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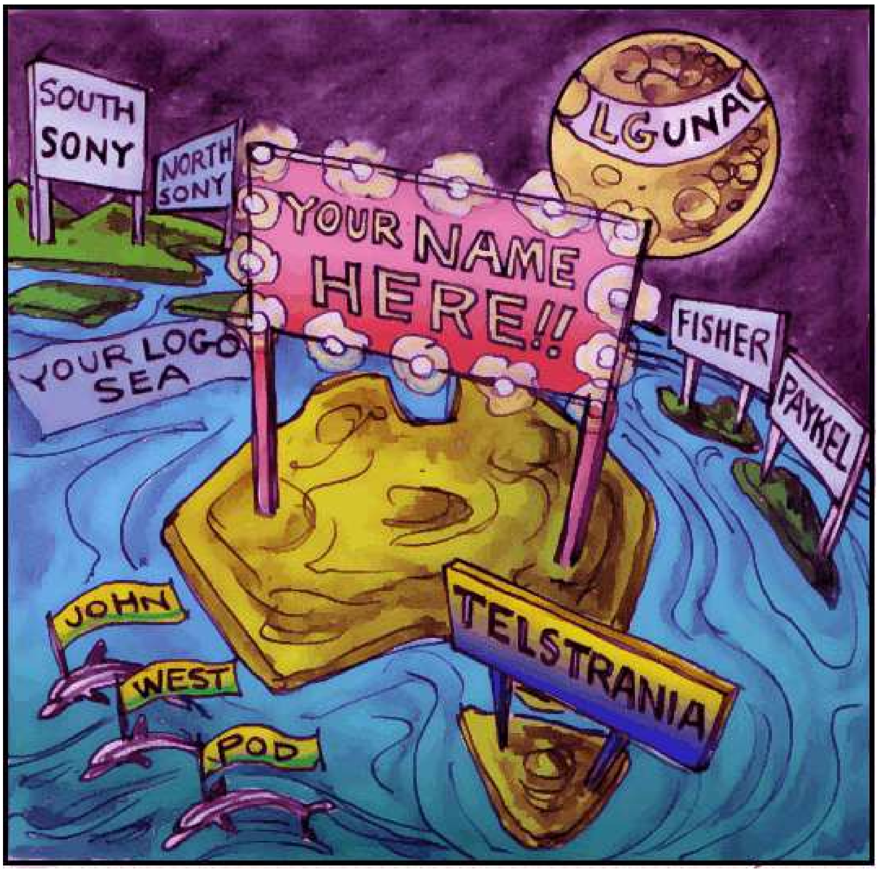
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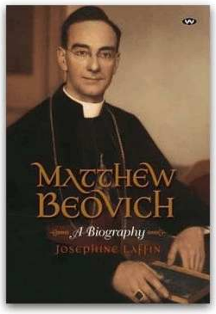
Adelaide’s ‘pivotal’ bishop

BOOKS

Greg O’Kelly

Josephine Laffin: *Matthew Beovich — A Biography*. Wakefield Press , Adelaide, 2008. ISBN: 9781862548176



Edmund Campion once described Adelaide Bishop Matthew Beovich as ‘a pivotal bishop in Australia’s history’.

This richly researched and readable work describes a man much loved in his archdiocese. It brings to life his times. The five decades spanning the 1920s and 1970s were times of intense change for Australia and the Church.

Josephine Laffin has risen superbly to a challenge of grasping and communicating lucidly the inner workings of the Australian Catholic Church. She was also able to draw on a precious resource in Beovich’s personal diary of reflections throughout this period.

Adelaide Catholics who know that ‘Matty’ was the longest serving Archbishop of Adelaide (from 1939 to 1971), are often astounded to hear what he accomplished as a young priest and protegÃ© of Daniel Mannix in Melbourne.

There he was the first Director of Catholic Education, the writer of the Red Catechism and its Companion, a principal broadcaster in the *Catholic Hour* and editor of the Australian Catholic Truth Society (ACTS) pamphlets on matters devotional and doctrinal.

He was clearly favoured by Dr Mannix. His appointment as Archbishop of Adelaide without reference to Dr Mannix may have reflected the uncomfortable relationship between Dr Mannix and Archbishop Panico, the Apostolic Delegate.

The significance of Beovich’s Melbourne work can be seen in statistics. The Catechism (red in Victoria; green in New South Wales) was in the hands of every child in Catholic schools in Australia. In 1925 alone 62,000 of the Red Catechism were sold. In the same year 360,000 ACTS pamphlets, displayed in all Catholic churches, were sold.

Five years before Beovich’s arrival there, the Catholic population of South Australia was 12 per cent; by 1971, when he retired, it was 27 per cent.

In contrast to Melbourne, Catholics suffered from discrimination and were little represented in civic leadership or in the professions. Premier Thomas Playford, Baptist and Freemason, had no Catholic in his government until 1953. The first Catholic Judge in South Australia was not appointed until 1959. The first Catholic Premier took up office some years later.

In Adelaide, too, previous bishops had preferred to recruit Irish priests rather than train local men. As late as 1955 two thirds of the clergy of the archdiocese were Irish. Even before he arrived in Adelaide Dr Beovich planned a new seminary. He received ten or so new students there each year.

Through the colleges that he invited Religious Orders to found (so increasing the high schools from eight to 17), more Catholics became involved in politics and leadership.

Beovich was Archbishop of a burgeoning church. In 1967 there were 86 students in the Adelaide seminary. Every year new parishes, churches and schools opened. Of the 54 diocesan parish priests in 1971, 27 were under 50, and 14 were under 40.

He also led the Catholic Church through the experiences that helped shape present day Australian Catholicism.

Post-war immigration transformed Australia. With a Croatian background, Beovich moved instinctively to welcome and care for the many thousands of 'New Australians' who came to South Australia.

Between 1953 to 1963, for example, a church serving the Italian community celebrated 1600 marriages and 3300 baptisms. In schools, it was not unusual for one nun to teach a class of over 100 students, the majority of whose parents were non-English speaking.

The Labor Party split also occurred during Beovich's time as Archbishop. He did not favour the Movement, going from describing B. A. Santamaria as the most outstanding layman in the Church to regarding his activities with dismay.

Beovich also attended all four sessions of the Second Vatican Council. His diary shows him changing from a man of conservative outlook to a reformist who implemented the Council directions. He also had to deal with events like the Vietnam War and the 1968 publication of the encyclical Humanae Vitae.

Edmund Campion judges that 'South Australia became the most creative centre in the Australian Catholic community'. Beovich distanced himself from political movements that would cause agitation, including the Movement, the Goulburn school strike, the Vietnam War, and the move to nationalise the Banks.

He encouraged lay activity and appointed young priests to important social movements and organisations, such as the Catholic Family Welfare, Catholic Education, the Guild of Social Studies, the Catholic Adult Education Association, the Catholic Migrant Centre, the editorship of the Southern Cross, and so on.

Laffin captures very well a most interesting period in the history of the Catholic Church in Australia through her study of a deeply spiritual leader, intelligent and adroit. To his priests he was famous for his inability to remember their names. Once he asked a priest, 'Oh Father, how is your dear father?' 'Still dead, Your Grace,' was the reply. A man dedicated to his vocation, he left only $4000 when he died.

How G-G weakened monarchists’ case

POLITICS

John Warhurst

smh.com.au
The Sydney Morning Herald

National

Environment Obituaries Multimedia

Criticism over G-G's Africa tour

March 9, 2009

THE Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith, has defended as "absolutely essential" a 19-day, nine-country tour of Africa by the Governor-General, Quentin Bryce.

Amid claims it will politicise her role, Mr Smith said Ms Bryce would promote Australia's bid for a seat on the United Nations Security Council on the trip but there were far deeper reasons to improve relations with Africa.

"We have neglected a continent of nearly 1 billion people and we

Quentin Bryce...under fire.

Today's Coverage

Couple shot at in car

Corrections

The announcement by the Prime Minister’s media office of the Governor-General’s visit to Africa referred to Quentin Bryce as ‘Australia’s Head of State’.

Whether this terminology was a self-conscious step by the Prime Minister himself, or just a lazy short-hand drafting mistake, is not the point. It shows how the term ‘head of state’ to describe the office of Governor-General has crept into the Australian language.

This usage has political implications. It enables monarchists to counter the popular appeal of the idea of an Australian head of state instead of the British Queen. An Australian Governor-General can be sold to the public as an Australian Head of State regardless of the constitutional position.

But it is a short-term victory for monarchists. The usage further diminishes the monarchy in Australia. It is a dead-end to describe the Queen by the much vaguer term of ‘sovereign of Australia’, which opens up the debate to a new republican counter-slogan: ‘Australian sovereignty, not a British sovereign’.

