impressive in his wig, gown and buckled shoes, sitting at a desk, the speaker of the Victorian Legislative Council. He had come a long way from being the outlaw, with wanted posters tacked on the Ballarat trees in 1854. 'You know he was offered a knighthood', my grandmother said.

'Did he take it?'

She snorted.

'Of course not. He was Irish.' End of story.

So, why go back? For the last couple of years I had been researching the Lalors for a play I was writing. I found history books, and fumed and wept over the fate of the Irish and my mother's family, cast off their land. Thousands of acres of the O'Lailor clan were confiscated by the English when they marched into England in the 16th and 17th centuries. The Irish, believe it or not, were troublesome at the time. Queen Elizabeth I sent a huge army in to quell them once and for all. I read on, about the Battle of the Plumes, when Rory O'More and the septs of Laois—the Lalors being one of the seven—routed the army. It was a great Irish victory and it was said that the helmets of the invaders lay among the bodies, the plumes in the green grass bright red with the blood that had been shed. The Queen retaliated, sending 54,000 troops that crushed the rebels. In the massive reprisal, all but nine of the Lalor males were slaughtered. According to family stories, the women and children were transported to the Caribbean as indentured labour.

Peter Lalor's father, Pat, was a fighting man. But he worked within the system. He stood for Parliament when Ireland became a colony of England in 1800. After dirty tricks and skulduggery on both sides, he defeated the local Protestant landlord and sat in the House of Commons, representing the original owners of the land. By then, in 1832, the Lalors were farming 2,000 acres, paying rent to an absentee owner. Cousin Richard told me later that Pat relinquished much of the land to pay for his trips to London.

It was time. I threw down my books, climbed up, wobbled on the back of the couch and took the Eureka flag down off the wall, folded it, packed it and went 'back'.

At the National Library in Dublin, I applied for my reading card. Ah, yes, said the young man, Tenakill. His wife and he had visited only last year. Such a shame the family would not turn

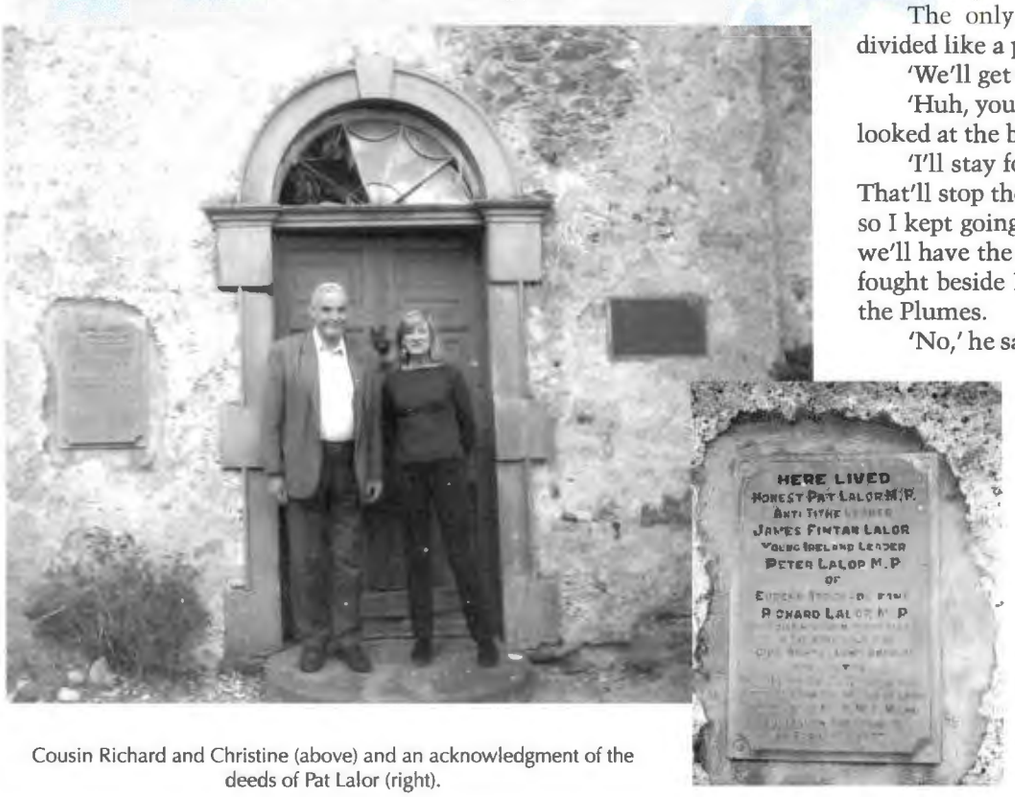
the house over to the National Trust for restoration. But then, who in their right mind would want busloads of tourists with cameras peering in the windows?

There were 43 references to the Lalors in the National Manuscript Library, mainly to James Fintan, Peter's brother. I leafed through the tired manila folders and read his impassioned speech to rebels in Tipperary, urging land reform: 'We must have a house to live in that no man can tumble down. For God, when he made the world, gave the whole of the earth to the whole of mankind ... but we live under the law of conquest ... Lift yourself and lift your country or sink back with that country forever'.

This was just before the uprising of Young Ireland in 1848 and James Fintan's arrest and death.

There were letters from the Ballarat goldfields from Peter to his brother Richard, who had gone home to Tenakill.

I got down from the Dublin–Abbeyleix bus and a tall man walked slowly towards me. His mouth turned down at the corners and his eyes were difficult to read under bristly white brows. It was Cousin Richard, his nose a Lalor beak that could peck a hole in some foolishness from a strange Antipodean relative. 'A fierce lot of rain we're having', he said.






Cousin Richard and Christine (above) and an acknowledgment of the deeds of Pat Lalor (right).

At Tenakill, I walked around the old house and peered in the windows at the tree growing where the roof ought to be. I knew Richard would be watching me from the 'new' 1950s brick veneer house just across the driveway. The collapsed beams of the old place had gone mossy green and I saw the dark rectangle of the fireplace where they had all sat around during the winter, before most of the eleven sons and daughters went to the new countries. The front door was locked and the black iron knocker, in the shape of an eagle, appeared to be freshly painted. A brass plaque was screwed into the wall next to the door:

'Here lived honest Pat Lalor MP, anti-tithe leader, James Fintan Lalor, Young Ireland leader; Peter Lalor of the Eureka Stockade fame, who distinguished themselves in the struggle for civil rights, land reform and justice. A tribute from the people of Laois, unveiled by Mr F. Milne, Australian Ambassador on April 5, 1987'.

I stood by the house and picked up a piece of crumbled pink brick. 'It cost too much to fix', said Richard, coming up behind me on the gravel drive. 'Sixteen rooms. A fortune to maintain. So I built the other place.' On the 170 acres that are left of Tenakill, Richard, his wife Millie and son, Kevin, run cattle.

RICHARD STARED AT the front door—an old man, handsome and six-feet tall—as if he could see the family stepping out to say goodbye to Peter and his brother, Richard, in 1852. If it wasn't for the famine, I thought, I might be living here. Not really. It doesn't work like that.

We stood for a while. Richard is a farmer, comfortable with silence. 'How much would it cost to put the roof on?' I asked.

'Thirty thousand pounds at the very least.'

The only glass still intact was in the circular window divided like a pie over the front door.

'We'll get a lottery ticket.'

'Huh, you're optimistic.' His mouth was a straight line as he looked at the building that had been tumbling down all his life.

'I'll stay for a while when we win and we'll get the roof on. That'll stop the walls from falling down.' He raised his eyebrows so I kept going. 'Then we'll have a barbeque, a celebration. And we'll have the Rory O'More Pipe Band.' After all, the Lalors had fought beside King Rory and routed the English at the Battle of the Plumes.

'No,' he said firmly. 'The Ballyroan Brass Band will be much more suitable.' Ballyroan was a town close by.

'I want the pipers,' I said, watching the jackdaws fly out of the jagged remains of the chimney that had stood there for 300 years. We glared at each other. 'We'll have both bands,' I said. 'We don't want to start fighting.'

'Oh no,' he said. 'There'll be no fighting.' A tree branch stuck out of the third floor window where James Fintan had written his articles on land and revolution, before his enraged father had thrown him out. 'We could get the James Fintan Lalor Pipe Band up from Dublin', Richard said, 'but that would cost a pretty penny'.

I spent two days at Tenakill. We didn't win the lottery. Richard hugged me fiercely before I climbed on the bus to Dublin. I came home broke and Tenakill needs a new roof.

A letter arrived from Richard the other day, in Christian Brothers cramped writing on tiny lined note paper. I'd asked if we could fly him out for the Eureka 150th celebrations. 'It should be great on that weekend in December', he wrote. 'I will not be there. I would never think of flying now, as I was never inside a plane.'

**Christine Gillespie** is a Melbourne writer and the great-great-granddaughter of Peter Lalor.

Anthony Ham

# In the shadows of the past

## The legacy of Franco still looms large in the Spanish imagination

It was a typical Spanish Sunday afternoon. Family and friends filled the room, young children competing with the old and infirm for the right to be heard. Amid the general chaos, one old lady turned to me with tears in her eyes and, producing four photos from her purse, said: 'Here are *mis cuatro muertos* (my four dead ones)—my father, my husband, my daughter and Generalissimo Franco'.

Her son, a man in his mid-40s, turned to me and said, 'things were better under Franco—there were jobs, no drugs and the streets were safe. Everyone wants to criticise Franco but he did a lot of good things'.

As a relative newcomer to the country, what does one say when confronted with the melancholy of nostalgia for a dictator who divided Spain and ruled over it ruthlessly for four decades? I smiled weakly.

When you first arrive in Spain, it is easy to be impressed by the country's transition to democracy. A devastating civil war and nearly 40 years of fascism seem, to the outside observer, to have simply evaporated upon Franco's death in November 1975. By 1978, Spain had a new constitution and now possesses a democracy so robust and successful that it is almost impossible to imagine this vibrant, somewhat hedonistic nation cast out by the outside world and withering under repression for so many years.

However, if you scratch a little below the surface, Spain is a country with deep scars whose survival as a modern democratic state has depended upon a veil of silence which masks its past.

Every family in Spain is still marked by the civil war and the years of Franco, divided in memory, if nothing else, between those who were for and those who were against Franco. In Madrid, you can buy a souvenir statue of Franco, as easily as a toy soldier. There are statues to Franco in cities throughout Spain and many towns still have a street named Avenida de Generalissimo Franco, as if he were some benign, fatherly figure of folklore rather than a man who admired Hitler and Mussolini, routinely tortured or killed government opponents and, even as late as 1975, demanded the fascist salute of an outstretched arm when greeted. And again a phrase keeps recurring—'Franco wasn't all bad, he did some good things'.

And yet, Franco's time has forever passed. Very few, apart from old men and women lost in the myths of their nostalgia, could imagine a return to the dark days of fascism. Fascist political parties or other far-right groups consistently fail to win 0.5 per cent of the popular vote in elections. A return to the days of Franco would not only be unthinkable but would quite likely cause a nationwide revolution.

Writing in *The Guardian* in September 2002, Giles Tremlett said, 'Visitors to Madrid often ask what happened to the hundreds of thousands of stiff-armed, blue-shirted Franco supporters who used to pack the Plaza de Oriente for his rallies. The answer, 25 years later, is that many are dead, most were only there for the free trip to Madrid and the rest are a powerless rump known simply as los nostalgicos, or the nostalgists'.

Nevertheless, to understand the ambivalent role which Franco and the country's fascist past still plays in Spanish society, it is necessary to revisit Spain's transition to democracy.

There was no South African style Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Nor was there anything resembling the path of post-war Germany's Nuremberg Trials. Indeed, what distinguishes Spain's transition to democracy is the fact that the prime ministers who oversaw the transition—first Carlos Arias Navarro and then Adolfo Suárez—had been life-long Franco loyalists. The Spanish armed forces also remained under the control of those who had carried out Franco's repressive policies until well into the 1980s. Such was the pervasiveness of Franco's bureaucratic and military apparatus that, apart from exiled opponents of the regime, there were few Spaniards in any positions of power during the years of transition who had not been loyal foot-soldiers of the dictator.

Even King Juan Carlos, the man who would later cement Spain's democratic future, was a Franco protégé, a monarch schooled by Franco since the age of ten in the ways of fascism and who swore an oath of eternal allegiance to Franco's ideals and promised to uphold them in perpetuity.

The only thing that did change was the fact that the Spanish people, restive and released from the shadow cast by Franco's strangely charismatic presence, were clamouring for change. Without the dictator's bloody-minded resoluteness in the face of a discontented country, none of his functionaries, themselves so many years cowed and marginalised by Franco, possessed the necessary standing to force their personalities and policies upon a hesitantly, but newly emboldened population.

There were serious missteps along the way. An inability and an unwillingness to halt repression in the Basque Country fanned the flames of separatist anger, giving new momentum to the terrorist group ETA whose existence remains one of Spain's great unresolved issues. ETA killed 38 people under Franco, yet has murdered 779 (including 118 in 1980 alone) since the advent of democracy, a fact largely attributable to the newly democratic Spanish leaders' failure to understand the goodwill required to bring Franco's enemies into the fold.

Rumours of coup plots were rife from the early days of the democratic transition and would continue until the mid 1980s. Under the 1978 constitution, the Spanish military was charged with the task of safeguarding 'the indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation' and few trusted the army.

On 23 February 1981—a date etched into the memory of a generation of

Spaniards—a recalcitrant and fanatically pro-Franco lieutenant-colonel, Antonio Tejero Molina, stormed the Spanish parliament during a nationally televised swearing in ceremony, firing shots into the air. For 24 hours, he held hostage the entire Spanish political class, not to mention the nation. Throughout a very long night, as the outcome hung in the balance and some army divisions pledged support for the coup and sent tanks onto the streets of Valencia, Spanish families waited to hear whether their country was to return to a military dictatorship and, most likely, follow the path of many Latin American countries to perennial instability. A nationally televised address by the king, in which he ordered the troops to return to barracks and assured his subjects that the coup did not have his support, ultimately defeated the coup.

The events of 23 February were a watershed in Spanish democracy. On the one hand, Spaniards took to the streets in numbers which only Spaniards can muster in support of democracy and reclaimed the transition as their own. The underlying message of the people was that they, and not politicians nor the army, were the true guarantors of Spanish democracy.

At the same time, an unreconstructed army remained in the wings, armed with constitutional justification for intervention. Fearful of more coups, the government wound back the movement towards regional autonomy and actively sought to appease the military and pro-Franco sections of society by paying more attention to their concerns.

Twenty years later, the consequence has been an unassailable democracy, but one with elements which would be unthinkable in any other country.

The Partido Popular (Popular Party; PP), which ruled Spain from 1996 until March 2004, was founded as the Alianza Popular in the early days of the transition. Its founder, one Manuel Fraga, had been a loyal interior minister under Franco. Fraga, now in his 80s, still heads the PP ticket in Galicia and is the north-west region's premier.

In 2002, it was announced that the Francisco Franco Foundation—an archive of 27,000 Francoist documents overseen by the former dictator's relatives—received 83,000 euros from the Culture Ministry to modernise its archives. That this represented 10 per cent of the ministry's budget for such projects and was the single largest subsidy was even more controversial given that the foundation's archives are, and have always been closed to anti-Franco historians and the general public.

On Madrid's main thoroughfare, Gran Via, stands a wood-panelled gentlemen's club, Gran Pena, which is a bastion of Francoist sympathies and where the veterans of the Blue Division—a 40,000-strong volunteer Franco army who fought for Hitler during World War II—come to listen to former Franco luminaries. In the entry hall is a bust of Franco which was erected in 1992.

Given the fragility of the post-Franco years, the argument that Spain's survival as a democracy depended on a national act of forgetting is a compelling one. At the same time, Spain's collective silence about its past continues to ensure that Spain remains a scarred and divided nation.

On 12 October 2004, the annual military parade saw, for the first time, a former member of the republican army, which was defeated in the 1936–39 Civil War, marching alongside a veteran of the fascist Blue Division. The government boldly announced the move as a step towards national reconciliation, but was drowned out by a wave of criticism from Franco's victims, not to mention those uncomfortable with the symbolism of allowing a once pro-Hitler soldier to participate in this day of national pride.