With her trip to Africa, Bryce is on dangerous ground. Julie Bishop, the Opposition spokesperson on Foreign Affairs, has criticised the trip. So too have several newspaper editorials.

But former Governor-General Bill Hayden, who is no friend of the Rudd Government despite his Labor background, has defended the trip, arguing that Governors-General should be free to travel and to speak on Australia’s behalf.

The controversy may only be clarified once it becomes clearer just what she does while she is in Africa.

The implication for the monarchy/republic debate is that the appointment of the Governor-General by the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister alone has again been shown to be a flawed system. It lends itself to involving the office in partisan politics.

That’s precisely what occurred with the ill-fated Archbishop Peter Hollingworth. Hollingworth, appointed by John Howard in 2001, was subject to strong criticism for his personal failings by the Labor Opposition Leader, Simon Crean, before his eventual resignation from office in 2003.

Like Bryce in 2008, Hollingworth was appointed under a system that freezes out the Parliament, the Opposition and the people at large. The perception that he was a Howard appointee, weakened his position.

Several commentators in *The Australian* newspaper, including Greg Sheridan, suggest Bryce's actions weaken the case for a republic with a directly elected president. That claim confuses two points. The first is ill-judged partisan activity (or activities that can be interpreted as partisan) on behalf of the government of the day by a Governor-General/President. The second is independent activity on her or his own behalf by a Governor-General/President.

There can be no valid criticism that Bryce is engaged in the latter; that is, speaking out of turn as a loose cannon. Rather the criticism is that she is unwisely doing the Government's bidding on a controversial political issue. If that is the case, the controversy contributes to a case for change, not a defense of the status quo.

This system should go. It would be far better to have either parliamentary appointment by a two-thirds majority of Parliament (the 1999 referendum approach) or direct popular election by the people. The former would involve parliamentary debate and include the Opposition. The latter would involve the people in an electoral process.

The trouble with free speech

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***It’s Hard Being Loved By Jerks (C’est dur d’Ãªtre aimÃ© par des cons)*: 118 minutes. Director: Daniel Leconte**

FESTIVAL DE CANNES
un film de DANIEL LECONTE
« C'EST DUR D'ÊTRE AIMÉ PAR DES CONS »

A sign posted at the base of Uluru bears a request from the site’s traditional owners, the Anangu community, that visitors not climb the rock. It’s not just a matter of sacredness. The climb is dangerous, and they feel responsibile for those who visit their land.

For many tourists a discrepancy of values comes into play. Western individualism asserts itself against the notion of communal responsibility. ‘The traditional owners are not responsible for me. I am responsible for myself.’ Some of these tourists subsequently ignore the request, and climb Uluru.

But of course, it’s not a question of values, but one of respect. To respect the Anangu as the traditional owners demands respecting their wishes, whether you agree with their reasons or not. You do not decide to smoke in a non-smoker’s house, in the name of free expression.

So it is that the 2006—2007 controversy surrounding the publication in Denmark of several satirical cartoons, portraying the prophet Muhammad and deemed offensive to Muslims is not as clear-cut as the makers of *It’s Hard Being Loved By Jerks* might have us think.

The lively and engaging documentary recounts the trial of French satirical paper *Charlie Hebdo*, taken to court by the Grand Mosque and the Union of French Islamic Organisations for its republication of the notorious *Jyllands-Posten* Muhammad cartoons .

In addition to those cartoons, including one of a beady-eyed, coarse-black-bearded Muhammad with a sparking bomb in his turban, the paper featured an original cover image, titled ‘Muhammad overwhelmed by fundamentalists’, in which a distraught Muhammad tearfully declares: ‘It’s hard being loved by jerks’.

To the plaintiffs, the cartoons are racist: the images not only link all Muslims to terrorism but also label them universally as ‘jerks’. But the editorial staff at *Charlie Hebdo* insist that the target of the sleight is not all Muslims, but only fundamentalists and extremists.

The documentary *is* lively and engaging, and admittedly that’s due in part to its unashamed one-sidedness. To the staff of *Charlie Hebdo*, and to documentarian Daniel Leconte, the debate can be reduced to a simple dichotomy of free speech versus obscurantism.

No courtroom footage is presented. Instead Leconte spends a good deal of the film's two-hour running time allowing key players, including *Charlie Hebdo*'s passionate, if arrogant, editor Philippe Val, to wax lyrical on the unassailable value of free speech in a democratic society, and openly mock the absurdity of the trial.

Leconte does present scenes that take place in the foyer outside the courtroom, where members of the public cram together and debate the cartoons' merits. This evokes the broader conversation about free speech that, prompted by the *Jyllands-Posten* and *Charlie Hebdo* cases, was taking place throughout the world at the time.

Only one dissenting voice is featured, that of Francis Szpiner, chief attorney for the plaintiffs, and he presents as an officious little twerp unlikely to win anyone's sympathies. There's a marked contrast between Leconte's interrogation of Szpiner, and his chuckling affability when conversing with Val et al.

If it's clear where Leconte's sympathies lie, then these sympathies are very likely shared by most Western viewers — this reviewer included. I believe satire is a powerful tool for interrogating the status quo and provoking thought on tough issues. Free speech is an important value in democratic society.

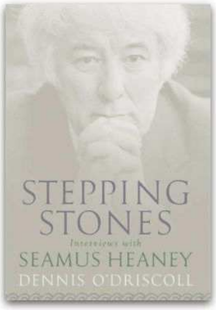
But as with Uluru tourism, it is a mistake to focus only on such values, and not on respect. If something causes offence, it is problematic to place blame on the one who is offended. Some moderate Muslims did perceive the cartoons as equating all of Islam with terrorism. Can their feelings be easily written off in the name of free speech?

It's Hard Being Loved By Jerks *is screening as part of the Alliance Francais French Film Festival , touring Australia March-April 2009.*

Non-believer drawn by the sacred

APPLICATION

James McEvoy



Nobel prize-winning Irish poet Seamus Heaney attends closely to life. The natural world reveals itself afresh to his gaze. And when tracing the contours of human experience, he can catch readers off-guard bringing to light unexpected moments of tenderness, discovery, or wonder.

For Heaney, reality matters: words give voice to the matter-at-hand. Having spent more than 50 years finding words for that which comes into view, his writing covers a great deal of territory: people, places and events that are well traversed in Dennis O'Driscoll's *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney*.

One theme that caught my attention in these interviews was that of the meaning and practice of faith. Heaney's reflections about his own journey of faith bring to light important aspects of a more general cultural shift in the West.

As a young, Catholic university student in late 1950s Belfast, Heaney three times made the penitential pilgrimage to Lough Derg, a sanctuary of St Patrick in County Donegal. He entered seriously into the ritual walk, the repetition of prayers, and the fast.

In retrospect he sees that it was the external challenge that held his attention back then: the walking unshod, the struggling to stay awake, and the fasting. 'You were necessarily concentrated on getting through it but not necessarily absorbed in sacred reverie,' he remembers.

Not that it was without its rewards: he was buoyed by the company of friends and on completion found the experience cathartic.

Through the '60s and '70s a change occurred. Catholic vocabulary and practices slipped from Heaney's view as he turned his attention at first to university life and later to a career in poetry, to marriage and a young family.

There was also, of course, the secular temper of the age: 'a general, generational assent to the proposition that God is dead'. He experienced as a loss the fading power of Catholic ritual and prayer in his life. Until then it had been a source of great refreshment.

Thirty or more years hence, he still does not make the leap of faith yet a renewed appreciation of the sacred pervades his work. To some degree this was a result of his immersion in the classics of Western culture, particularly Dante's *Commedia,* which re-awakened the depth of meaning in Catholic cosmology.

But the language of his Catholic past has found new power now. In the poem

'Out of This World', he traces the journey from his childhood immersion in ritual to the present, saying of his mature understanding:

And yet I cannot

disavow words like 'thanksgiving' or 'host'

or 'communion bread'. They have an undying

tremor and draw, like well water far down.

What to make of Heaney's spiritual journey? It could easily be seen as a casualty of the so-called secularising effect of the '60s and '70s; as a loss of religious faith followed by the emergence of a more syncretistic spirituality.

But such a judgement misses the major transition. Heaney describes a shift from faith understood primarily as external adherence to ritual, to faith or the spiritual quest as having profound personal resonance. Even though he no longer sees himself as a believer, sacred words now 'have an undying/tremor and draw'. They have the capacity to shake the soul and beckon it forth. (Not that I wouldn't love Heaney to discover the full joy of Christian faith: I would, if he so discovered it.)

In what is regarded as a major work on the place of religion today, *A Secular Age,*Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor offers an account of this turn to the personal. He sees early 19th Century Romanticism as a pivotal movement, with its emphasis on each person finding their own particular way of expressing their humanity.

He argues that since the 1960s the legacy of Romanticism has permeated popular culture in the West. As a result, religion has found a new place. In Taylor's words, 'The religious life or practice that I become part of ... must speak to me, it must make sense in terms of my spiritual development as I understand this.'

This intensely personal understanding of faith has great risks, particularly the subjectivist temptation to think that I determine what reality or even the divine is. It also presents the churches with the immense challenge of personally connecting with every believer and potential believer.

On balance, however, I think that the turn to the personal must be judged a step forward. Augustine's famous line, which he addresses to God, 'You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you', finds richer meaning in this context.

How to survive committee meetings

BY THE WAY

Brian Matthews

In a previous life I sat on many committees, but now I live in committeeless bliss. I remember them though — vividly. Which is not difficult because, in many ways, all committees are the same committee.

At the head of the table sits the chairperson who, despite the non-sexist title, is almost always a bloke. At his right hand sits the executive secretary who, despite the non-gender specific nomenclature, is almost always a woman. The chair will kick off with, 'Perhaps we should make a start', knowing that there are still five members to come — the same five members who are always to come. Nevertheless, he has a go.

'Any apologies?' The executive secretary reports that the representative from Global Financial Crisis Watch has disappeared along with all of GFCW's operating funds and that Victoria Dark, secretary to the Minister for Daylight Saving, will miss several meetings because she has gone into labour.

'Gone over to Labor?' This shocked ejaculation comes from what looks like a dehydrated boxthorn hedge wrapped in swathes of faded green corduroy, but is in fact Professor Evan Garble, Head of the Department of Fine Arts and Emissions Gambling at the Canberra Institute for the Arts and Emissions Gambling (CIAEG).

He is fighting a doomed battle to revive the old-style professoriate, which means invariably bringing the wrong agenda, being in any case always two items behind, glimpsing the world intermittently through an astonishing eruption of anarchic hair, moving five points of order but mislaying the last three, and dressing like a city tramp up on his luck.

'Minutes of the last meeting,' says the chairman, soldiering on. 'May I sign these?' But the latecomers arrive as he speaks with just enough interval between each to make any further business impossible till they settle.

One puffs and heaves, muttering something that sounds like 'F*****g stairs' but may have been 'Not enough chairs'. Another trips as he enters and distributes his papers, folders, glasses and pens along the length of the room, as if laying a trail to ensure a safe escape.

When it comes to dress and style, all committees are not quite the same committee. Here for example is the Committee on Institutional and Educational Guidelines (CIAEG), bringing to its current discussion a mix of sexy short skirts, terrible beards, a variety of suits and ties, several of them mute testimony to what blokes were getting married in around 1963, tight jeans and aging chic.

Conversely, a meeting of the members of the Centre for Investment, Amortizing and Economic Gradualism (CIAEG) will look like the display window at Henry Buck's and will, if it comes to that, be about as animated.

All committees are the same committee again, however, if you simply listen and don't look. At just about any committee meeting there are certain forms and combinations of words which will be accepted as the English language by everyone around the table.

For example, it's good to say things like, 'We'll have to real-time this one to impact on the offshore numbers', or 'Thinking outside the box will enforce some tough bottom-lining in the short term', or 'Prior to offshoring infrastructural considerations, could we give some thought to mainstreaming alternative audit phases', or for chairpeople, 'If members wouldn't mind diarising this one and we'll do the prioritising subsequently'.

Some committee rules of thumb: always say 'prior to' instead of 'before', 'in excess of' instead of 'more than' and 'in the approximate vicinity of' instead of 'about'.

Acronyms and initials are crucial in committee talk and always worth a run. A sentence like 'Provided the CIAEG go along with our ESPs, I can't see ASOP taking anything but a favourable attitude which will mean a GRW rating for sure' will have everybody nodding with totally uncomprehending enthusiasm.

As a general rule, committees approvingly spawn a certain modest level of illiteracy, especially to do with singular and plural. It is useful to say things like: 'This one is the most important criteria' and 'a very significant phenomena' and 'There's probably five major points here' — though never ever say 'There is five points', people would laugh at your ignorance.

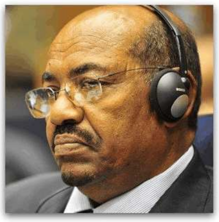
Committees, for reasons as yet unrevealed by research, refuse to acknowledge the ramifications of the plural. Statements in newspapers that read, 'There's many reasons for the economic downturn' and signs in shops that announce, 'There's only three months till Christmas' have all been devised by plural-hating committees.

But, at the end of the day, even a chairman is human, as he turns to his wife in bed and says in a husky voice, 'I'm a bit tired tonight, darling, but I'd be happy to prioritise a libidinous agenda for a night not in excess of three days from now.' How could she resist!

ICC’s dubious Darfur justice

POLITICS

Kimberley Layton



The background noise over Darfur appears to have finally reached its crescendo with the International Criminal Court issuing an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir.

Bashir has been waltzing around Sudan with impunity since 1989, promising the international community that the country ‘will act as a responsible government’ while overseeing the deaths of at least 300,000 people (Khartoum claims that the number is 10,000), and the displacement of approximately 2.7 million.

His actions have won him the dubious honour of becoming the first ever serving head of state indicted by the ICC. Though the panel of three judges claimed there was insufficient evidence to charge Bashir with genocide, he stands accused of two counts of war crimes and five of crimes against humanity in Darfur.

In retaliation to this affront, Bashir has expelled ten foreign aid agencies who, according to him, have undertaken ‘activities that act in contradiction to all regulation and laws’.

Organisations including Oxfam , Save the Children , Care and MÃ©decins Sans FrontiÃ¨res , in conjunction with the UN, currently run the world’s largest humanitarian operation in Darfur providing humanitarian assistance to more than 1.5 million people. Their expulsion from the region leaves those people with nowhere to turn.

Established in 2002, the ICC has hauled before its tribunal such shady superstars as former Serb President Slobodan Milosevic (who escaped sentencing by dying mid-trial) and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, who remains in custody there.

Charles Taylor, the former Liberian President, has been extradited to face trial in front of a Special Court created by the UN for the violence in Sierra Leone. Jean Kambanda, the former Rwandan prime minister, was convicted of genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal in another landmark case.

Recently, ‘Duch’, a top Khmer Rouge leader, was tried in front of a Cambodian UN-established court. A similar set-up may soon find itself faced with the prosecution of top echelon Syrian officials over the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Not since Nuremburg or the Tokyo trials held at the conclusion of the Second World War have courts been given jurisdiction over individual citizens as opposed to just over states. Since the end of the Cold War there have been considerable, though largely unremarked upon, advancements made in the international legal system.

As such, this latest act of the ICC ought to initiate an international patting of backs. Or should it? The African Union has called an emergency meeting in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa over the arrest warrant, only a day after warning it would hurt the fragile peace process. China, which has significant economic investments in Sudan (read: oil), and Russia, both armed with UN Security Council vetoes, have indicated they will halt any UN action.

The rebels have declared it impossible to negotiate with an indicted leader. Then there is the grave question of the people of Darfur who are now left stranded due to the untimely exit of the aid agencies. What of them? Given that this is Africa, and that they are absent from our television screens at present, more will die. Thus what seems like the beginning of the end of the tragedy of Darfur risks becoming simply the end of the beginning.

Supporters of the ICC claim to stand for ethics, for what is 'right', and for justice, yet the complexities of the situation ought to give us all pause.

The decision to pursue Bashir is ultimately a political choice that involves difficult trade-offs. The ICC can only deliver justice in its most legalistic form; it is forced by its very nature to neglect the wider and more nuanced meaning of the word.

Prosecuting Bashir will not deliver justice to the people of Darfur. Absent the humanitarian aid that they depend on to survive they will be delivered into an even worse situation.

Yet turning a blind eye to Bashir's atrocities is perhaps just as irresponsible. Sudanese Humanitarian Affairs Minister Ahmed Haroun, himself wanted for war crimes, remarked that 'it is up to the international community to weigh up the damage made by [ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo's] application and the arrest warrant'.

The international community might have finally turned off the music in an attempt to stop Bashir's brutal waltz, but at what cost? The stakes could not be higher.

God of the empty image

POETRY

Peter Lach-Newinsky

Meister Eckhart

To reach these common nuns
I must speak common German.
Invent a language by bending it
back into itself standing firmly on nothing.
For to attain God everything must go:
will, self, knowledge, word, God Himself,
to love Him as He is: non-God
non-image, hidden in the ground
of soul buried, destroyed, sinking
in the Godhead from nothing to nothing
down inside the self a silent
bottomless sea touching nothing,
no creatures that are all His speaking
heard only in the abyss of stillness
when knowing knows unknowing,
thought self shatters, bereft of thing ...
Yet my fellow Dominicans are confused
as they defend me and burn my lay followers.
They dare not yet seek my head
tortured empty of the images,
idols they have engraved in text
and the smoking flesh of heretics.
I am no heretic. Their faith is words.
Mine unspeakable.