Undaunted, and despite the dangers of opening old wounds, the Socialist government has continued to pursue an unprecedented policy of confronting the past.

The central pillars of the new approach include repealing Francoist laws (Spain is the only country in Europe not to have repealed some 1940s fascist legislation) and removing Franco symbols (statues, street names etc) from public spaces. More controversially, the government is investigating the possibility of a truth commission, launching official tributes to the victims of Franco, offering compensation to victims and formulating new school curriculum as it relates to the Franco period. There are also moves afoot to redress the injustice of the implicit pardoning of men such as Manuel Fraga while no such official exoneration has ever been granted to the thousands who were executed for their opposition to Franco.

More important for many victims, however, is the issue of mass graves, the unmarked resting places of men and women who died because they were deemed to be anti-Franco. The London School of Economics' eminent historian, Professor Paul Preston, who has compared Franco to Saddam Hussein,

recently told Spain's *El País* newspaper that 'the mass graves in Iraq are not much different from those now being dug up in Spain'.

The fact that the government is yielding to demands which no Spanish government has previously contemplated is due in part to the persistence of groups like the Association for Recovery of Historical Memory. Their president, Emilio Silva, stated in September: 'In other countries, those who resisted dictatorships are national heroes and receive a range of public assistance—it should be the same here'. But it is difficult to find a more compelling reason for acting than 100-year-old Francisca del Río, whose husband was killed by Franco's soldiers in Malaga in the 1930s: 'José Sastre was the love of my life. My only wish is to bury him in a place where I can bring him flowers'.

The highly symbolic act of Spain counting its *muertos*, of women such as Francisca finally being able to bury their dead, may be the defining act of Spain's transition to democracy and the ultimate test of its maturity. In the process, Franco and all that he represents may at last be condemned to history in disgrace. ■

**Anthony Ham** is a freelance writer living in Madrid.

Nigel Starck

# Tales of life, not death

## Obituaries provide a window on the lives of those great and small

They call me Dr Death. I owe the nickname to my PhD topic: the history of the newspaper obituary. But my thesis tells a tale in conflict with that name, for the obituary—when done well—is about life in all its permutations rather than death in its ultimate uniformity.

It can be an explicit appraisal of a career snuffed out, as in this Melbourne *Age* obituary of the fugitive entrepreneur Christopher Skase: 'To those closest to him, Christopher Skase was man of vision, a creator of prosperity and a persecuted victim of witch-hunting governments. Alternatively, he is remembered as a scoundrel, a thief, a liar and a coward'.

It can be an account of triumph over adversity, as displayed by Angel Wallenda, an American wire-walker who had lost a leg to cancer but continued to perform until shortly before her death. Her *New York Times* obituary included this quote: 'When I'm way up in the sky, walking on a thin line with a fake leg, people look up at me and really pay attention ... They see that I'm using everything I've got to live my life the best I can. When people think about that ... some of them see how much better they can live their own lives'.

And it is often funny. London's *Daily Telegraph*, which has a reputation for remembering eccentric lives, revealed that the admirers of Lady Denisa Newborough, who had also been a wire-walker in her youth, included 'the Kings of Spain and Bulgaria, Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Sheikh Ben Ghana, who gave her 500 sheep'.

My archival research has traced the origins of the obituary to the newsbooks—in essence, the magazines of the day—which circulated in 17th-century Europe. The earliest I have detected so far, in a 1625 English newsbook translated from a Dutch original and entitled *The Continuation of Our Weekly Newes*, records the life and death of Maurice of Nassau, Prince of Orange. It was an established journalism practice by the early 18th century, when the first daily papers appeared in London, and from there it was taken to the colonies.

America encountered the obituary in 1704, at the death of Mrs Jane Treat, granddaughter of Connecticut's deputy governor, described by the *Boston News-Letter* as a woman of 'piety, patience, modesty and sobriety'. She had been 'struck dead by a terrible flash of lightening' while reading her bible.

Australia's first newspaper, the *Sydney Gazette*, published an obituary in its second edition (12 March, 1803). It was a re-print from an unnamed British source, recording the life of Samuel McDonald, known as 'Big Sam', a sergeant of the 93rd Regiment who was 'six feet ten inches in height, four feet round the chest ... and always disliked being stared at'. Just over a year later, on 25 March, 1804, the *Gazette* produced an obituary of its own to acknowledge the death of the New South Wales building superintendent, James Bloodworth.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, journalism's dying art flourished. Newspaper readers loved a story with a moral, they luxuriated in ornate prose, and—on the strength of what I've found in trawling through several miles of library microfilm—they had no objections to graphic, intrusive reporting. In 1862, for example, the *Sydney Morning Herald* obituary of Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's consort, contained this deathbed intelligence: 'The prince's sufferings during the last day or two of his life are said to have been agonising. When an attempt was made to lift him, or move his position, his groans were distressing to hear'. That obituary also offered a detailed clinical description of typhoid (which had killed Albert) and discussed the foul state of the drains near Windsor Castle.

But by the 1920s, obituary publication by leading newspapers, with the exception of *The New York Times* and London's *Times*, had largely fallen into decline. The press showed an increasing preference instead for pictorial spreads, whole-page display advertising, home hints, short stories, sport and (from the 1950s) television columns.

It came thundering back in mid-1980s Britain, when the introduction of computer-driven typesetting allowed newspapers to grow in size and scope. In particular, the launch of *The Independent* and the appointment of a reformist obituaries editor at *The Daily Telegraph* led to a fresh, entertaining, and sometimes irreverent obituary style.

Their obituaries received international syndication. The Americans—notably *The Los Angeles Times* and *The Washington Post*—strengthened their obituary sections. And then, in 1993, Australia joined the revival. Journalism's dying art has enjoyed a resurrection: today there are eight Australian daily newspapers with a designated obituaries page.

It began with Melbourne's *Herald Sun* in July that year. The editor, Alan Oakley, wanted to attract

as readers a greater share of what is known in the trade as the A/B demographic—the better educated and more affluent. He expanded his paper's business coverage and introduced an obituaries section as the prime features of achieving that aim. *The Australian* followed five months later, launching 'Time & Tide', a page that it proclaimed as specialising in 'obituaries, reviews and life's revealing moments'.

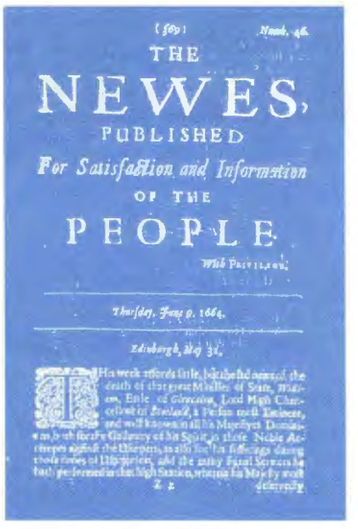
The national daily selected a controversial figure for the debut of 'Time & Tide' on Monday, 6 December 1993: Murray Farquhar, who had died the preceding Friday. Sydney's chief magistrate for eight years, he had subsequently been jailed for four years on a charge of perverting the course of justice. The revival of the obituary art at *The Australian* was marked by this unsparing posthumous assessment, under the byline of crime writer Bob Bottom: 'Murray Frederick Farquhar, World War II veteran, solicitor, Chief Stipendiary Magistrate, epitomised the unfortunate nexus between Sydney's notorious underworld and its so-called upper world. His death on Friday, of a heart attack, aged 75, has laid to rest the most public symbol of that particular malaise in Sydney society over recent decades which saw criminal figures mix openly with public figures'.

The obituary, neglected by Australia's newspapers for 70 years, was suddenly fashionable again. *The Age* began its page in May 1994, followed by *The Sydney Morning Herald* in 1996, *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) and *The Canberra Times* in 1999, *The West Australian* in 2000, and Brisbane's *Courier Mail* in 2003. At *The Courier Mail*, David Fagan recalls that he had identified an obituaries page as a priority on being appointed to the editor's chair: 'What inspired it? I thought obituaries were an important characteristic of any newspaper that aspired to be a newspaper of record and of any local newspaper of note'.

Though Australia, Britain, and the United States have all adopted the obituary with enthusiasm, they do demonstrate marked variations in its practice. American newspapers are much concerned with contemporaneous publication—striving to publish within 72 hours of death—and with defining the cause of that death. *The Los Angeles Times* is notably obsessive about cause, to the extent that when the poet Charles Henri Ford died aged 94 in 2002, it attributed his demise to 'causes associated with aging (*sic*)'.

The British approach is quite different, ignoring in many instances the time factor and cause of death, adopting a reflective and often ironic style, supplying candid revelation, and entertaining the reader with anecdote and *bon mot*.

London's quality press has a particular passion for obituaries which recount the habits of daft peers (such as the 4th Earl Russell, who used to crochet his own trousers out of string and who told the House of Lords that Leonid Brezhnev and Jimmy Carter were 'really the same person') and the tribulations of straying clergy. Notable among the latter was the Reverend Michael Bland, who, according to his *Daily Telegraph* obituary, had been hauled before the Consistory Court in Gloucestershire for 'writing rude letters to six people'. He was sentenced to be deprived of his living, but won on appeal to the Court of Arches, which administered only a formal rebuke and allowed him to return to his parish. The *Telegraph* noted: 'Any hope that, once the court case was ended, there would be a recovery of pastoral relations between the Rector and his parishioners quickly was dashed ... For many years, Sunday services were attended only by the Rector's housekeeper'.


THE
NEWES,
PUBLISHED
*For Satisfaction and Information*
OF THE
PEOPLE
*Thursday, June 9. 1664.*
*Edinburgh, May 31.*

THE AUSTRALIAN STYLE IS typified by two factors: sentimentality and egalitarianism. The first of those is caused by the willingness of our papers—even the leading dailies of Sydney and Melbourne—to publish reader contributions. They allow those amateur writers to share, with the readership at large, the most intimate reflections on their bereavement.

'Our friend Luke has been taken from us and no one on this planet can reason why', declared *The Australian* in an obituary, submitted by a sports official, following the death of an athlete. In another of the more extreme examples, *The Age* published this reminiscence from one of its readers: 'I have felt proud and honoured to share a long relationship with the remarkable woman I have always known as "Nana". I cannot believe that I will never see her again'. In each of those instances, sincere as the sentiment might have been, the words themselves were better suited to a classified death notice than to an obituary column.

A more congenial outcome is found in the egalitarian tendency of Australian newspapers. Their obituary subject selection is entirely free of rank or class considerations, with the famous dead appearing alongside an array of factory workers, truck drivers, school cleaners, and parish priests. As Tony Love, a former obituaries editor of Adelaide's *Advertiser*, sees it: 'The page confers a real kind of social justice through celebrating little heroes'. Suzy Baldwin, at *The Sydney Morning Herald*, has dedicated a section of her page to these lives; it is called 'Untold Stories'.

And how are life stories, of all types, best told in print? The trick is to capture a subject's character through the power of anecdote. John Farquharson, Canberra's resident obituarist, demonstrated the technique in his *Age* obituary of Alexander Borthwick, a diplomat: 'With his clipped speech, chivalry and great sense of humour, he was also good at the throwaway line. An instance of this was when the Duke of Edinburgh asked him whether his family of nine meant he was a good Catholic. "No", Alex replied, "just a careless Anglican"'. ■

**Nigel Starck** teaches creative writing at the University of South Australia. His PhD thesis, *Writes of Passage* (Flinders University), is a comparative study of newspaper obituary practice in Britain, the United States, and Australia.

Above: The year is 1664, the dateline 'Edinburgh, May 31': Roger L'Estrange's *Newes* printed one of the first recognisable obituaries. Its subject was the Earl of Glencairn, a loyal monarchist, who had 'dyed the 30th of the Instant of a Feavour in the 49th year of his Age'. By permission of the National Library of Australia.

art

Michele M. Gierck


Above: Oil painting, 84 x 84cm, Bayreuth 1982, the first of Georgina's composite paintings

Entering Migila House, there is a sense of stepping into another world. The rich earthy tones of African and Papua New Guinean art objects merge, and vibrant, intensely coloured oil paintings contrast against the off-white walls.

Migila House in Sydney is the home of English-born artist, Georgina Beier, and her German-born husband, Ulli Beier—writer, editor and professor of literature. They are a couple whose international literary and artistic achievements are extensive, but it is their life-long commitment to fostering Indigenous writers, artists and musicians—which began in Nigeria, a decade prior to Independence—that is just as impressive.

In 1950, when Ulli first arrived in Nigeria to lecture in phonetics and English literature, he was shocked to discover that across the university there was 'no reference to anything African'.

'We are here to impose British standards', he was informed matter-of-factly by the Vice-Chancellor. Ulli however, felt that he wasn't there to impose anything on anybody. 'I was willing to be totally surprised', he says.

And surprised he was, when only weeks later, during a lesson on Hamlet, a student raised his hand to ask: 'Excuse me sir, I'm somewhat confused. Is that a true story?'

It was only then that Ulli realised he had not spoken to his students about theatre, about the kind of performance they were accustomed to, and that no-one from the university had bothered to study their culture and backgrounds.

That innocent question prompted a change in Ulli's courses as he incorporated the world his students inhabited. This also marked the beginning of Ulli's own immersion into Yoruba culture. [A transfer between university departments, into adult education, allowed him to develop courses unimpeded by regular academic constraints.]

If the university was hardly impressed when Ulli's first course on West-African culture began, the local king was. He attended regularly, for an entire year. That example encouraged others to follow, and royal consultation soon became integral to course planning.

But it was the summer schools that allowed Ulli the curricular and cultural freedom he desperately sought. Exploratory by nature, the summer schools embraced topics such as kingship, music, art, oral tradition and women, from the perspective of Ashanti, Yoruba, Dahomey and Benin kingdoms. These courses provided students with an opportunity to rediscover aspects of their own culture which 'they had been educated away from'. Other courses of a more political dimension were offered in journalism, local government and democracy in West Africa.

Poetry, Ulli says, had its place too. 'This was very important because children went through schools and thought poetry was an English invention, because whatever poetry they had, was seen as "pagan superstition" ... There were a lot of misconceptions, so we had to do a lot of undoing of prejudice absorbed from the colonial mentality.'

Ulli Beier, now 82 years of age, passionately recounts his years in Nigeria. One can imagine the spontaneity with which he engaged in Yoruba culture, as teacher and lecturer, but most of all, as learner.

During his initial 16 years in Nigeria (1950–1966), Ulli founded and edited the influential journal *Black Orpheus*, the first English language magazine for African writers and artists, and provided a forum for emerging writers in post-Independence Africa. Writers and poets such as Christopher Okigbo, Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark, and Kofi Awoonor, now internationally acclaimed, looked upon Ulli as a colleague. He also edited *Modern Poetry from Africa*, (first published by Penguin in 1955) and translated Yoruba poetry, myths, folktales and contemporary Yoruba plays. He has also written a history of 20th-century African literature.

What Ulli did with the written word—encouraging Indigenous expression—Georgina did through art. The couple met in Nigeria in January 1960. As their personal lives merged, so did their creativity, in the heady days of African Independence, when 'anything seemed possible'.

Georgina, a young English artist who had found art school too restrictive, left nine months into the course because she ran out of money.

When she first arrived in Oshogbo—the town in which Ulli lived—the young artist was greeted with the news that she was to give an art workshop.

'I said, "I'm not!" because I wasn't a teacher, and I'd never taught in my life. But Ulli had already advertised it, so I had to do it.'

Now, with over 30 solo exhibitions under her belt, and as many group shows, including at the Tate Modern in London, Georgina Beier has worked with a variety of media: paint, textiles, drawings, murals and welded iron sculptures, as well as designing book and magazine covers. She has also been a theatre designer, working with actors, musicians, dancers and masqueraders. Yet to see the way she blends colours, and her unique style on canvas, one can understand why paint is her preferred medium.

Above: Oil painting, 180 x 90cm, 1979, Collection SchmidtBank, Marktredwitz

Back in 1964, however, little did Georgina realise that her art workshops, conducted at the Mbari Mbaya Club in Oshogbo, a town of 120,000, would be the forum from which several of Nigeria's best-known artists would emerge: artists whose work is now exhibited and sold internationally.