Not Poem

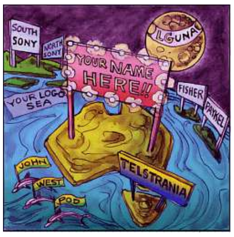
not positive nor negative nor neither

not God nor Devil nor either
not Buddha nor the road to kill him on
not Harry the horse nor a mermaid's song
not me not you not I not we
not sky nor sense nor being free
not tree nor fowl nor cloud of unknowing
not mum nor dad nor not showing
up in heaven, hell or in school
not lying down at the bottom of the pool
not male nor female nor transvestite
not deadly insight in the dead of night
not mellowing nor manically meditating
not lucidly lying nor languidly levitating
not full nor empty
not I that's plenty
not I that's plenty

What price our sporting soul

SPORT

Edwina Byrne



Last year when Viewed crossed the finish line of the Melbourne Cup and I tore up my TAB tickets, I became suddenly furious.

I was not angry at my personal financial loss, insubstantial and predicted as it was, but at the pictures on my television screen of the various VIPs and officials gathering around the victorious trainer and jockey. These VIPs, who would once have stood gloved and top-hatted, now wore red Emirates baseball caps to present the ‘Emirates Melbourne Cup’.

I was outraged. This wasn’t Emirates’ Melbourne Cup. It was Melbourne’s Melbourne cup.

Corporations seem to think they own a lot of our stuff, as it happens. The most recent incarnation of this belief is the trend for buying naming rights to Australia’s public works — indeed it seems all our sporting arenas undergo quasi-annual name changes.

These buildings, and the events that take place within them, constitute our urban and cultural landscapes, and should be sources of community pride, especially in a country in which sport is so central to identity.

These stadiums should be, in the marketing jargon, our ‘third places’; we should feel as much at home using these facilities as we do in a town square.

Federation Square in Melbourne, by the by, is sponsored by BMW and Optus, but its name and its identity as a public space remain; its angular facades unencumbered by corporate badging. Federation Square is just one example of how we can sell our events and amenities to sponsors without selling our souls.

Superficial as it may seem, the first step to reclaiming our public facilities should be reclaiming their names. Why should Western Australians, for example, abide names such ‘Medibank Stadium’ and ‘Members Equity Stadium’ when they could dedicate these public works to some unsung local hero?

Even when Members Equity’s contract expires, ‘Perth Oval’ will never return — not least because it is now rectangular — so why not immortalise a name such as William ‘Nipper’ Truscott of the Mines Rovers, East Fremantle, and State football teams? Nipper secured Western Australia’s first carnival win against Victoria in 1921 with a saving mark as the siren sounded.

Likewise Sydney music fans might attend concerts at Johnny O’Keefe or Bee Gees Park instead of ACER Arena, and Suncorp Stadium might be returned to its former glory as ‘Lang Park’. Prior to its redevelopment as Suncorp in 2003, the park was named for the feisty Presbyterian clergyman, writer and republican John Dunmore Lang, and was nicknamed 'The Cauldron' for Queenslanders' tendency for, shall we say, 'spirited' barracking.

Alternatively, the park at North Brisbane could choose its moniker from the names of those pioneers who are buried beneath its turf — the site was Brisbane's primary cemetery until 1875.

Perhaps, instead of Hisense Arena, Victorians could submit the name 'Maddock', in honour of the stadium's new, internationally accredited cycling track. Sarah Maddock, the vision-impaired daughter of a NSW dairy farmer, was the first woman in the world to attempt a long-distance bicycle ride.

She rode her 30lb Conqueror safety machine from Sydney to Melbourne in 1894; she cycled through bushfires, tropical downpours and creeks to Brisbane and back in 1895. What's more, she completed these rides in a long skirt, black satin knickerbockers and stays, resisting the contemporary movement towards 'rational dress'.

These suggestions are not merely the ravings of an overzealous history graduate. Reclaiming the public's naming rights makes economic sense too. The short term gains accrued by selling off these rights are far outweighed by the long term loss of the public 'brand'.

Consider, for example, the value of Wimbledon as a brand. Even when we disregard the cultural importance of the tournament, in calculating Wimbledon's value we must consider the tourist dollars it attracts, and the value of television rights, merchandise and annual sponsorship bids; all of which would be less lucrative if Wimbledon lacked its historic and cultural associations.

The brand 'Wimbledon' evokes a whole range of associations with British taste and style which sponsors can capitalise upon. By associating with Wimbledon, sponsors are saying 'We're elegant, timeless, and sophisticated — we are British'.

Likewise, *The Age* sponsors Colonial Stadium ... erm ... Telstra Dome to emphasise its Melburnian, sporting identity. Will the stadium retain this value, such as it is, when it becomes Etihad Stadium in March? Will Melburnians view Etihad as a brand with local connections, or as a coloniser?

In 50 years, when Perth's old folks reminisce about watching the Force at a stadium named for a bank, will their children gaze at the Pier Street stadium with the same reverence we reserve for Subiaco? Will breweries vie with airlines for the chance to associate themselves with old ACER arena, that fondly regarded local institution? Or will it be regarded as just a local incarnation of an international franchise?

What we sell these sponsors is an opportunity to increase their 'brand recognition'. Perhaps we should nurture our institutions' own identities first — it's what the marketing pros call 'creating value'. Yeah, I know. And these are the people naming our stadiums.

East Timor’s digger friend

EULOGY

Paul Cleary

Paddy Kenneally (1916—2009) quit his job as a wharfie the day Japan bombed Pearl Harbour in 1941 and enlisted in the Australian Army. One month later, after undergoing minimal training, the tough Irishman was on his way to join an elite guerrilla unit in East Timor.

While more than 20,000 Australian soldiers were captured by the Japanese on islands to the north of Australia, the unit in Timor known as the 2/2nd Australian Independent Company fought a successful guerrilla war in the mountains.

As the Oscar-winning filmmaker Damien Parer noted at the time, the men in this unit were ‘unique in that they remained an organised fighting body all through the lightning Jap successes ... These lads are writing an epic of guerrilla warfare.’

Kenneally took part in two of the defining actions of this campaign during his year of service there.

On the night of 14 May 1942 he was one of 13 men who mounted a raid into the heart of the Japanese headquarters in the capital, Dili. The men shot up the barracks and escaped without suffering any casualties. Kenneally, and his platoon commander Geoff Laidlaw, were the last to come of the town that night.

One week later, when the Japanese came looking for the raiders, Kenneally was there again. He was one of six men who ambushed about 100 Japanese soldiers near the village of Remexio, in the hills above Dili.

The Australians were armed with 303 rifles and one sub-machine gun, but they used the terrain of Timor to their advantage and took more than 20 enemy casualties. One of those killed in this attack was a senior Japanese officer who had been brought to Timor to drive out the bandits in mountains.

All of this would not have been possible without the support of the local population. Kenneally and other veterans said they would not have lasted a week had the Timorese not protected them.

The Timorese paid dearly for their support, with an estimated 40—60,000 perishing in the conflict. As Kenneally often said, all they got from supporting us was misery.

Kenneally served with the 2/2 for the rest of the war and saw action in New Guinea. He also returned to PNG after the war and at 75 climbed Mt Wilhelm, the country’s highest mountain.

John Patrick Kenneally, always known as Paddy, who has died aged 93, was born in Youghal, County Cork, Ireland, son of Michael Kenneally and his wife Mary Ellen Morrissey. The family migrated to Australia in 1927.

By virtue of his energy and longevity, Paddy Kenneally probably did more than any other person to remind Australia of its debt to the Timorese, especially after the Whitlam Government gave Indonesia the green light to invade the territory in 1975.

During the occupation Kenneally visited the territory four times, starting in 1990, when he was 76, and travelled extensively around the hills where he had fought. He returned three more times after the ballot on self determination.

Kenneally reported back to East Timor activists in Australia, and to the veterans who remained involved in the country, through aid projects and their newsletter, the *2/2 Commando Courier*.

While he was a Labor man through and through, Kenneally had little time for Gough Whitlam because of his support for Indonesia’s invasion.

Opening a photo exhibition on East Timor in Parliament House, Canberra in 1996 in the presence of several Labor luminaries, Kenneally lambasted Whitlam for his treatment of the Timorese. When in 2005 East Timor was struggling to get a fair deal in negotiations over Timor Sea oil, Kenneally rallied his mates to fight one last time for East Timor.

Appearing in national television ads on the eve of ANZAC Day, Kenneally and five other veterans called on the Howard Government to give the impoverished new nation a fair go. Kenneally told Prime Minister John Howard in his appearance: ‘I’d rather that you did not come to my ANZAC Day parade.’