'Georgina saw the possibilities in people, and she believed in them', says Ulli. 'Everybody needs this.'

In the book, *Thirty Years of Oshogbo Art*, artist Muraina Oyelami reflects: 'If we had gone to University art school we would not have been able to develop that inner eye so early. Too many things would have been imposed upon us and it might have taken us years to free ourselves from that "education". That is why we Oshogbo artists can call ourselves lucky; because we were allowed to remain *ourselves* from the start ...'

The Mbari Artist and Writers Club in Ibadan, the second largest city in Nigeria, and the local Oshogbo Mbari Mbaya

Club, became cultural centres in which Nigerian playwrights, actors, musicians and artists flourished, in the early post-Independence era. Yet had it not been for Ulli Beier, conceiving the project, securing international funding and working with local writers and artists, those clubs may never have existed.

Wole Soyinka—who later became the first African to receive the Nobel Literary Prize—collaborated with Ulli to create the Mbari Artists' and Writers' Club. A cross between a Paris café and a cultural venue, it housed an art gallery, small library and a bandstand for theatre and music.

The local Oshogbo Mbari Mbaya Club, while smaller than its Ibadan counterpart, soon became a major venue for contemporary Yoruba theatre.

One of those Oshogbo playwrights, Duro Lapido, was an engaging man with only primary education. Ulli explains: 'Duro wrote the most fantastic plays there, that were not only performed at the Club, (in Oshogbo), but also on radio and television, and taken around the country on tour. Duro Lapido's Yoruba Theatre Company became so well known that in 1964 they were invited to the Berlin Theatre Festival where they had the most marvellous audiences.'

Decades later, a number of actors, playwrights, artists and writers who performed in the two Mbari Clubs still sustain their livelihood through their artistic talents.

Yet the Mbari Clubs were not the only sources of support for artistic initiatives. Ulli and Georgina opened their rambling three-story Brazilian-style home, all 16 rooms with six verandahs, to artists and writers whose creative talent they believed in. The Beier house offered not just studio space, but for several it became their home. It seems the building and maintaining of relationships has been as integral to the Beier's modus operandi, as is the creativity they each possess.

Ulli and Georgina Beier had certainly found their niche in Nigeria, and may have stayed, had it not been for an unexpected phone call. A professor from Papua New Guinea who had read *Black Orpheus*, rang to find out what Ulli thought about setting up the university's literature department in Port Moresby. The idea appealed. In 1966, Ulli and Georgina left Nigeria. After a few months in England, and the birth of their first child, they departed for Papua New Guinea.

In England they had searched for information on Papua New Guinea but soon discovered that little had been written about the contemporary situation. All they could find were books by anthropologists and missionaries—with nothing written by Indigenous writers.

While Ulli set to work at the university, with a freedom he could only have dreamt about in his early days in Nigeria, Georgina soon realised that the art-workshops she had developed in Africa were not appropriate—the people were far too shy. She would therefore have to find another way.

It was while pondering this, that an article in the newspaper caught her attention. It was a report on the poor conditions in a local psychiatric hospital. That, she thought, might be a good place to start.

The artist soon began classes with 12 patients. Georgina describes the energy, the colour and images of their work as 'spectacular', and before long, the patients' work was exhibited internationally.

In terms of her own art and the media she worked with, Georgina was fond of experimenting, and Papua New Guinea soon offered the opportunity to branch out. Welded iron sculptures and the screen printing of traditional designs became a part of her repertoire. She also set up a remarkably successful cottage industry for local artists and craftspeople to print textiles with New Guinean designs.

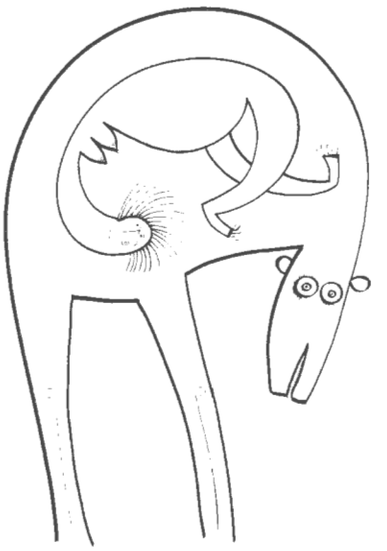
Meanwhile, at the university, Ulli embarked on a new style of creative education. His first course, 'Oral Traditions', encouraged students to draw upon stories from their own lives and the communities that surrounded them. For contrast, rather than only impressing European literature upon them, he also introduced them to African and Indian writers.

Arriving eight years prior to Independence for Papua New Guinea, Ulli realised that what had concerned African writers 20 or 30 years ago—issues such as colonisation, Independence and the rediscovery of their own identity—were key concerns facing contemporary Papua New Guinean society. With this in mind, his courses in 'New English Writing from Africa', as well as 'The portrayal of Papuans in Mainstream Australian Literature', and 'Emerging Aboriginal Writers', were established.

In 1969, Ulli was invited by Dr H.C. Coombs, the newly appointed head of the Australia Council, to write a report on the arts in Arnhem Land. This led to the creation of the Aboriginal Arts Advisory board, of which he became a member.

In PNG, Ulli fostered creative writing, much as he had in Nigeria. Several plays were produced, some of which were performed internationally. Ulli was also instrumental in writing and publishing the first ever autobiography of a Papua New Guinean. From a series of interviews he compiled Albert Maori Kiki's autobiography, *Ten Thousand Years in a Lifetime*. Prime Minister, Michael Somare's autobiography soon followed.

Below: Drawing made in Fiji, while Georgina was conducting a workshop in welded iron sculpture, 1997



Nigeria, however, was never far from Ulli's and Georgina's thoughts. In 1971, they returned for three years. This was an opportunity for their two sons—their second child was born in Port Moresby—to experience the culture that had captivated their parents. When they returned to Papua New Guinea, the country was on the brink of full Independence.

Through all of this travelling, Ulli and Georgina had never experienced culture shock. Four years later, however, moving to

Australia, they suffered their first bout. Neither of their sons, Sebastian and Tunji, were accustomed to living in a Western city. Even earning an income, writing book reviews in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, had its challenges.

The Beier family were now living in Australia, but they were restless. Their hearts seemed to be elsewhere. It was only after they succeeded in bringing Mathilas Kauage, one of their New Guinean artist friends, to Sydney to work and exhibit in their home, that they felt more settled.

This was also an important time for Georgina, an artist who draws much inspiration from cultures she has been immersed in. She painted five canvasses, each taking three months to complete, 'that brought two decades of struggle to a conclusion'. Four of the paintings were bought by a bank in Germany, the fifth was acquired by a collector in London.

Their attempt at settling in one country, however, was short-lived. The prospect of establishing the first institution in Europe devoted to the promotion of contemporary Third World art, lured Ulli, Georgina and their children back to Europe.

The University of Bayreuth had an African Studies Centre. Its Vice-Chancellor, who had been keen to establish a museum of contemporary African art, offered Ulli, guest professor at that time, the position of curator.

'If it's not just a museum, but runs like a gallery with changing exhibitions, if we can have African food, but above all, if we can have African artists and musicians in residence, who are able to interact with Germans, then I'll accept.'

Ulli and Georgina founded 'Iwalewa Haus—Encounter with the Arts from Africa, Asia and the Pacific' in 1981, and ran it from 1981–1984 and from 1989–1997. Tunji, their son, a talented musician—in African drumming, South Indian percussion, and jazz—also made his contribution, as artistic director of the multicultural music festival 'Border Crossings' in Bayreuth. During this time, Ulli and Georgina continued to visit Nigeria, with Georgina giving seven workshops in Oshogbo between 1990 and 1994.

African artists, writers, and musicians came to Iwalewa House to spend up to six months in residence, working, exhibiting, performing and interacting with European, Indian and Pacific musicians and artists. It gave them the kind of exposure they never could have achieved elsewhere.

Although it was a very busy time, Georgina made time in her packed schedule for her own personal artistic endeavours, remaining intrigued by new media and modes of expression.

By the time Ulli Beier formally retired, he was already ten years past the regular retirement date. In 1997, with their sons pursuing their own careers, Ulli and Georgina returned to Sydney.

International film-maker, Paul Cox, who has worked on a book and a small film with Ulli, says: 'When I think of Ulli, the words dignity, imagination, creativity, humility, and above all, humanity, come to mind. If Ulli was our Prime Minister and Georgina was Minister for the Arts, we would not have a "Third World ..."'.

During the last seven years, based in Sydney, Ulli and Georgina Beier have continued to give workshops and guest lectures, and to foster the arts in the University of the South Pacific, while also developing relationships with Aboriginal artists and writers.

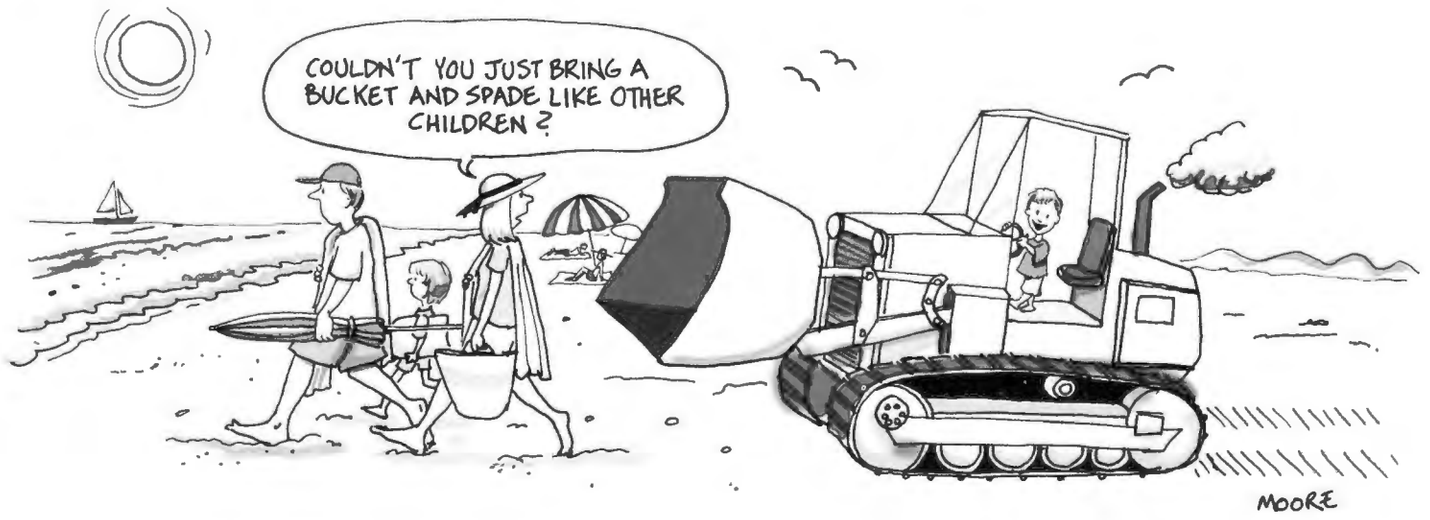
At Migila House, Ulli and Georgina stage concerts of multicultural music and poetry recitals. Ulli is busy putting their archives together and Georgina has recently embarked on a new series of paintings, so vibrant and intricate that one suspects they may be her most extraordinary paintings yet.

There is little time for rest, and one senses that Ulli and Georgina Beier like it that way. ■

**Michele M. Gierck** is a freelance writer. All artwork by Georgina Beier, reproduced with permission of the artist.

Forthcoming books by the Beiers:
*They keep their fires burning*, edited by Georgina Beier. Conversations about African food, manners and hospitality. Bayreuth Studies, January 2005.

*Decolonising the mind: The impact of the university on culture and identity in Papua New Guinea 1967–1971*, by Ulli Beier. Pandanus Books, Australian National University, April 2005.



essay

Avril Hannah-Jones

# Walking for justice


In November last year, I finished an essay on 'Christian women in Nazi Germany'. The following day, I attended a rally for refugees held in Canberra. The two events became entwined in my mind, and not just because of the protesters wearing pink triangles.

Around 700 people rallied on the front lawns of Parliament House. It was a small gathering, but an impressive one for a weekday morning. Buses had come from Sydney and Melbourne; people from Adelaide and Canberra; and many lone members of Rural Australians for Refugees represented their communities. The crowd was mixed; retirees, trade unionists, politicians, business people, and families. Anger at Australia's treatment of asylum seekers is not the prerogative of the left-wing urban university student, although many were there.

The day began at the High Court, which declared in 2004 that it was lawful for the government to detain asylum seekers indefinitely if there was no prospect of removing them from Australia. We then marched to Parliament House for several hours of speeches and music.

Everything about the day was warm and welcoming. Having flown in that morning from Melbourne, I basked in (and was ultimately burnt by) the Canberra sunshine. The protesters were welcomed to country by local indigenous elders. The rally was hosted by Merlin Luck, the Big Brother contestant who appalled viewers when he emerged from the house with his mouth taped shut and a sign reading 'Free th[e] refugees'. He was, unusually, besuited, although his neat pinstripe did have www.chilout.org painted down one arm. As an ambassador for Children Out of Detention, Merlin had taken part in a media conference and was looking the part of a trustworthy citizen, but his MC'ing had a familiar larrikin air.

Greens' Senator Bob Brown talked about the church service parliamentarians had attended that morning. The prime minister had prayed for God's help to make Australia just. As Bob Brown put it, 'Prime Minister, don't ask God to do what you can do'. Democrats Senator Andrew Bartlett, who has visited every Australian detention centre, including the one on Nauru, promised that the Democrats would continue the fight, even though it appeared to have lost them votes.

Members of ChilOut dropped 102 children's shoes on the stage to represent the children still in detention. William Mudford, a 16-year-old student, argued that the detention of children was creating a new stolen generation. Another speaker called on those parliamentarians concerned about unborn children to show some concern for those already born.

Responses to the speeches outside Parliament were governed by protocols. Statements of which the crowd approved were greeted with cheering, whistling, clapping, 'hear, hear' and, occasionally, 'hallelujah'. Descriptions of the ill-treatment of asylum seekers, the number of children in detention, the breaching of international laws, were met with cries of 'shame'. But how could we respond to the speech of Riz Wakil, a former asylum seeker who was detained in the Curtin detention centre? Wakil talked about his friends, still detained, who had attempted suicide because they had lost all hope. There seemed no way to respond loudly to this without trivialising it. We responded in silence.

The theme of the day was opposition to mandatory detention and temporary protection visas. The sub-plot was whether it is time to go beyond peaceful protest and begin a campaign of civil disobedience. Speakers argued that there had been no mention of refugees during the election campaign, so the Howard Government had no 'mandate' about them. Members of parliament told the crowd to campaign. Politicians of all political persuasions have lobbied for individual asylum seekers, even if they have not crossed the floor when immigration issues have been put to a vote. There is something there to work with.

Is it time to do more? If asylum seekers are being deported to torture and death, can violence be used to prevent deportation? If people can be held indefinitely without trial, should they be hidden in the community? Some speakers suggested that peaceful protest had been tried and failed. They argued that the Vietnam moratorium marches would not have succeeded without people burning their draft papers. The time had come for the refugee movement, too, to move from protest to political resistance.

I saw everything at the rally through the prism of the Third Reich. The resemblances are obvious: racist propaganda; detention without trial; refusal to give the public access to detention centres;

the use of the 'war on terror' to justify the removal of civil and political rights; the attempt to reopen questions about the legality of abortion. And then there were the protesters wearing pink triangles.

It is estimated that 10,000 men were forced to wear pink triangles in concentration camps. They were the most despised of the prisoners; even those who weren't murdered by the SS never lived very long. A Jewish friend and I have debated the propriety of wearing a pink triangle today. As she pointed out, she would never wear a yellow star. Perhaps the difference is that very few people approve of genocide. The Nazi anti-homosexual laws remained on the West German statute books until 1969. In Australia, homosexuality was only finally decriminalised nationally in 1996. Various laws try to prevent homosexual people from having children. This year, parliament passed legislation to prevent same-sex marriages being performed in Australia, and to ban the recognition of same-sex marriages performed overseas. Post-Holocaust, anti-Semitism is a bad look. Homophobia continues to suit politicians and churches.