The following day, the Australian Government capitulated, offering East Timor a 50 per cent share of the disputed Greater Sunrise field.

Right to the end, Kenneally’s love for the Timorese and the country where he fought remained fervent. Last year, he returned there with two sons and a grandson, where he attended the ANZAC Day service at the war memorial built by the 2/2 veterans overlooking Dili.

Paddy Kenneally is survived by his wife of 57 years, Nora (nee Kelly), their children Gerald, Helen, Michael and Sean, and seven grandchildren.

Gain from pain

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

REVERSALS
REVERSALS
The Jesuit Lenten
Podcast Series

Victorian premier John Brumby has secured a massive lead over the state opposition following the Victorian bushfire crisis last month. According to Newspoll published in The Australian on Friday, the proportion of voters favouring Labor has surged to 46 per cent, compared with 33 per cent for the Coalition.

Commentators including *The Australian*'s Rick Wallace suggest that Brumby 'seems to be the beneficiary of the voters' tendency to rally around a leader during a crisis'. But it's more likely that Brumby has shown his true colours as a competent leader. It's only necessary to contrast his performance with George W. Bush's inept and divisive handling of Hurricane Katrina, which left America rudderless, and precipitated his popular downfall.

It's a truism to say that a community will emerge stronger from a well-managed crisis. A leader's task is simply to remind people that they can pull through, patch and fix what's broken, and set up a mechanism that will not only support the community through the current crisis, but prepare them to better face future crises, should they arrive. Brumby has proven more than capable.

The bushfires occurred during a time of great financial uncertainty. But Australians distinguished themselves by generously giving money. It was as if they were consciously and calculatingly investing their funds in a scheme called 'the solidarity of the community', because they believed that would bring them the best long-term gain to their own sense of well-being. Time will tell that they were not far wrong.

Jesuit clinical psychologist and trauma counsellor Peter Hosking reflects on the bushfire crisis in the first of a series of Lenten podcasts launched last week by Jesuit Communications.

He says that the bushfires were genuinely shocking, and the disruption to the lives of the communities since has represented an acute sense of pain for many individuals and communities. But for the community at large, there has been 'an extraordinary amount of bonding for people as we've experienced that with them'.

'It is tremendously helpful for people to have that sense of solidarity ... to know that there are people out there who understand, and who are willing to work in solidarity with them as they do their recovery.'

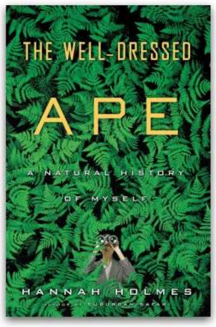
Some Australians are aware that the quality of life of other Australians has been severely diminished by circumstances beyond their control, and they are willing to contribute their own resources towards doing something about it. Such goodwill has the makings of a solidarity that can extend to other more ingrained calamities at home, such as Aboriginal health, and overseas, such as the genocide in Darfur.

Why humans rule the world

BOOKS

Jen Vuk

Hannah Holmes, *The Well-dressed Ape: A Natural History of Myself*, Scribe Publications, 2009, RRP $35.00. ISBN 9781921372520



With our high-brow ideas (courtesy of those 'huge, hot' brains of ours), formidable motor skills (thanks to those dexterous digits) and professional indifference, we humans have long enjoyed our place at the head of the animal kingdom's table.

Now, in *The Well-dressed Ape,* US science journalist Hannah Holmes turns a cool, scientific eye back on us, reminding *Homo Sapiens*of our mammalian origins and, in the process, bringing us down to size or, more to the point, down to the rudiments of our species.

Offering herself up as 'an average enough specimen', Holmes casts a critical eye over the body she's long taken for granted (bar the bits and bobs she's all too aware of). She concludes that before her stands an upright creature disarmingly vulnerable in its 'knobby', pink-skinned nakedness. Odd-looking, one might say ludicrously top heavy. Yet it's this very peculiarity that's also the key to our success.

'The combination of a light body and heavy brain undeniably works,' writes Holmes. 'My species is prospering. And if we look a little funny while we're doing it, we can change that, too.'

When it comes to us humans it's all in the mind, she concludes: 'The brain has evolved to dominate the animal. The organ consumes a large percentage of the body's energy budget. In exchange, the brain makes possible the human's tremendous tool kit, which at this time ranges from stone axes to melon ballers and a space station.'

Size definitely adds 'voltage' to muscles, organs and nerves, but the human brain 'floats above that scale' and is strongly influenced by sex hormones as it develops in the foetus.

We're a smart lot alright, even if our behaviour is, at times, highly questionable. Not only do we mark our territory 'with doors, fences and plastic flamingos', our appetites are governed as much by emotion as by hunger or need, our communication is powerful and flexible as well as manipulative, and while we're sexually proactive it's often without a thought for reproduction.

But here's the rub: Whales, dolphins and elephants all beat us in the cranium stakes, and linguistically our chatter seems no more or less intelligent than, say, a prairie dog's or European starling's. And these are only two we know of. Ouch.

The one thing that truly separates humans from the pack is our need to 'understand ourselves ... with the status quo satisfactory, we'd have nothing to discuss. *Homo Sapiens* would finally fall silent.'

Could this be why we've made such a mess of our planet? If everything was in order, and the natural world wasn't in such peril, we'd grow bored, right? Holmes is far too diplomatic to suggest this outright, although read what you will in the title of her final chapter: 'A bull in a China shop: ecosystem impacts'.

While humans do bad things, we are not the baddies. Like all of God's creatures 'we marshal the natural resources necessary to propel its offspring into the future'. The problem is that we've become so good at it: 'The entire world, including its seas, atmosphere, and even space beyond, now bears the mark of this unusual creature. Its ecosystem impact, one could say, is total.'

Holmes has managed to pack a mountain of data into 350-odd pages and, as a result, there are times when she leaves the reader behind. An overly liberal sprinkling of the metaphorical, too, had me stumbling. For example: 'Mom, who lost some height to the old-fashioned polio virus, is another long drink of water.' (huh?).

That said, this is still one heck of book. Despite its weighty subject matter, Holmes imbues her observations with enduring optimism, providing a lively dissertation on a perennially exciting and exasperating subject: Us. With a love for language that rivals her love of anthropology, she combines an amazing head for facts with candour and a wonderful, wondrous cadence. A resonant, rollicking read.

Religion lives on in the ABC's shallow pool

MEDIA

Peter Kirkwood

The question of the coverage of religion is vexed. It's useful to compare how it has fared on TV and radio. This week ABC TV's *Compass* celebrates its 21st birthday . In the fickle and faddish world of television that's quite an achievement.

But there is a certain irony and sadness in the anniversary. While the longevity of the flagship religious program on TV is being lauded, the religious flagship program of ABC Radio has been axed. I refer of course to the cancellation of *The Religion Report*, and I use the words 'irony' and 'sadness' advisedly.

First, the irony. Although TV is an intellectually shallow medium, radio deals well with sustained presentation and discussion of ideas. Television struggles to present complex and abstract ideas, beliefs and values. Driven by visual narrative, TV has other strengths. It presents story, emotion and personality well. So in dealing with and presenting religious experience, perhaps it's the more powerful medium.

When I was trying to entice serious religious commentators to appear on TV, they often voiced concerns about being trivialised, or complained that they couldn't possibly express themselves in a 15 second interview grab. I always responded that while TV overall may be shallow, at least *Compass* is the deep end of the shallow pool.

So it's ironic that serious coverage of religion is being celebrated on ABC TV, while being purged from radio. But in television religion has always been on the margins, while being mainstream in radio, at least on Radio National.

For its first three years, *Compass* aired at midday on Sunday. It took quite some arguing with management to shift it to Sunday evening.

Even now with its floating timeslot, usually 10—10.30 p.m., sometimes later, it's difficult to build a regular viewership. The constant complaint from viewers is, 'Why is *Compass* on so late? Can't it screen earlier?' The quality of the program has been increasingly recognised by ABC management, and there have been successful attempts at some periods to schedule it at 9.30 p.m.

On the other hand, on ABC Radio a raft of religious programs has always aired in mainstream timeslots. As well as *The Religion Report*, the schedule has included *Spirit of Things*, *Encounter*, *The Ark*, *Rhythm Divine* and, on ABC Local Radio, *Sunday Night with John Cleary*. So *Compass* tries to achieve on television what this range of programs does on radio.

One way of looking at this anomaly between TV and radio is to note that in television a program on the periphery is being recognised and brought more into the mainstream, but that in radio the opposite is happening. Religious programs that have always been at the centre are now being marginalised.

Radio management has made an argument for this downgrading, or marginalising. They say that resources from a number of cancelled programs, not just *The Religion Report*, needed to be channeled into burgeoning online activity. Given that this need is legitimate, there should have been debate about which programs to axe.

I would have argued that *The Religion Report* and *Encounter*, religious current affairs and documentary respectively, should form the core of specialist religious programs, and should be the last to be ditched. As far as I know, there was no consultation, resulting in deep anger both in the ABC Radio Religion Department, and in the broader community.

So the anniversary of *Compass* is tinged with sadness. Certainly Stephen Crittenden's announcement on air that *The Religion Report*had been axed was brave, but also rash. Though I didn't always agree with his analysis, spin, or particular enthusiasms, I will certainly miss his expert, thoughtful and thought-provoking programs.

But it's not just about him personally. I mourn the passing of the program itself.

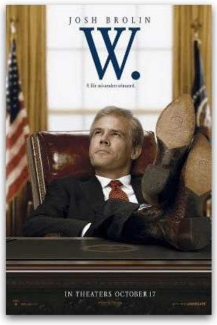
In October last year in front of a Senate Committee, ABC Managing Director Mark Scott described Radio National as 'the jewel in the crown of the ABC'. With the passing of *The Religion Report*, the jewel that is Radio National now shines much less brightly.

Loving George W. Bush

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***W.*: 131 minutes. Rated: M. Director: Oliver Stone. Starring: Josh Brolin, James Cromwell, Richard Dreyfuss, Elizabeth Banks, Thandie Newton, Jeffrey Wright**



In 2006 I reviewed Oliver Stone's then most recent film, *World Trade Centre*, about the destruction of New York City's Twin Towers on 11 September 2001. I suggested none too subtly that Stone had lost his nerve; that he had taken a 'gutless, "safe" approach'.

It was, perhaps, unfair of me. But my words speak to the power of expectations. Stone traditionally wields his left-wing agenda like a sledgehammer. But with *WTC*his approach was moderate. As one reader noted, it's absurd that a film's most controversial feature should be that it's uncontroversial.

With that in mind, those who expect *W.*, Stone's biopic about George W. Bush, to be a portrait of a monster, will be disappointed. Stone's Bush is not exactly sympathetic. But he is human. And, damn it, he is even likeable.

As swaggeringly portrayed by Josh Brolin, W. is the proverbial black sheep of the Bush family: overshadowed by his gold-fleeced brother Jeb; ceaselessly and vainly seeking his father's (Cromwell) approval. He is passionate and affable, with a cowboy's wit and charm.

Cowboy, indeed. Stone draws selectively from W's history to play up this aspect of his persona. The youthful W. is shown as a hard-drinking, spoilt, delinquent frat boy. Later, he walks off his job at an oilrig rather than suffer the belligerence of a bullying boss.

The film's pretzel-like structure curls back and forth between such formative moments from W's youth and a pertinent period of W's presidential tenure. The events of September 11 are not portrayed, yet they are the salt grain around which the pretzel curls. When the film commences Bush is hitting his stride as a 'war' president. Afghanistan has been invaded. The newly confident President Bush and his cronies are contemplating the invasion of Iraq.

Stone makes a feature of Bush's middling intellect, and he is portrayed as an overzealous (perhaps deluded) and impressionable president, convinced that he's on a mission from God and easily manipulated, notably by Vice President Cheney (Dreyfuss). But usually, he seems to be genuinely well-intentioned.

W. may be evenhanded, but Stone can't resist the occasional ironic dig. When W. is revelling in a sense of heroic derring-do, the spritely 'Robin Hood', by Dick James with Stephen James and His Chums, starts jangling on the soundtrack. Such winks at the audience are intrusive but amusing.

The film's biggest drawback is the short shrift given to its supporting players, none of whom is as well-rounded as W. Laura Bush (Banks) is the devoted politician's-wife. Colin Powell (Wright) is weary and worldly-wise. Newton's impersonation of Condoleezza Rice seems better suited to a *Saturday Night Live*sketch. And when the villainous 'Darth Cheney' declares that the best justification for invading Iraq is to secure its oil resources and thus expand the American empire, one almost expects him to hyperventilate and draw a lightsaber.

Still, it seems that to W. there are no shades or layers — the world is black and white and as straightforward as a picture book. So perhaps it's appropriate that, in a film seeking to explore the reasons behind his actions and world view, the characters who surround him should be reduced to digestible stereotypes.

When I reviewed *World Trade Center* three years ago, I brought Henry Singer's documentary *The Falling Man*into the discussion, because I had seen it recently, and there seemed to be a resonance between the films and their themes. As it happens, the night I saw *W.,* I also finished reading Hunter S. Thompson's memoir, *Kingdom of Fear*. It contains a scathing diatribe against the Bush administration:

'We have become Nazi monsters in the eyes of the whole world — a nation of bullies and bastards who would rather kill than live peacefully. We are not just whores for power and oil, but killer whores with hate and fear in our hearts. We are human scum, and that is how history will judge us ... No redeeming social value. Just whores.'

George W. Bush may have left the building, but as Stone himself told *IndieLondon*: 'He's with us, the Bush Doctrine is our foreign policy'. Indeed, whatever you think of the man, his dire legacy will last. Although Stone's offering is evenhanded, others may be expected to be less charitable.

How to ‘green’ your church

RELIGION

Steven Douglas

In February this year Alistair Macrae, President Elect of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA), called for ‘real action’ to address the ecological crisis. He decried the ‘disjuncture between public policy and rhetoric’ that is so evident in the Federal Government’s response to climate change. He now faces the same disjuncture within the UCA, as do other church leaders in their churches.

Since its inception in 1977 the UCA has a proud history of leading Australia’s largest churches in calling for a range of actions to address social and ecological justice. Numerous UCA proclamations have rightly called for government action to address a range of ecological concerns. But only recently has the church begun to take seriously its own obligations to act accordingly.

Much the same can be said of the Catholic and Anglican Churches in Australia, which are relatively recent converts to religious environmentalism. The Catholic Church has had more to say on ecological concerns. It has formed Catholic Earthcare Australia as its ecological justice body. But the focus of the Catholic Church remains strongly on education, primarily within its schools. Its organisations are not obliged to comply with the Church’s international or national statements on ecological responsibility.

Arms of the Catholic Church have proposed highly controversial land developments that entail clearing bushland, sometimes including threatened species and ecological communities. They justify them on the basis that the profits from such works will produce social gains. A recent example is an urban subdivision proposed by the Church on land it owns near Bendigo, Victoria.

The strong rhetoric of the Catholic Church on Creation-care remains largely an optional extra for its organisations, and economic and institutional gains still take precedence over ecological protection in the vast majority of situations. In some dioceses a distinct greening of policy and praxis is evident. In others the almighty dollar and the interests of the Church still take absolute priority over ecological values, even in the face of parishioners’ opposition.

Much the same is true in Australian Anglicanism, though it has had far less to say on environmental issues. Overall, it is the least progressive and the least active of the three churches on ecological issues. It has no equivalent of Catholic Earthcare, nor the eco-justice aspects of UnitingJustice Australia . At the national level, the Anglican Church struggles to move beyond symbolic policy-making and calls for government action.

As is the case in the UCA and the Catholic Church, parts of the Anglican Church are advanced in applying eco-justice through their operations. But in all three traditions such examples, though part of an increasing trend, are still the exception.

The phenomenon of climate change has apparently catalysed much of the recent interest in and action by churches on ecological issues. Traditionally, perceived human rights and interests have prevailed in the churches' anthropocentric ecological policies and praxis. Now that they accept that the ecological harm caused by climate change is having and will have a potentially devastating impact on people, particularly on those who are least responsible for the problem, the old dichotomy between human rights and ecological values has been at least partially undermined.

Churches have belatedly moved to protect children from abuse while in their care. Organisations and individuals within the churches are bound by such rules, sometimes enforced through strong sanctions. But as yet, even the relatively progressive UCA has not required its organisations and members similarly to protect Creation.

Like its Catholic and Anglican peers, the UCA has only encouraged real action on ecological issues. Of its peers, it has taken the strongest stance by encouraging its members and organisations to switch to 'green' (renewable) electricity.

Encouragement doesn't seem to be sufficient. Internal surveys have indicated that a tiny minority have made this switch. Some have indicated that they don't see this as a priority; others that they might get around to it; some can't justify the extra cost; others are thoroughly uninterested.

Whether an aging and dwindling membership will be able to undertake the full spectrum of changes needed to reduce its ecological impacts is problematic. But it requires only a phone call to the energy supplier and a small additional cost to switch to green power. Often the cost can be eliminated through basic energy efficiency measures.

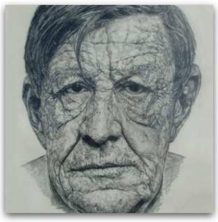
All three of our larger denominations continue to struggle with the process of converting their ecological policies into praxis. The wider society also struggles, as evidenced by the still small percentage of consumers buying green power.