No mention of this was made at the rally. But, here and there, protesters wore pink triangles.

Looking back at the Third Reich people often ask why there was not more resistance to the National Socialist regime. My question is why there was so much? In a totalitarian state in which people were killed for handing out anti-government leaflets, how did anyone find the courage to hide Jews or to conspire to assassinate Hitler? How did they even find the courage to dissent from ideological conformity?

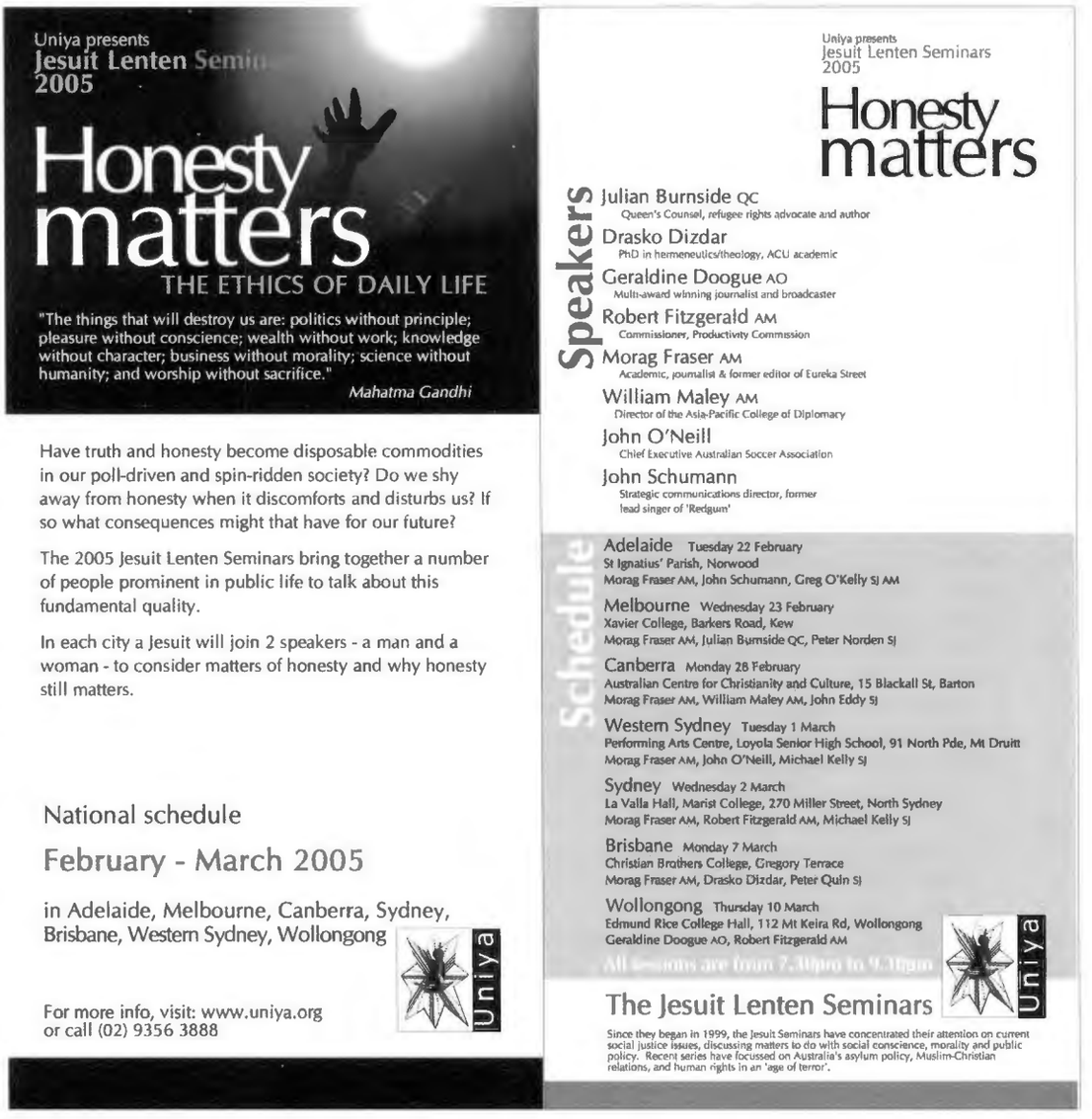
In Australia in 2004 dissent did not require courage. As we marched from the High Court to Parliament House we were accompanied by police officers. They were there to protect the High Court and Parliament House from us; they were also there to protect us from the traffic. Our protest was not merely permitted; it was facilitated by the law. All my comparisons between Howard's Australia and Hitler's Germany founder on that fact.

At one point during the march a chant began: 'What do we want? No mandatory detention. How will we get it? Fight for it!'

I stopped chanting and began talking to the student marching with me. Were we prepared to fight? He is a pacifist, so he wasn't. I suggested answering the chant with 'Work for it!' or 'Pray for it!' Recently converted from Anglicanism to atheism, he thought prayer would be useless. He was less scornful of the suggestion that we work. We are not yet ready to commit acts of civil disobedience. We do not rule them out forever.

In Hitler's Germany, those who opposed the government risked death. In Howard's Australia, those who oppose the government risk being ignored or laughed at. There is some excuse for the Germans who accepted the existence of concentration camps and the mistreatment of racial, sexual and religious minorities. Australia is not a totalitarian state. We have no excuse for accepting the existence of detention centres and the mistreatment of racial, sexual and religious minorities. ■

**Avril Hannah-Jones** is a student at the United Faculty of Theology, Melbourne.

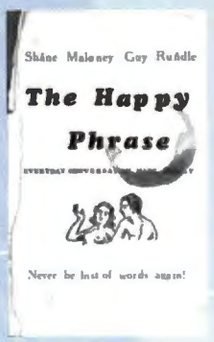



by Lucille Hughes

Our quiz mistress is back to tease, torment and tax your mind this summer. Gather the family, inveigle the neighbours and put your guests to work in answering these mind-benders.

1) What is the world's largest parrot and where is it found?
2) Victoria's emblematic bird was later found to be a mere sub-species of which species? (Latin and English names please)
3) What is the name of the faithful dog that awaits his master at the local railway station in L.M. Montgomery's final full-length novel featuring Anne Shirley Blythe?
4) Which nightmare houseguest was reported, by the wife of British bluesman John Mayall, as having spent an afternoon in the bath with the taps on, causing thousands of litres of bath-water to cascade down the staircase and through the house?
5) Name the game in which world finals were recently held in Istanbul and the Italian team beat the Dutch for the title.
6) (i) Give the names of two brothers from County Clare, Ireland who both survived being shot at the Eureka Stockade during the goldminers' rebellion on 4 December 1854.
   (ii) Which brother was shot through the chest?
   (iii) Give the ages of the two brothers.
   (iv) What happened to their cousin, John Hines?
7) Who first devised a method of preserving food by heating it in a sealed container?
8) What is the maximum distance of open sea one would have to cross if sailing from Scandinavia to Canada? (You can take any route and make any stops you like, as long as the actual travelling is on water.)
9) What is the world's:
   (i) Most densely populated country?
   (ii) Least densely populated country?
   (iii) Highest death rate (by country)?
   (iv) Highest life expectancy (by country)?
10) Peter Jackson's movie won't help you here, but as *The Lord of the Rings* is now officially our favourite book it won't be much of a stretch ...
   (i) Name the sword that Isildur used to cut the one ring from Sauron's finger.
   (ii) Name the place and the title of the book in which the shards of said sword were first shown to the hobbits.
   (iii) What name was given to the sword after it was reforged for Aragon at Rivendell?
   (iv) In the *Fellowship of the Ring,* Boromir travels to the Council of Elrond from Gondor. What event convinced him to go?

11) The head of which Indigenous Australian resistance leader was preserved and sent to botanist Sir Joseph Banks?
12) Name the first Australian Aboriginal community outside the Northern Territory or Queensland to have traditional land returned. Extra point for the year.
13) Name the first European involved in armed conflict with Australian Aborigines and the year in which it occurred.
14) In Haruki Murakami's book *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, what is the name given both to which human and which animal?
15) In *Eastern standard tribe* by Cory Doctorow, the character Art logs on to an internet message board to get legal advice. What is his screen name and that of the lawyer who advises him online?
16) In Martin Boyd's *A Difficult Young Man*, why does Aunt Baba refuse to give Uncle George a divorce?
17) (i) Name one of the writers Elizabeth Jolley quotes in the introduction to her novel *Lovesong*?
    (ii) In the same novel, which Bach Cantata does Dalton Foster hear and remember?
18) In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, what is the name of the key in Christian's bosom which he remembers will open any lock in Doubting-Castle?
19) Name the group that Gisela Falke von Lilienstein co-founded in 1901. Where was her work first exhibited?
20) Name the Australian artist whose drawing, *Basrah by night*, depicts a gargantuan dog's head looking over the horizon. What type of art is he better known for?
21) What is a term describing the proportion in which a straight line or rectangle is divided into two unequal parts in such a way that the ratio of the smaller to the greater part is the same as that of the greater to the whole?
22) Whose remains are now housed in a sarcophagus built for
    (ii) which infamous English cardinal and
    (iii) who was the artist who made it?
23) Which artist wrote to Charles Baudelaire saying that 'Insults are pouring down upon me as thick as hail,' and what was the painting that inspired them?
24) Express the following quotation in modern mathematical language: 'If as many numbers as we please beginning from a unit be set out continuously in double proportion, until the sum of all becomes prime, and if the sum multiplied into the last make some number, the product will be perfect'.
25) Who invented the symbol of equality (=)?
26) What is a 'Balmer edge?' and how does its detection help astronomers observe black holes in more detail?
27) What organisation is associated with a recent bill before the Australian Parliament containing legislation to restrict the sale of ammonium nitrate?
28) Define the following words:
    (i) kenspeckle
    (ii) lucubration
    (iii) vilipend
29) For scientists and sci-fi addicts, what do the numbers 42 and 496 have in common?
30) What do Carmela Baranowska, Paul McGeough, Adam Pretty and Andrew Dyson have in common?

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Please include your name, address and phone number. Winners and answers will appear in our March issue.

Kate Stowell

# A democracy of convenience

**Kate Stowell** visits Uzbekistan, a democratic republic still under the reign of its former communist party leader.

DEMOCRACY WITHOUT INDEPENDENCE. In elections, the opposition candidates vote for the incumbent government. These are just a couple of ways to describe the power structure in Uzbekistan; a country sandwiched between communist China and the arguably democratic Russia.

Located in the heart of Central Asia, Uzbekistan traces the route Ancient Silk Road traders once used to carry goods from the Roman Empire to the Orient. These same historically marvelled bazaars are now the sites of terrorist bombings and social uprisings. The majestic cities of Bukhara and Samarkand—once famed for their architectural magnificence—are now the holding place for American troops occupying Afghanistan, which lies just over the southern border.

The former Soviet State of Uzbekistan remains, as it was prior to the rise of communist Russia, largely unexplored terrain. News from the self-declared 'democratic state' rarely makes headlines. The capital, Tashkent, is a buzzing metropolis with a mixture of largely unfinished Soviet and Western architecture. The end result is a Gotham City-style urban landscape with searing grey city blocks and dimly lit streets. Yet at the same time, the cities are dotted with ornate turquoise and pearl coloured mosques and temples. Travel to the region is difficult for Westerners, as the government likes its travellers—as *Lonely Planet* describes—in the form of 'pre-programmed, obedient pods'.

You get the feeling there is something to hide in Uzbekistan.

The republic is led by President Islam Karimov. There are five legal political parties, all of which publicly support Karimov, a former communist who has held power since just before the 1991 Soviet collapse.

In the early 1990s, Karimov outlawed the main opposition parties and forced their leaders into exile. As was the case with Chairman Mao in China, this was not uncommon during the communist era. However, since 1991, the Eurasia region has seen a massive restructure of borders, leaders and political systems. But 14 years on, nothing much has changed in Uzbekistan. In December, 2004, Uzbeks went to the polls for a presidential election where the only opposition standing against Karimov withdrew from the race two months before the election. As *NewsObserver* reported, 'election officials have refused to let opposition parties run on the ballot, disqualifying their registrations on technicalities'.

Politics is not the stuff of dinner conversation in Uzbekistan. Chatter about political opinion or the local economy is met with downcast eyes and monosyllabic responses. According to one Bukhara man, individual names are required on electoral ballots.

So why the fear and secrecy? President Karimov has been criticised internationally for gross human rights abuses and one UN report described the use of torture in Uzbekistan as 'systematic'. His state-controlled media has also been condemned for obstructing any independent reporting. Living standards are amongst the lowest in the former Soviet Union and outside the elite, (most of which derives from branches of the former communist party), there is no chance of a 'fair go' for workers. One catch-cry of the government has been 'blessed are the obedient'.

In 2003, parliament passed a law granting Karimov immunity from prosecution for life and a referendum saw him extend his term of office by a mandated five years.

Central Asian politics expert Dr Sharam Akbarzadeh from Monash University believes Karimov uses a hard-line against terrorism and an alliance with America to justify his tyrannical domestic policy.

'Karimov thinks an iron fist is required to fight terrorism and that justifies all the oppressive measures he has taken within his own country, both to stay in power and to strengthen his alliance with Washington and Moscow,' Akbarzadeh said.

Along with Russian president Vladimir Putin, Karimov was an adamant opponent to the Taliban in Afghanistan. His hard line against terrorism won him praise from international counterparts.

The events of 11 September 2001 provided Karimov with another opportunity to flex his international muscle and to prove to Uzbek nationals why they cannot afford to vote him out of office.

'September 11 was a blessing for Karimov because before then he had a terrible reputation with the United States as a tyrant. But September 11 changed all the parameters of the United States–Uzbekistan relationship. Fighting terrorism, as Karimov has been doing in the region for some time became of global importance', said Dr Akbarzadeh. 'Karimov basked in the glory of being a strong partner of the United States fighting against terrorism.'

While the United States is at pains to introduce countries like Iraq to Western-style democracy, the human rights abuses sustained and implemented under Karimov are tolerated by the Bush administration in exchange for the co-operation of a Muslim state in the 'war on terror'.

But while Karimov may seem to be 'fighting the good fight', Dr Akbarzadeh believes he is a leader with two faces. 'Is Karimov a good guy or a bad guy? You could write a thesis on that topic.'

Karimov's militaristic approach to stopping terrorism at any cost is used internally on Uzbek nationals, both to satiate his desire to stay in power while stamping out any Islamic extremism simmering in Tashkent. The danger of this approach is that Karimov does not differentiate between his treatment of international terrorists and regular citizens.

'Any threat to the established order is a threat to Karimov's hold on power', says Dr Akbarzadeh, 'and the easiest way to label that and to deem it unacceptable is to call it terrorism', he said. 'Terrorism is a blanket term for everything anti-Karimov.'

In March 2004, the government blamed a series of bomb blasts in metropolitan Tashkent on members of a radical Islamic group, which authorities believed was linked to al Qaeda. In a letter to President Islam Karimov, the International League for Human Rights said the trials of the accused were 'accompanied by harassment and torture of defendants while in custody'.

The US did order an independent inquiry into the sentences. However, according to Dr Akbarzadeh, a truly independent inquiry would be near impossible to conduct without government interference.

'Independence, as we know it in Australia, does not exist in Uzbekistan. There is no way that anyone can be independent under Karimov's current power structure', Dr Akbarzadeh said.

So what of the future? Criticism from the United Nations and the European Union has done little to change Karimov's mind. Dr Akbarzadeh believes when it comes to Karimov, the voices of the United States and Russia are the loudest.

'The United Nations and the European Union do not have the political or economic muscle to force Karimov.'

The unfortunate reality for 26.5 million Uzbeks is that for the superpowers fighting the 'war on terror', any alternative to Karimov is too unpredictable to risk.

'The United States and Russia have an interest in keeping Karimov in power because if he goes, the whole Eurasia region could be open to unpredictable terrorist forces, whether it be Islamic fundamentalism or another force that he has managed to suppress through his governance thus far.'

Internationally, either through fear or fellowship, Karimov's domestic policy is tolerated. The United States is currently providing funding and training for Uzbek security forces in place of sanctions.