Perhaps if the churches gave the same institutional weight to eco-justice as they have belatedly done to child abuse protection, they might catch-up with the greening of the community. They might ideally surpass it or come to lead it.

The human face of a ‘metaphorical’ poet

NON-FICTION

Garry Kinnane



The first time I saw Auden was on a small black and white television screen in England in 1965. The voice had a surprising duck-like softness, but it was the face that captured your attention. Deeply furrowed, it was, Auden himself had said, ‘Like a wedding-cake left out in the rain’.

In 1972, aged 65, he famously abandoned New York, his home since 1939, to return to live at Christ Church College, Oxford, where he had been an undergraduate in the 1920s. He was given a cottage in the College grounds, and was expected to give occasional talks and be available to students.

It turned out not to be the success everyone had hoped for. The worse for drink at high table, he could be grumpy and offensive. ‘Of course, everyone pees in his bath,’ he might say, or rudely turn away from anyone whose conversation he didn’t like. He might abandon a talk after a mere few minutes if he’d felt he’d said enough.

Some of the younger Fellows gave him a wide berth. But his fame was such that the College Board was prepared to accommodate such minor irritations, convinced that he was good for their image.

My college, Linacre, was then next to Christ Church, and I would sometimes see him puffing his way along the St Aldates wall. An emphysemic, he struggled for breath in the damp Oxford air. He looked sad, lost, lonely.

A postgraduate mate at Linacre was studying American History. One lunchtime he casually mentioned that his supervisor was running a seminar that afternoon on modern American society, and Auden had agreed to take part. Would I be interested?

Interested was hardly the word. No poet faced the world of his time with more courage and honesty than Auden. One had reservations; there was that troubling line about ‘the necessary murders’ which so exercised George Orwell, and the conversion to Christianity that for the Left was a sell-out, and his move to America that was a defection. But he was still the finest living poet in English; it would be like sitting at table with Shelley or Arnold.

Eager, we got there early, and were directed upstairs to an ancient gloomy barn. A rickety round table stood in the middle of the floor, and we took chairs from a stack on one side. A few students drifted in, and we sat around the table chatting nervously. Only five turned up, so I saw the possibility of a wonderful, unexpected intimacy.

Eventually he appeared at the top of the stairs, ushered in by the greying, suave-looking Professor of American History, who welcomed Auden to the seminar. In a shabby blue suit and crumpled grey shirt with a loose wool tie, he stood unsmiling and breathing hard while someone fetched him a chair. He placed himself, not at the table, but some eight feet away, turned so that he could gaze out the window at the blue sky.

Everything about his body language suggested he would rather be anywhere but here.

The seminar got underway, briskly led by the professor. The topic was The American City, particularly New York, and the professor kept tight control on the flow of talk, most of which he did himself. After some 20 minutes Auden had still not said a word, indeed hardly seemed to be listening at all. He lit a cigarette — a transgression, but no one cared — and sat gazing out the window in unmistakeable disdain.

I was close enough to observe the ancient lizard's face, the smoker's barrel chest and stick legs, and to sense something of his loneliness.

The topic turned to urban violence. The professor was becoming glib and rhetorical with his mounting unease at Auden's lack of participation. 'What we have, of course, is not so much a problem of moral failure, as Saul Bellow has recently argued, but a new kind of class struggle.

'In the ghettoes of Los Angeles and New York, unemployment, poverty, lack of education all conspire to give ethnic minorities no chance of using the system to their benefit. "A riot", Martin Luther King once said, "is the language of the unheard". So for young urban blacks, with no other means of self-expression, violence is a kind of poetry.'

He paused here and unexpectedly directed a question across to Auden. His patience had finally given out.

'Wystan', he said expansively, 'You've been living in New York recently, and we've all seen the reports of muggings in the subways, attacks on people in the streets, thugs roaming the city at night. What's your view on all this? Is it worse than a decade ago, are the reasons different now, does violence always come down to a matter of chance or are the explanations glaringly obvious?'

There was silence as we all waited. The question loomed huge and amorphous over the room, seeming to block out thought. Auden's lips stammered a few times, then he lisped, in his softest, limpest duck voice:

'Well ... it's terribly nice where I lived.'

And he spoke not another word for the rest of the seminar.

I have little memory of what was said after this. I kept thinking how disappointingly out of touch, old-womanish, his comment was. I walked in silence with my mate till we got to Christ Church gate, when he finally remarked, 'Well, that was a load of old bollocks then, wasn't it?'

'Oh, yes, well ... I guess he's pretty old and not too well,' I said, unconvincingly.

We parted — he turned right, up to the shops, I went left towards Linacre. I walked down the hill past the little coffee house where Auden, I learned later, liked to spend time in the hope of being approached by students; apparently few bothered, or even knew about it.

I was reflecting on his comment when suddenly another possibility occurred to me: perhaps it wasn't so mindless after all. In fact it might have been right on the money. How could he register his disapproval of the whole event, an exercise in linguistic waste, without contributing to the pile himself? The only way was to speak purely for himself, from experience, in cant-free language.

In this way only could he be what he professed to be: a real, not a metaphorical poet. It turned out a good day for literature, I told myself as I headed up the walkway to the Linacre library.

The logic of the Bali death machine

HUMAN RIGHTS

Peter Hodge

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Reaction to bomber executions will affect Bali 9's fate: expert

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An Asian law expert says the way in which Australians react to the execution of the Bali bombers will have implications for three Australian men on death row in Indonesia.

The executions of Amrozi, Mukhlas and Imam Samudra could be carried out as early as today, and Indonesian authorities have tightened security as a precaution against retaliatory terrorism attacks.

Melbourne University Asian Law Centre director Tim Lindsay says people must keep in mind that three members of the Bali nine drug traffickers are also awaiting execution.

"Whatever is said now in Australia about these events will apply also to the convicted Bali nine drug traffickers Scott Rush, Myuran Sukumaran and Andrew Chan, who also face the same fate," he said.

"Whatever is said in Australia that endorses

Scott Rush faces execution, along with Myuran Sukumaran and Andrew Chan. (AFP: Ardono Sudiro)

It was reported in the *New York Times*(24 February 2009) that many states in the USA are considering abolishing the death penalty, not because of growing moral reservations about the ultimate form of punishment, but in order to reduce costs.

Unfortunately the dead men walking in Indonesia's prisons cannot hope for a flow-on effect. Among them are Myuran Sukumaran, Andrew Chan and Scott Rush , whose cases inch towards a climax that may include a hail of bullets near dawn on a remote Bali beach.

Luke Davies ' essay, 'The Penalty is Death' in the September edition of *The Monthly*, based on interviews with Sukumaran, Chan and their families, succeeded in humanising the convicted 'ringleaders' (as they are usually branded) of the Bali 9.

But the most chilling element of Davies' report pertains not to the Bali 9 but to another high-profile death row case. Davies cites a letter addressed to Kim Nguyen, Van Nguyen's mother, informing her that the death sentence passed on her son would be carried out on 2 December 2005 in Singapore's Changi Prison.

'Please do not hesitate to contact our officers-in-charge if you have any queries', it notes with cold neutrality, as if it were a response to a disputed water bill. 'You are requested to make the necessary arrangements for him. However, if you are unable to do so, the State will assist in cremating the body.'

Van Nguyen knew he had to die. But did he know why he had to die? The proportionality of crime and punishment and the impact of the sentence on his family were not serious considerations for the judge who passed the sentence on him, or for the Singaporean Government that denied him clemency.

He died because a faceless system said he must. His death ensured that the system continued according to a blinkered logic that took little account of who he was, how he might have changed, and why he had committed the crime. 'Possession of 396 grams of heroin' was entered into the machine. 'Death by hanging' was the output.

I am reminded of Franz Kafka's short story 'In the Penal Colony'. The traveller is invited to witness the execution of a soldier 'condemned for insubordination and insulting an officer', although 'interest in the execution seemed not to be that great in the penal colony'.

The colony employs a unique and complex machine, invented by the previous commandant, to carry out its executions. Much of the story is taken up by the proud officer's explanation of how the machine works. As part of the 12 hour process, the condemned man will 'have the law he has transgressed inscribed by the harrow [part of the machine] on his body'.

The officer, also judge in the colony, explains that in his court 'guilt is always beyond doubt'. But the tide has turned and the officer, who has inherited custodianship of the machine, is now one of the few remaining supporters of this mode of execution.

It becomes apparent that, to the officer at least, preserving the endangered form of punishment (at any cost, as it turns out) is more important than the crimes it serves to deter. He asks of the traveller: 'Do you think it's right that such a lifework' — he pointed to the machine — 'should be allowed to rot?'