So while it may be a case of better the devil you know for world leaders and the 'war on terror', the people of Uzbekistan remain oppressed in the face of high taxes, no public representation or independent media.

Despite common use of the phrase 'democracy' when describing Uzbekistan's political landscape, Dr Akbarzadeh describes it differently. 'Authoritarian regime. There is no other way to describe Uzbekistan.' ■

**Kate Stowell** is a second-year journalism student at RMIT University. She visited Uzbekistan in 2004. Photographs by the author.

Nikki Fisher

# Dirty hands, happy hearts

## Getting children out of the house just became a little easier

In 1914 at Brooklyn Botanic Gardens in New York, Miss Ellen Eddy Shaw established the world's first children's garden. Miss Shaw hoped that all children in Brooklyn might have gardens and believed children's gardens could be a 'living opportunity for a child to learn lessons of nature and observe how nature looks out for herself'. In the year 2004, when children live in a world where food is genetically modified and where play for some equates to television or computer games, the garden is a wonderful place to return to and reconnect with the natural world.

The Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden opened at Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG) in October this year. Two years in the making, this sensory garden is a wonderland for children of all ages to explore. Gary Shadforth, the RBG Education Manager estimates approximately 2,500 school children have visited the Children's Garden already. From kindergarten to tertiary, the RBG education program provides interactive and experiential learning experiences. Digging and planting are not normally encouraged in Botanic Gardens but they are here. Gary says, 'It's different to being in a classroom. Hopefully learning in this hands-on garden is an experience the kids will remember'.

The education program integrates horticulture with art, science, technology, geography and history. Sitting at the base of a 10,000-year-old fossilised River Red Gum tree dug up from a sand quarry in Albury, children listen to stories of the prehistoric and learn about the impact of humans on nature. In the kitchen, garden fresh food is the focus. Children plant and harvest vegies like beetroot, carrot, turnip and capsicum and smell and taste fresh herbs. Sustainability is a key philosophy underpinning many of the lessons. Children gather near a shallow rock pond to learn about the significance of water to life and nature and to the ecosystems it sustains. In the Discovery Shelter, an open air structure with a roof and two walls, children consolidate what they've learnt in the garden and explore further, looking at plants under microscopes or creating wind chimes to learn about nature's elements. Gary says, 'The only complaint we've had so far is from children who don't want to leave'.

While the Botanic Gardens might be an obvious location for a children's garden, a less obvious location but an equally magical environment is the rooftop of Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital. The Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) Horticultural Program began ten years ago. Originally the RCH Children's Garden started as a rooftop project designed for patients in the 3 East Adolescent Unit that overlooks the rooftop. 'Being in the garden is an opportunity for kids and families to take the focus off the medical reason why they're here', says Julie Robinson who co-ordinates the garden with renowned community garden coordinator Basil Natoli and a host of dedicated volunteers. Initially the RCH Children's Garden was funded by independent trusts and relied on donations. The Cystic Fibrosis Society donated 65 potted roses to the RCH Children's Garden after hearing the story of a little boy diagnosed with cystic fibrosis who told his dad he had been diagnosed with '65 roses'. In 2000 the Horticultural Program expanded its horizons and created a children's garden at the rear of the hospital overlooking Royal Park. Art has become a feature of this new garden. Giant topiary dinosaurs watch over the flowerbeds while Gus the gardening dog, a colourful two metre tall metal sculpture, watches over the vegie garden. Children play in the sandpit or watch fish swim in the mosaic fishpond.

In 2003 the newly established garden was at risk of closure as funding had run out. The patronage of Dame Elisabeth Murdoch made it possible for the garden program to continue and an auxiliary called 'Dirty Hands Happy Hearts' has been established to receive donations. Julie and Basil are funded to work with children in the garden on Monday afternoons and all day Thursday. 'At present our focus is working with adolescents. We would like to secure funding to extend the program to young children', says Julie.

Mother of five, Louise Williams travels with her family each day from rural Victoria to the RCH to visit her eldest daughter Rebecca. 'The Children's Garden is a godsend for parents', says Louise. 'It's wonderful to have time alone with Rebecca while my husband takes our other children out to play in the garden. It's too hard for the younger ones to sit still for long. The garden makes it easier for everyone.' Fourteen-year-old Rebecca's first trip outside her ward in the two weeks since she arrived at the hospital was to the Children's Garden. With Julie's assistance Rebecca spent the afternoon potting succulents in the sunshine while her brother and sisters played in the garden and her parents sat nearby. 'Long term patients look forward to visiting the garden, children in the chronic illness ward build special bonds and love to visit the garden together', says Julie. Fifteen-year-old Kim Traile has been in the hospital for eight weeks. Kim is happy the garden was saved, 'I like the garden because you forget you're in a hospital. It's like you're in a park'.

Children in Years Three to Six at Collingwood College are learning the joys a fruit and vegetable garden can bring, thanks to the vision and initiative of restaurateur and food writer Stephanie Alexander. Motivated by her concern that 'we may be witnessing the first generation in history that has not been required to participate in the primal socialisation rite, the family meal', Stephanie was committed to creating a Kitchen

Garden program in Australian schools. Childhood experiences of food influence attitudes to tasting food and food choices later in life. Stephanie believes in the power of leading by example and creating positive experiences with food for children. In particular, she hopes to do this for children living in lower socio-economic areas, who may otherwise have fewer opportunities. Stephanie cites evidence that suggests children from lower socio-economic families are prone to obesity due to poor food choices and less physical activity. The Kitchen Garden aims to address childhood obesity by being a preventative measure. Stephanie's confidence in the benefits a children's kitchen garden could bring to Australian children is based on the success of The Edible Schoolyard, a kitchen garden established by legendary American restaurateur Alice Walker in collaboration with the Martin Luther King Jr Middle School, Berkeley, California.

Principal of Collingwood College, Frances Laurino embraced Stephanie's vision and in late 2001, The Kitchen Garden at Collingwood College was established. Today the Kitchen Garden at Collingwood College is a verdant 'supermarket' of fresh vegetables, fruits and fragrant herbs. Children spend one period per week in the garden and two periods in the program's fully equipped kitchen with a qualified chef, cooking foods that most parents couldn't imagine children eating. Tortellini with pumpkin and ricotta, salad of young broccoli and beetroot stems tossed with olive oil and lemon juice, beetroot and chocolate chip muffins are all created by the children. The home grown and prepared food is then shared in Kitchen Garden dining room. Word is spreading about the success of the school's Kitchen Garden program with schools in Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and New South Wales contacting the College expressing interest in establishing similar gardens.

Lauren Cameron enjoys her garden view from Ward 3 East. Photo: Bill Thomas

Judy Masters, Principal of Brunswick South Primary School, says the Kitchen Garden at Collingwood College is their inspiration. The school established their own kitchen garden three years ago when Jenny Burke, the school's Grade 5/6 teacher, coordinated a submission to Moreland City Council's Sustainable Schools Project. The school's submission secured a grant of $3,000 that enabled them to establish the garden, put up a fence and install a water tank. Judy says, 'We really want to give the children an understanding of how food is grown and to teach them about cooking with fresh ingredients. The garden supports our healthy eating policy. While we can't enforce [what] children eat, we encourage them in whatever way we can to make healthy food choices'. Jenny says there have been many additional activities and learning benefits inspired by the garden. For instance, in 2002 Jenny and a group of students launched a 'Bring On The Rain—Grow and Sustain' compilation of songs they composed and recorded about the garden. Another benefit has been the involvement and support of local retired community members who have volunteered in the garden over the years. Heather Chapple is a current volunteer and works in the garden one day a week attending to its overall maintenance spending time with children weeding, watering and planting.

The school's integration aid, Margaret Meanie, works in the garden with children who have learning difficulties. Margaret finds taking the children out of the classroom and into the garden relaxes them and enhances their self-esteem. 'They feel special to be outside in the garden when the other students are in class.' While reading a picture book to Daniel, one of her grade three students, Margaret showed Daniel an illustration of a pea in a pod. 'What's that?' he asked. Daniel had only ever seen frozen peas in a plastic packet. The next day Margaret brought in fresh peas in pods to show Daniel. Today peas grow in the Brunswick South Primary kitchen garden alongside parsley, tomato, lettuce, carrot, broccoli, spring onion, climbing beans, potato, lemon, passionfruit, radish and pumpkin. 'Strawberries have been the other hit with the kids. They need to see results and they're excited to see a strawberry grow and then eat it fresh from the plant', says Margaret. Another one of Margaret's students wrote a story about picking the first strawberry. The story was published in the school newsletter. Margaret says, 'It was a very simple story that was challenging for him to write. He was so happy about finding the strawberry and really proud to take the newsletter home'. The timeless lessons of nature are as relevant today as they were in 1914. ■

**Nikki Fisher** is a Melbourne-based freelance writer.

# Here I go on my way

**On the warparth: An anthology of Australian military travel**, edited by Robin Gerster and Peter Pierce.
Melbourne University Press, 2004. isbn 0 522 85087 1, rrp $39.95

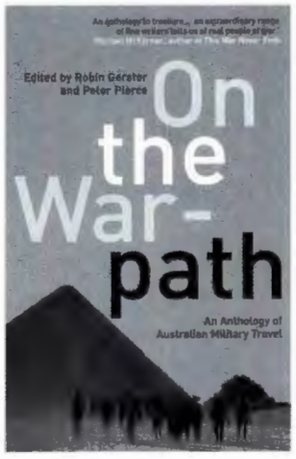
MOST BOOKSHOPS TODAY devote an entire bookshelf to militaria. It's a growth area. Much of what is on sale is almost unreadable: long-winded revisionism by armchair generals that tell where the commander of the day went wrong, or clumsy attempts to distil an essence of 'mateship', like an expedition for the source of the Nile. Other books focus on images and statistics.

*On the Warpath* is none of these things. It is a well-crafted little book which brings together mostly first-hand accounts of many aspects of Australians at war and arranges them in a way that reads well and allows each piece to breathe, to relate its tale on its own terms. Its authors are soldiers, officers, nurses and journalists. Its subtitle markets the book as 'an anthology of military travel', but this sells the book short, for there are insights into the human condition contained here that you would be hard pressed to detect in most travel literature.

There are 57 individual contributions to *On the Warpath* and almost none of them focus on the fighting. Instead, we hear from Louise Mack, a correspondent in World War I, who resists calls to evacuate the threatened town of Antwerp and wanders through a fallen, deserted city, awaiting the new owners. Elsewhere, we see a different side of General Sir John Monash, as he writes in letters to his wife Victoria of his days spent in France travelling from village to village; personally organising farmhouse billets for his troops while 'making friends with the children, or the dog, or in one case the pet pig'. From the other side of the world, in another war, Army nurse Jessie Simons recalls lazy tropical days spent sightseeing in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Malacca. Six months later, with Singapore fallen, her ship would be sunk and she and other survivors would spend three and a half years as prisoners of the Japanese in Sumatra.

*On the Warpath* offers good descriptions of the physical conditions in which these men and women toiled each day. Perhaps nowhere is this environment more confronting than in the jungle campaigns of New Guinea and the islands. Kenneth Slessor writes:

> 'the jungle has deadlier adversaries than the Japanese; it hits back at the fighting-man with sharp claws, with matted roots and vines and thorns, with tiger-toothed branches and barbed undergrowth; it mocks him with tremendous ribs of mountain, with vertical peaks, deep torrents, agonies of rock and marsh; it soaks him to the hide with whipping rain, it saturates him with sweat, it burns him with incandescent heats and fevers, and it cakes him with a pulp of loathsome mud. It is full of malaria, ague, dysentery, scrub typhus, obscure diseases. It is full of crocodiles and snakes and bloated spiders, leeches, lice, mosquitoes, flies... '




And yet, these trials were borne and victory came, in time. Each year around Anzac day, our media attempt to summarise the war in the jungle in neat, digestable packages for those of us sitting in front of the television or radio; a bit of stock Pathé footage here, a few arrows advancing on maps there, perhaps some interviews with veterans who are mostly (understandably) reticent about their experiences. But it is first-hand accounts like Slessor's, penned by people who could write well and candidly, that provide us with a necessary context for appreciating the terrible ordeals that these men endured.

PERHAPS THE MOST remarkable feature of *On the Warpath* is the writing that reveals a transcendence of these ordeals. In the midst of suffering, fear and uncertainty, the human spirit emerges at its most beautiful: the passages from Ray Parkin's Burma-Siam Railroad diaries are perhaps the book's finest example. Parkin was a POW on the railroad with 'Weary' Dunlop (in fact, it was Dunlop who smuggled Parkin's entire manuscript back to Australia, after the author had been sent on to forced labour in Japan before the war ended). The first excerpt from his diary tells us of the beginning of captivity and transport to the railroad. The second entry presents us with a man emaciated and racked by malaria, who has watched his colleagues suffer and die for the past eight months in captive labour. Yet amidst all of this, Parkin the naturalist emerges. On lone duties away from the camp for a short time, he paints watercolours and writes what, under the circumstances, are breath-taking passages:

> 'the crows are noisy tonight. Two large black ones sat on a bamboo and eyed me with what I thought was professional interest, as I ate my supper ... I was able to make a watercolour of a plant like a multiple Venetian pole this afternoon. I have seen a lot of flowers here I should

like to paint, if I get the time. As I eat or cook by the fire, I watch hundreds of small bronze lizards with a black stripe down each side ... I feel a contentment which makes me burst out singing and whistling. I talk to myself ... telling myself to buck up, get a move on, do this, or that. I have ants and lizards for company and occasionally, a small lizard cocks me a friendly glance'.

Whether the result of conscious editorial choice or not, there are linear progressions discernible in the excerpts in *On the Warpath* and they make for instructive reading. As we progress through different conflicts over time, the way Australians write about themselves in the world and the way they write about their adversaries changes. Tom Gunning, a veteran of the Sudan campaign reminisces that 'we were eager to be off to this mysterious Sudan, where 50,000 Arabs were embarrassing Britain at an awkward time'. 'Banjo' Patterson voices what must have been an overwhelming collective need for affirmation (at least as far as the newspapers were concerned) in recalling the acceptance by the British of an Australian unit fresh from its first action against the Boer: 'We were no longer outsiders ... we were of the brotherhood and could hold up our heads with the best. The kangaroo was himself again! And once we have gained an entrance to the Briton's scheme of the universe we will not lose our position ... This morning we were nobodies; now we are full-blown soldiers and can ruffle it with the best of them'. Such jingoism might be a natural growing pain, after all, but it peters out through the pages of *On the Warpath*. Along with Parkin's diaries and the brilliant, incisive prose of Osmar White, Tom Hungerford's account of his garrison duties in occupied Japan are particularly fine. He befriends an elderly Japanese man, an English teacher before the war, and enters intimately into the world of the Japanese countryside. At one point, he finds out what his gentle host thinks about Australia: 'He'd read a number of Australian books, among them Joseph Furphy's *Such is Life*. I asked him what he'd thought of them and he said they'd given him a mixed sort of picture of Australia ... he imagined Australians to be happy, a bit simple, secure, immature and sometimes vicious'.

*On the Warpath* encompasses writings from the early colonial campaigns in the Sudan and South Africa, through the two World Wars, Korea and Vietnam to small selections from East Timor and Afghanistan. The book ends with attempts by those who were not there to understand the experiences of Australia's military past. As you might expect, the standard of 57 separate contributions varies, but there is some very good writing laced throughout the book and each excerpt measures a handful of pages at most; as such, there's little chance of becoming bored before the next cameo. Parts of the book will tell stories that might only be guessed at: for young men abroad for the first time, there are always new sights to see, new places to get drunk or start fights and exotic women to possess, in between the fighting. But here and there, the editors have set before the reader elegant writing, full of humanity and wisdom. They deserve our congratulations. ■

**Luke Fraser** lives and works in Canberra.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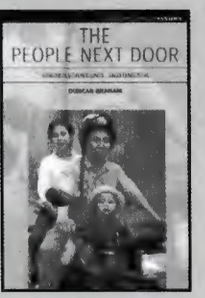


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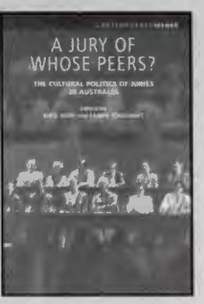


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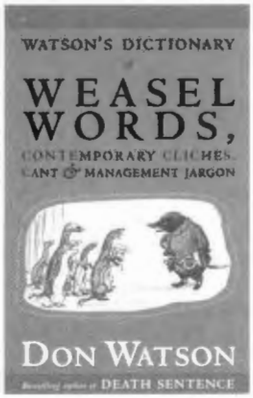
# Word up

**Watson's dictionary of weasel words, contemporary clichés, cant and management jargon**, Don Watson. Random House, 2004. ISBN 1 740 51321 5, RRP $32.95, **Word watching: Field notes from an amateur philologist**, Julian Burnside. Scribe, 2004. ISBN 1 920 76938 2, RRP $32.95

THE DAY THAT MY REVIEW COPIES of Don Watson's *Weasel Words* and Julian Burnside's *Word Watching* arrived, my wife showed me a newspaper article in which Buckingham Palace reported that Princess Anne had been involved in an air proximity incident. In plain English, this meant that a Typhoon Combat Jet and the Princess's Royal Squadron BAE 125 had come as close as a curtsey to smashing each other into a million pieces over Morecambe Bay. Had this happened, there would have been, to quote *Weasel Words*, a negative health consequence for the Princess. From *Word Watching* I learned that the equivalent American term is Midair Passenger Exchange, an encounter that is almost invariably followed by aluminium rain.

This is as good a way as any of seeing how these two very different books at times converge, brought into the same arena by shared interests—in this case, the capacity for meaning to be deliberately fudged for whatever sinister or mad reason. But whereas that is one of Burnside's interests, it is the core of Watson's (as distinct, he would want it noted, from his non-core interests): ' ...weasel words, clichés and jargon (are used) as shields against attack, as camouflage to escape detection, as smokescreens or vapour to blind or repel anyone sniffing out the truth about us'.

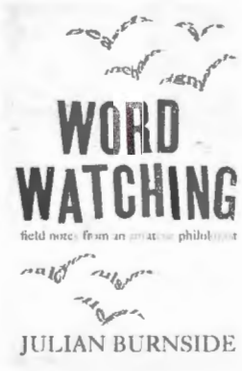



As with great art, *Weasel Words* pleases with moments of familiarity and sudden surprises. It is comforting, for example, to come across Icon. You confidently expect it and, sure enough, not only does it appear, but it is nailed:

> 1 Image or representation, usually of a saint or other sacred Christian personage. ... 2 Computer symbol. 3 Any well-known footballer or cricketer, the Big Pineapple, the Crocodile Man ... [more than 40 further examples follow] 4 Anything or anyone you say. (Make your own list).

And it is surprising, but wonderful, to come across 'We', among whose alternative meanings are:

> '1 You and me. 2 Me. 3 Me and the wife. 4 My government, cabinet, regime, cabal, junta, reich, etc. 5 Not you. Not the High Court. Not the Navy. Not the United Nations. Not the captain of a Norwegian ship. Not anyone who doesn't suit me.'




*Weasel Words* is brilliantly witty, often hilarious, especially read aloud at the dinner table whenever someone inadvertently or worse still deliberately falls back on a weasel word. But don't let your own delight and laughter lead you to under-rate it: this is more than a dictionary. Beneath its alphabetical surface runs a discontinuous satiric narrative that is an assault not only on the corrupting and defilement of the language but also, unerringly, on the people who are hiding behind and prospering from this corruption.

On this point, Julian Burnside is equally unequivocal: Orwell, he suggests, 'would be disappointed (to find that) slick political language is as powerful now as in 1933: it can hide shocking truth, it can deceive a nation, and it can hand electoral victory to the morally bankrupt'. This is one of the toughest moments in *Word Watching*, which is a delightful collection of short essays on quixotically selected lexicographical examples, curiosities and profundities catching the eye of a (not so) 'amateur philologist'.

The fascinating lexicography of animals ('Beastly Words'), 'Nice Distinctions', legal language, slang, collective nouns, 'Doublespeak', the 'harmless drudgery' of philology itself, and errors that endure into acceptance, all come under Burnside's gentle but probing scrutiny. You could consult this book the way you might consult Fowler or Strunk and White, for running linguistic repairs. You will find, among much else, that he concedes 'reluctant' has been taken over by 'reticent'; and that 'disinterest' has beaten 'uninterest' from the field—though he could take heart from 'mitigate': consistently used wrongly a decade ago to mean militate (against), it seems to have made a comeback recently—and that Burnside himself uses 'quotes' as a noun, thus helping 'quotation' further into decrepitude.

But better still, read it as a book of fine essays, laced with a sometimes self-deprecating wit, which use the language with the grace and respect that has inspired him to 'watch words' in the first place.

Above all, though, there is a lively consciousness on the part of both authors—no matter how brilliantly in their different ways they entertain us with 'mere words'—that language is a glory and a splendour, but it is also political, that its corruption, when this happens, or is allowed to happen, is no accident. 'The Nazi regime mastered it', Burnside observes, 'the Howard Government has been an enthusiastic apprentice'. Likewise Watson: 'Language, as Stalin knew, is an essential instrument of terror'.

The language is a serious responsibility. Both these books perform in its cause—to end with an honourable cliché—above and beyond the call of duty. ■

**Brian Matthews** is an award-winning writer and columnist.

Matthew Lamb

# Breaching the barricade

**Kisch in Australia: The untold story**, Heidi Zogbaum. Scribe, 2004. ISBN 1 920 76935 8, RRP $26.95

In 1934, Czech writer and communist, Egon Erwin Kisch, sailed to Australia for what should have been a rather low-key event. He was the guest speaker of the Melbourne branch of the Movement Against War and Fascism. But the United Australia Party, (forerunner of the Liberal Party), had recently been re-elected, and one of their platforms was to eradicate the threat of communism. So they took it as an expression of their mandate to block Kisch's attempts to land in Australia. The charge was led in the courts by the newly appointed Attorney General, Robert Menzies. His office had received information from the Special Branch in London, from an agent known only as 'Snuffbox', regarding a secret file about Kisch and his subversive activities.

The only problem was that the Australian government shouldn't have had access to this file, even though they used it as the basis of their case against Kisch.

*Kisch in Australia* details the knots the Australian government tied themselves into in trying to keep Kisch out, and the loopholes Kisch leapt through in order to remain briefly in Australia. 'This, then', says the author, Heidi Zogbaum, 'is the so-far untold story of how Kisch and Menzies, the great antagonists, came to be puppets dangling from invisible strings stretching all the way from London to Melbourne'.

Egon Kisch knew first hand what Hitler was capable of, and the direction in which he was leading Germany. Kisch himself was imprisoned by the Nazis in the aftermath of the Reichstag fire of February 1933, and later deported to Prague. Hitler used this national disaster as an excuse to weaken the liberties of his own citizens, and to target communists, socialists and Jewish intellectuals as dangerous dissidents.

As early as June 1933, Kisch was in England already speaking out against Hitler's government. There he came to the attention of the Special Branch, a subsidiary of MI5. In September of that year he was prohibited from re-entering England. It was this ban that 'Snuffbox' referred to in his cablegrams to Australia the following year. So with little else to go on, other than loyalty to Britain and a fear of communism, the Australian government took steps to ensure Kisch did not repeat his message of peace, or his un-Australian criticisms of Hitler, on our shores.


When Kisch arrived in Fremantle on November 6 1934, his passport was confiscated and he was kept on board his ship, the SS *Strathaird*. His situation was immediately made public. So by the time he reached Melbourne on 12 November, his story was already well known. Publicity only increased when Kisch, still prohibited from going ashore, forced his own landing on Australian soil. He jumped from the quarterdeck onto the dock, breaking his leg in the attempt.

Meanwhile, his case had reached the High Court in Sydney. The Commonwealth lost the case, and to add to the humiliation they had to pay all costs. Kisch, who had been taken back on board the SS *Strathaird*, despite his broken leg, was now free to land.

But Menzies was not backing down, and before Kisch could leave the boat he was detained by police and taken to perform the infamous diction test. The test was conducted in Gaelic, and he failed. However, reappearing before the High Court, it was demonstrated that the officer conducting the diction test couldn't pass the test himself. Kisch was free again, and again the Commonwealth was forced to pay his costs. By May 1935, in a compromise with the Commonwealth, Kisch was back in Paris.

While in Australia, in between speaking engagements—made all the more popular because of his attempted prohibition—Kisch was researching a travel book, published in 1937 called *Australian Landfall*. Here Kisch related his own treatment in Australia in the context of the White Australia Policy and the situation of the Aborigines. But the book was not available here until 1969, three years after Menzies left government, because Lyons had tightened censorship laws. In 1936, when a journalist tried to obtain a list of the censored books, he found the list itself was also banned.

On the surface, *Kisch in Australia* is a political farce, and it is in this context an entertaining read. But what makes it all the more interesting is that it also contains many parallels with contemporary events, such as the tendency of governments to use national disasters to restrict citizen's freedoms and silence dissent; the prevalence of embarrassing intelligence failures; Australia's habit of misplaced loyalty toward more powerful allies; and our paranoid fear of not so immanent threats. In this regard, *Kisch in Australia* is not only entertaining, but instructive. ■

**Matthew Lamb** lives in Brisbane.

Tony Smith

# Morality questioned

**Fleshmarket Close**, Ian Rankin. Orion, 2004. ISBN 0 752 85113 6, RRP $55
**Kittyhawk Down**, Garry Disher. Allen and Unwin, 2003. ISBN 0 186 508981 8, RRP $19.95
**The Sunday Philosophy Club**, Alexander McCall Smith. Penguin, 2004. ISBN 0 316 72956 6, RRP $29.95

If you thought that the Australian Government's drastic actions had banished the problem of asylum seekers it is time to think again. Not only have Australian artists, playwrights, musicians and novelists, such as Tom Keneally (*The Tyrant's Novel*) and Sandy McCutcheon (*The Haha Man*) adopted the theme locally, but concern for refugees is now inspiring creative works worldwide. The latest novelists to focus on detention centres and the ways that they challenge us for a compassionate response include crime writers Ian Rankin, Garry Disher and Alexander McCall Smith.

Rankin is the master Scottish storyteller who created Detective Inspector John Rebus. Few readers in the English speaking world would not have heard of Rebus, who is among the most credible crime fighters of the last two decades. His adventures evoke the architecture and the characters of Edinburgh. Some 15 stories draw on local history to make these tales unique to the city of Scottish thinkers, warriors and artists. *Set in Darkness* for example, involves the site for the new Scottish Parliament, rising above the town in an old castle, and mired in political intrigue and corruption.


Rebus' compassionate response to the plight of asylum seekers is remarkable considering that his outlook is generally cynical. Partly because he needs a shell to protect himself from the terrible sights he witnesses, and partly because he sees more corruption than idealism in those supposedly working for justice, Rebus has a hard comment about everything. When an immigrant is found murdered in the Knoxland housing estate, the police erect a portable office but are met with racist views on the aliens. When local residents try to burn the office using newspapers, Rebus comments sarcastically that he is amazed that 'someone in Knoxland actually reads'. When a police car has a carton of eggs smashed on its windscreen, he expresses surprise that someone in Knoxland buys fresh food.

Some critics dismiss the crime genre as an unworthy literary form. Certainly there is variable writing in crime novels, which include a range of styles from the hard-boiled to the soft-boiled; from the forensic to the police procedural; from the thriller to the comic. But it is possible to distinguish good writing from bad, and to identify novelists with serious intent. An example of crime writing adapting to contemporary trends was the way that female authors took a feminist perspective on crime and detection in the early 1990s. By subverting the masculinist norms of the genre, such as the prevalence of violent heroes and the depiction of women as passive victims or prizes, writers such as Marele Day, Jean Bedford, Kerry Greenwood and Claire McNab produced works that are thought provoking as well as entertaining. Their heroines represented the move by women into the public sphere of bureaucracies, parliaments and the media. Their adventures showed that reactionary forces were deliberately shrinking that sphere in order to control women's newly-found independence.

Rankin has previously dealt with serious themes such as child pornography and paedophilia. In *Fleshmarket Close*, he juggles several stories. While investigating the murder of the immigrant, a Turkish Kurd who was trying to re-establish himself as a journalist, Rebus helps colleague, D.S. Siobhan Clarke, search for a missing girl whose sister committed suicide after being sexually assaulted, and explores the discovery of two skeletons buried in the cellar of a bar. By expanding on the themes of racism and xenophobia, Rankin ensures that his crime stories are a legitimate literary vehicle.

Rebus is shocked by conditions inside the Whitemire detention facility. He remembers the building from when it was a prison in the 1970s, and is unconvinced when the administrator attempts to distinguish it from other places of incarceration. 'Those new buildings you saw as you came in—specially constructed family units. TVs and a cafeteria, table tennis and snack machines ...' Rebus interrupts: 'And which of those don't you get in a prison?' In a familiar pattern, the administrator admits that Whitemire is owned by an American firm that runs privatised prisons in the USA and Britain.

Rebus has come to Whitemire because the wife and children of the murdered Kurd are incarcerated there. The administrator denies that he hid the connection. He shrugs off Rebus' question about suicides: 'Comes with the territory'. During another visit, Rebus witnesses a death in custody. Given the lack of hanging points, the man must have been extremely desperate. Later, as connections between former inmates of Whitemire and a slavery racket are established, the administrator slashes his wrists with the glass from a family photograph.

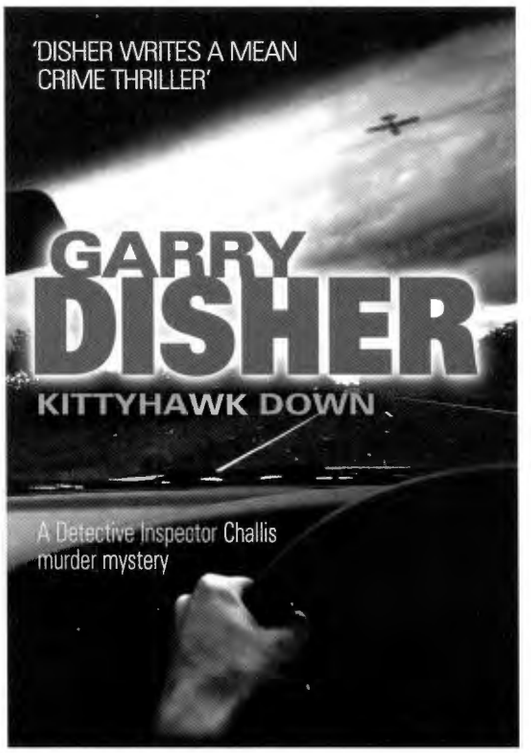
When the murdered man's wife goes to identify her husband's body, her children refuse to leave her. Rebus routinely visits mortuaries in the line of duty but he has not seen children around bodies before. This upsets him enough for a colleague to ask what is bothering him. He replies, 'I just think they deserve a childhood, that's all'. He buys toys and takes

them to Whitemire where a guard insists they will be checked. Rebus is appalled: 'You think there are drugs hidden inside the doll?' The guard agrees it is silly and guarantees that the children will get the toys. The two men share a look as Rebus realises that this guard is actually humane. He asks, 'How do you stand it here?' The guard replies, 'Would you rather have the place staffed by people different from me? God knows there are enough of them ...' Here Rankin is again realistic. Whitemire is an important employer and in times of high unemployment, people cannot put principles before the pay packet.

Outside Whitemire sits a lone woman keeping a vigil. Rebus befriends her and tips her off about what he has seen. They dine together, but Rankin, ever the realist, ensures that the gulf between their worlds remains unbridgeable. Clarke has seen the desperation of people who work there and quarrels with the vigil woman, whom she accuses of being able to afford the moral high ground. Of course, governments know the situation and exploit the vulnerability of those on the outside as well as those within these prisons.

CLOSER TO HOME, Garry Disher, one of Australia's most under-rated writers, detects a note of hypocrisy in the economic justification for detention centres. Disher has created D.I. Hal Challis who works on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula. His cases usually involve both uniform and detective branches and are in the police procedural mould. In *Kittyhawk Down,* an unidentified body has turned up in the ocean and Challis suspects a major crime connection. Others suspect some asylum seekers who have escaped the local detention centre in an old navy barracks. Disher skilfully draws together several themes, including local politics, petty crime, Challis' love of restoring aircraft and his troubled relationships. His wife is in prison for conspiring to murder him and regularly attempts self harm. He has a developing relationship with local journalist Tessa Kane, but professional considerations add to Challis' apparent lack of enthusiasm for deeper involvement.

Kane and Challis' closest colleague D.S. Ellen Destry are among the few locals to resist the hysteria over asylum seekers. Two Malaysian students have been assaulted and their head coverings torn off. Graffiti has been sprayed around urging: 'Bomb Muslims back to the stone age'. To Ellen, however, the inmates appeared starved and 'psychologically frail'. The centre was welcomed by the Chamber of Commerce, but in reality it provides only half a dozen jobs for locals while lining the pockets of an American corrections company and stirring up local bigots. If job creation were the aim, then it is likely that more support staff would be required if asylum seekers were allowed to live in the community.




Another accomplished crime writer, Alexander McCall Smith, has branched out from his Mma Ramotswe series to explore the polite world of Edinburgh. Mma Ramotswe is the highly moral head of Botswana's No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency, but his new sleuth is Isabel Dalhousie, editor of the *Review of Applied Ethics*. Dalhousie is at the theatre when a young man falls to his death, and decides to conduct her own investigation into the circumstances. Although asylum seekers do not appear in *The Sunday Philosophy Club*, Isabel offers some important insights into morality. Especially applicable to the incarceration of women and children who have fled oppressive regimes is the idea of a 'moral imagination'.

'Morality depended on understanding the feelings of others. If one had no imagination—and there were such people—then one would not be able to empathise with them. The pain, the suffering, and the unhappiness of others would not seem real, because it would not be perceived.'

Indeed, even when she is dealing with possible suspects, she notes the importance of being 'well-mannered': 'international law, after all, was simply a system of manners writ large'. She argues that 'good manners depended on paying moral attention to others; it required one to treat them with complete moral seriousness, to understand their feelings and their needs ... to treat them with respect'.

One problem with politicians is that they read too many biographies that reinforce their ideas of self-importance. They might develop more open minds if they relaxed and read some works of imagination.

There are many reasons that we should change our policy on asylum seekers. While it might sound a selfish priority, one of the most compelling is that detention of children damages us. Locking people away without benefit of legal proceedings makes us jailers and incarcerators; threatens human rights and dignity; and shows that we make our ethical decisions without reference to principle. We seem to do it only because we can. According to the Children Out of Detention website (www.chilout.org), some 113 children will spend this Christmas in Australian detention centres. The Immigration Department website has advice on how to send gifts to them. However, *Fleshmarket Close, Kittyhawk Down* and *The Sunday Philosophy Club* would be very appropriate Christmas presents for anyone who still endorses mandatory detention. ■

**Dr Tony Smith** is a writer living in country New South Wales. His opinion pieces and reviews have appeared in numerous journals including *Australian Financial Review, Australian Quarterly, Australian Book Review, Online Opinion, Online Catholics,* the *Journal of Australian Studies, New Matilda* and *Drawing Board: Australian Review of Public Affairs.*

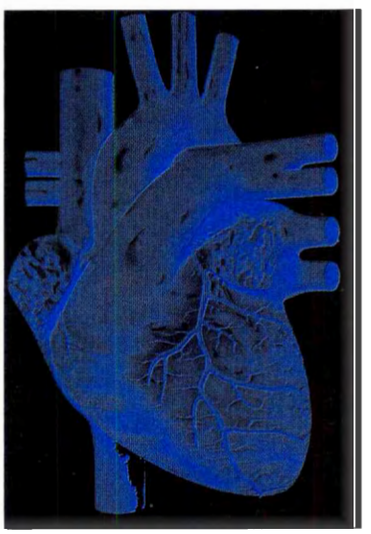
Christopher Gleeson

# All is grace

**The wet engine: Exploring the mad wild miracle of the heart**, Brian Doyle. Paraclete Press, 2004. ISBN 1 557 25405 2, RRP $29.95

'ALL IS GRACE' were the last words of pioneering theologian Karl Rahner before he died, but they also thread their way through Brian Doyle's latest book, *The Wet Engine: Exploring the mad wild miracle of the heart*. One of the joys of my reading this year has been the discovery of this editor of *Portland* magazine. In this book and his earlier work, *Leaping*, he is clearly a spiritual writer of the first order, someone who uncovers grace and its first cousin, love, in every aspect of life. Because writing for him is a form of contemplation and prayer, he sees this 'skinny book' as 'a sort of prayer of thanks that my son is alive and stubborn as stone', and 'that there are such complicated and graceful people as Doctor Dave ...'

Liam Doyle was born without a ventricle in his heart and Doctor Dave McIrvin is the cardiologist who cares for, and perhaps saves him. After learning from Dave the many complicated operations facing his son, Brian Doyle 'hid himself in the thicket of facts and diagrams' and read everything he could find to immerse himself in the mysterious ways of the heart. This 'thin, intense, odd little book' is an invitation by the author to 'wander into the wet engine' and study its mystery with him.



The second chapter, 'Heartchitecture', is ample evidence that Doyle has been a meticulous researcher. He takes us on a fascinating journey through the workings of this 11 ounce unit that feeds a vascular system comprising 'sixty thousand miles of veins and arteries and capillaries'. After considering the intricate engineering of the heart, Doyle reflects on all those outstanding students of the heart, brilliant surgeons like Christiaan Barnard, 'all over the world, for thousands of years, men and women exploring and healing the wet engine'.

When he names Brian Barratt-Boyes of New Zealand in this part of the globe, I looked in vain for mention of our own great heart doctors Harry Windsor and Victor Chang. We must be satisfied with a passing reference to an Australian doctor, Doyle's companion while watching a heart operation, who speaks 'Australian, a smiling sunny language which takes me a minute to get the pace and rhythm of ...'

THIS BOOK, HOWEVER, is much more than a cardiovascular travelogue. We meet some wonderful people on this journey—bravehearts like Hope, Doctor Dave's mother, who was imprisoned during the war by her own American government for having parents from another country. In that camp, 'you could not escape that wind. It would find you. It lived with you'. Was she bitter? 'No, I am not bitter', she says. 'No. Bitter is no place to be. But I do not forget.' Then there is the fascinating character with the exotic name of Hagop Hovaguimian, a colleague of Dave's, who spends three months a year working in Oregon and the other nine months in his home land of Armenia. Dave refers to him as 'a genius surgeon who has saved thousands of lives in America and Armenia, and invented a hospital'. A talented classical pianist, Hagop says of himself: 'I don't play the piano much any more. I stopped feeling the need to play. But I love to do operations. I love the parents and families of the children. I love the sick people. This is love. It's an addiction for me, I think'.

This is love and this is what this book is all about; a father's love for his son, a surgeon's love for his patients. In his 'heartful of patients', Dave recalls people like Tessa. 'She had a single ventricle. Her parents were bikers. They raised horses down in southern Oregon. Her mother had a plastic leg and her dad, Ivan, who was the nicest man you ever met, he was about six-foot-twelve. Enormous man. Played football for the University of Southern California. Nicest guy. She made it.'

It was the great Jewish author Elie Wiesel who said once that 'God made man because he loves stories'. Stories are prayers for Brian Doyle, and 'love is the story and the prayer that matters the most'. *The Wet Engine*, therefore, is pre-eminently a spiritual work because it touches and probes the heart on nearly every page. Doyle reminds us that the heart is the seat of the soul. 'God is the engine. God is the beat.'

In a chapter entitled *Imo Pectore*—'in the innermost recesses of the heart'—Brian Doyle reflects on those cardinals appointed by the Pope but, for political reasons, cannot be publicly announced. Their names are held by the Pope *imo pectore*. So it is with our own hearts. There are secret words in every heart. He reminds us that 'our hearts are not pure: our hearts are filled with need and greed as much as with love and grace; and we wrestle with our hearts all the time. How we wrestle is who we are'.

As one who wrestles with the heart on many issues, I can thoroughly recommend this book. It touches the heart in so many ways, and one cannot ask more of a spiritual writer than that.

**Christopher Gleeson** SJ is the Director of Jesuit Publications.

# the shortlist


**The happy phrase: Everyday conversation made easily**, Shane Maloney and Guy Rundle. Text, 2004. ISBN 1 920 88546 3, RRP $17.95

Don't be fooled by the compact size of *The Happy Phrase*. Its content is large in vernacular and enormous in levity. This book is best digested in small bites, to appreciate the pithy, full flavour of this jovial compendium on the English language.

I imagine that writing this 'how to' guide was not an onerous task for Shane Maloney and Guy Rundle. The sharp wit juxtaposed with the absurd, invites the reader to move from laughter to admiration for the wild imagination behind such genius.

The gauntlet is thrown down as the reader is challenged to 'simply commit [the phrases] to heart and you will always have just the right phrase at your fingertips for any social or professional interaction'.

No event or circumstance is sacrosanct. The humour moves between the factually ridiculous to the believably fictitious. Whilst the chapter headings evidence judicious advice, the sub-headings and subsequent dot-points elude sensible response. Chapter 8 'Getting a Purchase' provides but one example. Following the assurance of the authors, I look forward to the day at a flea market when I am able to utilise the expressions, 'These lederhosen are a tad snug' or 'I give not a fig for your filthy spondulicks'.

*The Happy Phrase* is small enough to fit in a handbag or jacket pocket for ready reference in moments otherwise lacking in quick wittedness or in order to impress that special someone.

**—Lee Beasley**

**In pursuit of plants: Experiences of nineteenth and early twentieth century plant collectors**, Philip Short. University of Western Australia Press, 2003. ISBN 1 876 26898 0, RRP $54.95


The olfactory-challenging durian enjoyed by Frederick Burbidge in Borneo in 1880; Friedrich Leichhardt's desperate eating of the leather hide that had housed his botanical collection in the wilds of Australia in 1847 and Joseph Hooker's 'indescribable loathing' of parasitic ticks in Darjeeling in 1848 are brought together, with many other botanical adventures and experiences in *In Pursuit of Plants*. A botanist himself, Philip Short has compiled a set of contemporary accounts from botanists, explorers and other plant collectors who ranged across all continents at the height of imperialism, discovering, collecting and classifying.

Collectors tell their own stories, many of which read like ripping yarns. A comprehensive set of appendices includes an explanation of botanical nomenclature and taxonomic ranking and a fascinating historical description of botanical collecting and preservation techniques.

There is however, a disappointing lack of women's plant collecting reflected in the book. According to Short, a tally of Australian collectors born before 1901 indicated that men outnumbered women seven to one in collecting activities. This being so, it is surprising that amongst the 38 collectors represented in this book, only one woman has been included. Short's dismissal of the possible inclusion of Marianne North and Ellis Rowan as 'essentially flower painters' and already well known, makes little sense. Many of the men who have been included were essentially civil engineers, surgeons or surveyors rather than professional botanists. With the inclusion of men of such eminence and fame as Leichhardt and Baron Von Mueller, it is unclear why the much less well-known North and Rowan should be excluded.

**—Rebecca Marsh**



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## Point of interest

Me, is it?
angling my foreground
to move with me
along a crowded pavement
in one clarified direction,
eyes set to recognise one doorway
of gravelled glass and a particular
curlicued frame.

Or is it us?
in two directions
designed to meet in golden intersection
to contradict
the deeply textured thrust along the pavement—
among shoved elbows
to take hands for one moment
unprotected skin
between your cuffs and mine,
to meet eyes that pleasantly
void
the strong mass of pedestrian
and shift towards a new destination:
quick flick before
the structure reasserts.

Or them, is it?
the crowding round
zigzagged to such crossed purposes
no one can meet so many eyes
so many expectations,
such heavy-hatched
continuous bodiment.

**Aileen Kelly**

## Wrap

The house
presses
the car
presses
even the imagined to be free
persona comes tight-wrapped
in bristled skin, watchdog.

Step out for breathing-room,
the small open between bush and buildings.
Sunlight flicks off and the real day rains
devaluing the shoulders and other
vulnerable parts. No policy
fully covers to roof out
sunstroke, thunderstroke,
even this petty sprinkle
of the unexpected.

The sky  the breath  the tongue
take your own name in vain
and when you listen back
your own voice slips
into a foreign vernacular.
When your name
is danger
when your language
is danger
you learn the dangerous skill
of silence
and some speak
never again.

But there is still
the wrapped house  the uninsured
person watchful in the shrunk pelt.

**Aileen Kelly**


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# Dark Christmas

*Bad Santa*, dir. Terry Zwigoff. When I was a kid I imagined the colourful boxes under the Christmas tree at the local shopping centre were full of wonderful gifts. But at about the same time I realised Santa was more commerce than kindly, I also came to realise the gifts were nothing more than empty banana boxes from the supermarket wrapped by the check-out chick in her lunch break. It was a big blow. But after seeing *Bad Santa* I'm inclined to reassess my empty banana box theory. Santa's sack wasn't bare, it just wasn't G-Rated!

*Bad Santa* not only fills the boxes under the plastic shopping mall tree (with safe cracking tools and bottles of vodka), it wraps them with a great big MA 15+ gold bow, and writes Merry #*!^*# Christmas on the greeting card. Not to mention a bar maid with Santa suit fetishes who is as likely as not to nip out and bite.

Willie (Billy Bob Thornton), a pathetic career criminal, dons a Santa suit, for 30 days out of every year, to thieve from department store safes. The other 335 days he drinks the proceeds. His partner-in-crime, and the operational brains behind the scam, midget Marcus (Tony Cox), organises the gigs and enjoys a bit of five-finger-discount Christmas shopping on the side. The pair have enjoyed years of hassle free scamming, cruising between cities to spread their own special brand of Christmas cheer. That is until they hit Phoenix. In this town their stockings are packed with more punch than usual: a politically correct mall manager (John Ritter), a corrupt store Dick (Bernie Mac) and a snotty nosed fat kid (Brett Kelly) who still believes.

Black comedy doesn't come much easier than this. Drunks in Santa suits, conniving midgets who pack 22s, mall mums and festive expletives make for easy laughs. Sacred cows (and reindeers) are slaughtered with scant regard for good taste.

Thornton is perfectly dishevelled, if a little too handsome, as the foul-mouthed Bad Santa. His drunken destruction of papier mâché reindeers is hilariously violent and wonderfully unsuitable, not to mention his beating up skinny teenage bullies in the mid-afternoon sun. John Ritter (in his last film role) plays eggnog to Thornton's straight scotch, lending PC store manager, Bob Chipeska, just the right mix of nervous conscience and plain ridiculousness. In fact there are no bad performances in this little Christmas slap in the face—all tested performers having fun with light but irreverent material.

There is nothing masterful about *Bad Santa*, just clean foul-mouthed fun. There is a touch of the Coen Brothers about the whole thing (not surprising given they came up with the concept and ex-produced it); their particular brand of madness mixed with curly cynicism is lurking under all the mistletoe. And while it could have dug a little deeper into the inner workings of its main players, for what is essentially a Christmas flick for grown-ups, that expectation is perhaps a little churlish.

Yes, *Bad Santa* is a one joke film, and yes, there's a smattering of sentimental redemption, and yes, you will see much better films this year—but if you want to laugh on and off for an hour and a half, look no further than *Bad Santa*.

**—Siobhan Jackson**

# Political puppetry

*Team America: World Police*, dir. Trey Parker. I can't help but feel that people underestimate Trey Parker and Matt Stone (creators of *Southpark*, and now, *Team America*). Sure, they revel in the most childish forms of bodily gross-out humour, are fond of gratuitous violence, sex and obscenity, have the aesthetic sensibilities of a four-year-old, and find nothing funnier than the idea of Michael Moore destroying Mount Rushmore in a suicide bomb attack. But is that any reason not to take them seriously as artists, activists and political thinkers? You think I'm joking, don't you …

My argument: *Team America: World Police*, in addition to being the funniest film I've seen since *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* (yes, I love stupid humour), is a much more effective and cogent critique of US foreign policy post-September 11 *and* of left-liberal hand-wringing about it, than anything by Michael Moore or his right-wing critics. Yes, it features gratuitous puppet sex and violence, the greatest volume of vomit in one scene since Monty Python's *The Meaning of Life*, and Kim Jong Il as a James Bond-style super villain. (I particularly like the scene where he feeds Hans Blix to his pet sharks.) Yes, it appears on the surface to be a mere scattergun parody of action genre conventions, Hollywood A-list political pretensions and redneck jock foreign policy a la Rumsfeld, Cheney and Rice. But the sheer absurdity of a puppet action film provides the perfect medium for bringing out the gross stupidity, gratuitous violence, obscenity, and indeed absurdity that is US foreign policy (not to mention most of its film industry).

In fact, the central theme of the film seems to be the relationship between Hollywood and US politics, not just in the sense that Arnold Schwarzenegger is being touted as the next President, or that the current US foreign policy seems like a bad remake of *Top Gun*, or even that both revolve around staging scenes to both fool and capture the audience's imagination. No, it has something to do with the choice of puppets as the medium for Parker and Stone's message. Simultaneously both plastic *and* wooden, the fundamental inadequacy of the marionettes for their purpose (check out the puppet kung-fu, the puppet sex, the puppet dancing and you'll see what I mean) reflects the inadequacy of the responses of both US culture and its political system to the world around it.

Oh, and did I mention the puppet sex?

**—Allan James Thomas**

# Travels in Neverland

*Finding Neverland*, dir. Marc Forster. *Finding Neverland* is, technically speaking, a flawless film. The story moves along with Hollywood cause-and-effect; its irony powerful and its meaning well-pitched to a broad audience. But the tried-and-tested style of its storytelling is a tired one. Imagine a film that trumpets imagination actually utilising some. That would be something to see!

Set in Edwardian London, *Finding Neverland* tells the story of J.M. Barrie (Johnny Depp), a struggling playwright, whose chance encounter with a family of four boys and their widowed mother (Kate Winslet) inspires the tale of *Peter Pan*. Predictably, as his relationship with the family develops, he teaches each of the boys a valuable life lesson, and his play goes on to become the story we know today. The true test of Barrie's faith in the power of imagination is saved for the film's finale, and will make the experience of watching *Neverland* rewarding enough for most, not to mention decidedly family friendly.

Johnny Depp's performance is as compelling as the script allows. For Australian audiences Depp's Scottish accent will prove watertight, and while he may be blessed with remarkable good looks (for a playwright) Depp draws Barrie with a social ineptitude and sufficiently subtle intellect to allow an audience to embrace his character. His straight-faced shenanigans with the four boys are charming, without an over-bearing masculinity that might have affected a more American approach.

Of the supporting roles, Dustin Hoffman, Kate Winslet and Radha Mitchell are wasted; tiny satellites that orbit Depp and push the plot forward with a morbid mechanisation. Only Julie Christie, (in a role that threatens to devolve into stereotype) appears to be having any real fun, as the crotchety grandmother who inspires the malevolent Captain Hook in Barrie's play.

*Neverland* harnesses much of the appeal of Edwardian London—bizarre facial hair, new-fangled 'automobiles' and a host of children who speak the Queen's English with the innocent charm of the *Famous Five*. But where movies like *Big Fish* or *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* are examples of the imaginative vision they celebrate, *Neverland* regrettably chooses the safer path of realism and point-form storytelling. While it is, essentially, successful, as the credits roll you may find yourself wishing that the story of a peculiar and irreverent act of artistic risk-taking hadn't been turned into the safest film of the summer.

**—Zane Lovitt**

# Totally 80s, dude

*Napoleon Dynamite*, dir. Jared Hess. *Napoleon Dynamite* is set in Preston, a small town in rural Idaho in the America of 1982. The film's namesake is the underdog figure of Napoleon Dynamite (Jon Heder), a mouth-breathing teenage geek in happy pants who draws mythological beasts in lead pencil and performs hand-dance recitals with the 'Happy Hands' club.

Utterly unaware of how the rest of the populace may see him, he sports a big ginger afro to high school, and talks up his nunchuck skills (between getting body-checked by the hallway bully and unsuccessfully inviting girls to games of tetherball in the quadrangle).

Napoleon lives with his grandmother and unemployed 32-year-old brother Kip, who spends his days in front of a computer screen, engaged with a mysterious soulmate who dwells on the far side of a chatroom. Their quad-bike riding grandmother is injured in the early stages of the film, and she summons the beflared figure of Uncle Rico to babysit the two brothers.

You could describe *Napoleon Dynamite* by employing popular film-reviewer's words like 'offbeat' or 'cultish'. But never that dreaded word 'alternative' here—that would be way too 1994, dude.

Plenty of films have explored the inherently tribal atmosphere of high school, but what holds this flick together is its authenticity: Hess is actually a native of Preston, Idaho. Napoleon makes hilarious attempts to impress the only kid at school with lower status than himself, Pedro the new Mexican student. He does this with lines like 'there's like a buttload of gangs at this school, this one gang kept wanting me to join 'cos I'm pretty good with a bo-staff'. However, beware—the bleached bones of formulaic Hollywood scripting that poke up from the sands a few times, are all but washed clean with original humour, good comedic timing and solid direction.

This is the 1980s that some of us have intentionally forgotten. In Napoleon's world, it's still a few years before martial arts obsession and teenage angst get mass validation from *The Karate Kid* and slacker-classic, *The Breakfast Club*. Anyone who experienced the popular culture of that decade will recognise cultural artefacts, mannerisms and fashions that were laid to rest long before *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* became passé.

*Napoleon Dynamite*'s dialogue is so credible that those still reeling from high school trauma may find certain scenes cringeworthy. Others may find themselves saying 'totally friggin' sweet' out loud for the first time in 20 years.

As nostalgia, it's amusing and accurate, and as a comedy of quirk and oddity it has surprised audiences everywhere, making a big splash at film festivals. There's a brief epilogue that you'll miss if you don't wait out the credits. Don't be afraid about laughing out loud in the cinema—your inner nerd can hide in the dark.

**—Gil Maclean**

# Where the real men are

My dad used to make beer. He didn't wait for retirement; he saw a book *Make Your Own Beer* in the local health-food shop in 1966 and was its slave from that second. He read it with yearning, and made rosy plans for a future of cheap Draught Bass. He began to accumulate equipment, a bit at a time: plastic rubbish bins were just coming in, and he got several and filled them with weird smelly stuff. Our kitchen, never the most minimal and orderly room in the house, started to sprout tubes of various length and calibre. Then there were the used beer bottles, hoarded and collected from friends: each bottle of bought beer representing present pleasure and future hope. His friend Jim got the brewing bug too and stopped donating bottles, causing a certain coolness between the two that soon developed into Home-Brewers' Feud, a form of rivalry surpassed in virulence only by Neighbour Fence Resentment.

'I tried some of that silly bugger's latest batch yesterday', Dad would say, 'and it kept me up all night'.

'You could always drink tea', said Mum, who liked to pour oil on troubled fires.

Boyfriends were measured by their ability to smile as they quaffed glasses full of liquid that made Guinness look like Tarax. 'Look at that yeast', Dad would say, holding up a glass of grey-brown soup. 'Full of Vitamin B: you'd pay good money for brewers' yeast like that in the shops.'

'Only in the Middle Ages', said Mum.

He tried to get her to make bread out of the lees, but she laughed and threw it down the sink or on the garden, where it killed several plants.

We girls hated Dad's brew as much as Mum, but somehow, it was the measure of a real man to take his tipple without poncey attributes such as clarity or nice taste. Boyfriends who went green and ran out to the loo after taking a swig were regarded as wimps, and tended not to last. A household of five daughters had to have some system for grading the suitors, and for a while, Dad's beer was the way.

But it all ended when he got cocky and thought he'd use rainwater for his brewing. He set up a rickety pipeline from the roof and gathered July's rain harvest into one of the plastic bins. He forgot to do a couple of things like scrubbing the roof, because although he strained out the pigeon droppings and boiled it to kill germs, there must have been something else in it. For one thing, the shed roof was asbestos. Dad was quite remorseful. The doctor said it was a good job that it all came up again so quickly. We all lived to quarrel another day.

Real men may brew beer but they don't have to prove anything, unlike the sad creatures that run the men's rights websites. I was thinking about this when trying to watch another episode of *Law & Order SVU*. I am still mystified that this rates so well, with such wooden acting and one-dimensional scripting. All the Law & Orders, CSIs, SVUs and whathaveyous that I have seen have had one thing in common: the perps are all female. Is there a sexually abused and battered little girl with a stepfather and angry stepbrother? Look no further than her mother for the criminal. The serial killers in the ones I've watched are always women, or maybe scary little girls. Interestingly enough, the detectives say compassionate things about the abusers, saying that it was because they themselves were abused. (Which might lead to the argument that you should jail the victim too, because this is America, after all, with more of its people in jail than anywhere else in the world.)

This made me go on the web to look for some stats, and that was interesting. Overall, if you go by government studies instead of the woman-hating websites, the truth is what you might expect: women are a great deal more likely to be killed than to kill, and as for sexual abuse, female perpetrators are rare enough to excite huge media coverage. Anyway, with the summer holidays coming up, there will be less telly-watching and more mucking about with gardens and stuff at our place. I think I might give up on the *Law & Order* programs: I've watched enough now to know that they suck. I will, however, be watching the fifth season of *West Wing*, which shows that America has decent political thinkers to set against the racist-redneck-bible-bashing-gun-toting-death-penalty-loving-election-riggers. I'll be taking out *The Sopranos* on DVD because it also shows that the US is making far better drama series than anywhere else.

And I'll be catching, on the ABC, *Living Famously* (the Alfred Hitchcock and Tammy Wynette ones are amazing—Saturdays at 7:30pm); and that lovely and interesting Irish series *Any Time Now* (Thursdays 8:30pm). On Sundays at 8:30pm, do watch that crazy-brilliant American series *Carnivale*. It was described by its creator, Daniel Knaufe, as a cross between *Grapes of Wrath* and David Lynch. (More Dennis Potter than Lynch, really, with echoes of *Freaks* and *Les Enfants du Paradis*.) Set in the dustbowls of the 1930s, it contextualises theology, history, politics and war, framed by the most fantastic credit sequence. In lighter mood, the ten-minute snippets of *Creature Comforts*, from the *Wallace & Gromit* people are also worth a look. And don't miss the new setting of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* on January 8. And finally there's *Altered Statesmen*, (Mondays 8:30pm) which is all about how many of our rulers have been mad, as if we needed telling.

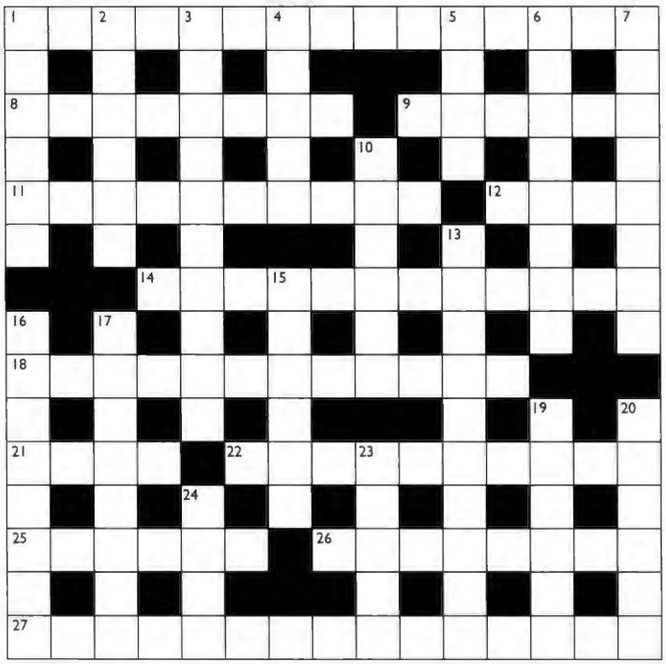
And the best TV moment of 2004 was the International Rules Game (a mixture of Aussie Rules and Gaelic football) between Ireland and Australia, where for seven glorious minutes a Jack Russell chased the ball all around the ground, gaining possession at least once and evading all attempts at capture. The footballers were real men: they tried not to step on the little dog, which as any Jack Russell owner will tell you, was just being a Jack Russell. I never watch football normally, this was very much a bloke thing in our house, but they called me in and we all cheered the naughty little dog, bounding and playing and dodging and having the time of its joyous little life, God bless it. Happy New Year. ■

**Juliette Hughes** is a freelance writer.

puzzled

**Devised by**
**Joan Nowotny IBVM**

## *Eureka Street* Cryptic Crossword no. 130, January–February 2005



### Across

1. The curse of the medical profession. (11, 4)
8. Standing with strip, for example, displaced. (8)
9. Hooray! We've found the stockade! (6)
11. Drive train erratically? Without doubt! (3, 7)
12. Knock for six! It's crazy to go back. (4)
14. She deals with affairs of the heart, perhaps, being aware of 1-across. (12)
18. Worth thinking about, being substantial. (12)
21. Sounds if one takes a part in spinning the bread. (4)
22. He cools ingot, possibly, while acknowledging 1-across. (10)
25. Part of foot, reportedly, when marching thus. (2, 4)
26. English realist unexpectedly gives workshops for artists. (8)
27. Complaint set out in station register – not referrable to 14-across or 22-across. (15).

### Down

1. Act like a kangaroo when jocularly told to go. (3, 3)
2. Membrane, when inflamed, makes you, reportedly, paler. (6)
3. Talk about the sort of cloth under consideration. (2, 3, 5)
4. There's nothing left on this side. (5)
5. The driver could be described as quite a card! (4)
6. Poor Eric can't keep to the middle of the road; he is definitely on the edge. (8)
7. Chief comment is at the top of the page. (8)
10. In 1999, outstanding senior Australian leaders picked this plant. (6)
13. Someone in garment with this feature could reach for 21-across and seize it. (4–6)
15. Longing, we hear, to be changing the colour of one's hair, for example. (6)
16. Inform about sentimental gush, showing contempt. (8)
17. Examination of a sin lays guilt, perhaps, on someone. (8)
19. Greater than anyone else for this quality, Solomon said stirred stew is best! (6)
20. They take siestas out east to avoid stagnation. (6)
23. Short month English teacher initially conducted musical group. (5)
24. Try the case in this place for the audience. (4)

**Solution to Crossword no. 129, December 2004**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 S | A | 2 U | V | 3 I | G | 4 N | O | 5 N | B | 6 L | A | 7 N | C | ■ |
| A | ■ | L | ■ | N | ■ | E | ■ | O | ■ | I | ■ | O | ■ | 8 C |
| 9 P | I | N | O | T | N | O | I | R | ■ | 10 B | I | T | E | R |
| I | ■ | A | ■ | E | ■ | L | ■ | M | ■ | A | ■ | B | ■ | U |
| 11 E | R | R | O | R | ■ | 12 I | N | A | P | T | N | E | S | S |
| N | ■ | ■ | ■ | N | ■ | T | ■ | ■ | ■ | I | ■ | I | ■ | T |
| 13 T | U | 14 B | A | ■ | 15 C | H | A | 16 R | D | O | N | N | A | Y |
| ■ | ■ | E | ■ | 17 S | ■ | I | ■ | I | ■ | N | ■ | I | ■ | ■ |
| 18 M | E | A | L | T | I | C | K | E | T | ■ | 19 A | T | O | 20 P |
| E | ■ | T | ■ | R | ■ | ■ | ■ | S | ■ | 21 S | ■ | ■ | ■ | O |
| 22 R | E | T | R | I | E | 23 V | A | L | ■ | 24 I | N | 25 F | E | R |
| L | ■ | A | ■ | D | ■ | I | ■ | I | ■ | M | ■ | L | ■ | T |
| 26 O | M | B | R | E | ■ | 27 X | E | N | O | P | H | O | B | E |
| T | ■ | L | ■ | N | ■ | E | ■ | G | ■ | E | ■ | R | ■ | N |
| ■ | 28 B | E | A | T | O | N | E | S | B | R | E | A | S | T |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Keoghs Creek, Tasmania. Photo: Philip Sloane

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