'And so it has been and so it is written/On the doorway to paradise/That those who falter and those who fall/Must pay the price!' sings Javert in *Les Miserables*, unshaken in his conviction that 24601, as he prefers to call Jean Valjean, is marked for life by the petty crimes he committed decades earlier.

Theatre audiences, having empathised with Valjean from the beginning, ponder what handicap prevents Javert from seeing the good man that Valjean has become. The passing of judgments on our fellow humans based on pure linear reason, without any emotional or moral input, does indeed reflect a mental deficiency.

When in the 18th and 19th centuries the concept of human rights gradually gained popular support, a critical mass of Europeans and Americans began to empathise more with those who were not friends, family, co-religionists, or of the same social class.

It is reasonable to assert that the combination of access to Enlightenment thinking and direct experience of state-sanctioned torture and murder contributed to changes in justice systems. Much later they culminated in most countries in the abolition of the death penalty.

If Rush, Sukumaran and Chan are to survive, new generations must place themselves in the shoes of Kafka's traveller and imagine the harsh realities of 21st century executions and what they say about us. They must engage with the struggles of earlier generations.

None of the Bali 9 is a monster, nor was Van Nguyen. It is important that we ask why the condemned need to die, if that is to be their ultimate sentence. If you answer 'because the law says so', think again. The clock is ticking.

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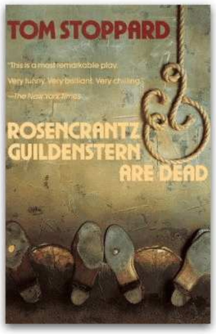
How to teach ‘vampire’ students

EDUCATION

Eleanor Massey



In a middle-of-the-road Comprehensive high school, somewhere on the Australian coast, a student teacher is bravely taking a year 12 English lesson on Transformation. *Hamlet,* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*are the texts, and I’m the qualified teacher down the back. In front of me is a Venn diagram, illustrating the themes of Order (Hamlet’s Elizabethan world, when not out of joint) and Disorder (the shambolic world of R&G)

The class is a shambles too. iPods and mobiles rule, and the girl in front is discussing her new ‘vampire’ boyfriend. ‘Have you seen the new werewolf?’ she whispers to her friend. ‘I think he’s cute. His eyes are like, bright blue, and he wears his hair back, like he’s just been running. He’s in 12B. I can’t take my eyes off him.’

In her other life she’s Guildenstern. She finds her place. ‘”Give us this day ... “. What’s this “Give us this day” business?’

‘”Our daily bread”,’ says the student teacher. ‘It’s the Lord’s Prayer.’

‘But why does he keep saying it?’

‘”And forgive us our trespasses.”’ A pause while he thinks. ‘”as we forgive those who ... those who ...”’

I’m reminded of Percival Wemys Madison in *Lord of the Flies,* gradually forgetting his home address, which was taught to him by far-away and long-ago parents.

He rallies.

‘It’s talking about religion, and the absence of a God to look after you, when things are no longer ticketyÂ—boo.’

He’s doing his best, trying to teach abstract ideas in a difficult play about a postmodern world, where he himself is a player. The current English syllabus is awash with the theories of postmodernism and relativism, theories which have stalked the university cloisters for a long time now. Earlier on, the vampire girl airily told me that her opinions were of equal value to those of the ‘Creators’ of the texts (Shakespeare and Stoppard).

The lesson ends. ‘Things are looking up,’ I say, brightly, as we dodge our way back to the English staffroom.

‘Yes, but they still ignore me,’ said the student teacher.

‘You could always tell them to sit down, shut up and listen!’

He gives me that look generation Y reserves for the dinosaurs they occasionally encounter. He feels sorry for them, he says. He can remember being 17. Horrible. An identity thing. Their identity, he says, is really important.

More important than the HSC? It seems so.

Next morning, driving to school, I listen to Dr Clive Hamilton, discussing his book, *The Freedom Paradox,* on Radio National. The Me generation of the '60s and '70s, he says, has produced children who act on immediate impulse, rather than on the basis of their own individual will. This has unleashed self-centredness, leading to moral relativism, an absence of rules to live by and deep anxiety.

Definitely the disordered side of the Venn diagram, I think.

We need a new metaphysic, he says.

This sounds like a religious Esperanto. I've taught English in a lot of schools. I've taught religious studies, too, and have found out that values, like language, don't stand alone. They're inextricably tangled up with the culture and religion of the society they occupy, even if the time-honoured prayers have been sloughed off and barely remembered.

One of these values is education, and many Australian citizens not born in the Western world, unenlightened by post-structural ideas, and never part of a Me generation, often respect it. Their children work hard for coveted places in Selective High Schools and, as they enter year 12, give a nod to postmodernism, if that's what the course requires — unaware of the rot that's set in, in the state of New South Wales.

Must drop a note to the student teacher. The line he wants is, 'As we forgive those who trespass against us'.

Miscellaneous notes on Rwanda

POETRY

Shu Cai

Nature

Hyacinth beans are ripe

But no-one is there to pick them.

The breeze is drunk

But who is there to lean against?

Things in nature

Come and go naturally

No need

For a rose

To thank
Sunshine

Or rain

Miscellaneous notes on Ruanda (1)

1. Armadu

Armadu he’s so fat

He’s got the beer belly

But I’m sure not from drinking beer

Armadu he’s so poor

That he can’t afford the beer

He straddles his taxi on a ride

Armadu he’s so black

I’m only saying that he’s naturally black

Strongly black, good-heartedly black

Armadu he’s so white

His teeth shining white

Like a row of fluorescent lamps by broad daylight

Fatty Armadu

His belly like
A huge sack his body can't support
Poor Armadu
His sixth son is crying, 'Daddy'
As his wife is pregnant with his seventh
Blackman Armadu
He drove for the construction company
He spoke Mandarin with a north-eastern accent
Armadu, ah, Armadu
He 'ha-ha's as soon as he starts talking
He laughs: ha, ha, ha, ha, ha ...
Armadu, ah, Armadu
He rides his bike like a taxi
He's leaning against the wall, having nothing to do
As soon as he sees me, he strides up
Towards me. We raise our right hands
As they hit in the air with a 'flap'!
Then he laughs out loud
Who knows what he is laughing about?
Shaking the tiny supermarket next door this way and that
Every time, looking at him laughing loudly
I thought to myself:
Armadu's belly must be full of a poor man's joy.

What kind of future

What kind of insomnia is it
That steeled your heart to a union with me?
What kind of disease is it that physically
Destroyed me and helped me see the future through?
'We have been in love for so many years ...'
You said, sounding like a bud just pinched

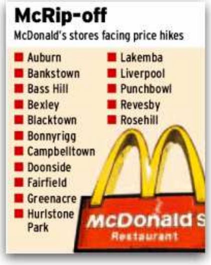
Days like ellipsis dots. Pleasure
In pain. Two raw eggs for a roll
Of *jianbing guozi**. Running up to the 14th floor at one go ...
A burning heart keeping the northwesterly outside the body.
‘You’ll see what I mean in the future ...’
I said, foreshadowing our lives.
Days patching days up. Bickering
And brabbling, nothing really matters. In the scabbed
Hearts blood running as joyfully ...
Two leaves fallen to the ground finding it hard to take root.
‘Future after future…|’
And you, are working out how to meet it
But what kind of future is that, if it makes me
Jumpy, and sleepless?
And what kind of future is that, if it makes you
Sun yourself on one side as the other side goes paralytic?
‘I now see what you meant then ...’
The tree’s hair, close to turning grey.

**A breakfast item consisting of thin pancake rolls with fried dough sticks and eggs in them, popular in Beijing, originally introduced from Tianjin in the 1980s.*

Burger buggers' price hike spin

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins



McRip-off

McDonald's stores facing price hikes

- Auburn
- Bankstown
- Bass Hill
- Bexley
- Blacktown
- Bonnyrigg
- Campbelltown
- Doonside
- Fairfield
- Greenacre
- Hurlstone Park
- Lakemba
- Liverpool
- Punchbowl
- Revesby
- Rosehill

McDonald's has been criticised for planned price increases that mean customers in poorer areas will pay more for fast food meals than those in wealthier localities.

The media reported on Thursday that the cost of menu items was previously determined by restaurant overheads, but McDonald's will now use socio-economic factors. McDonald's countered by saying its new demand-based pricing system is simply a matter of giving the customer what he or she wants.

'We really let the customer speak,' CEO Catriona Noble told radio 2GB. 'And that's exactly what customers have the right to do. [They can say] "hey, that price increase is too much for me to handle and I'm going to come to you less often".'

It could indeed be true that customers in lower socio-economic areas are more prepared to tolerate higher fast-food prices than those in wealthier locations. But that is not an excuse for McDonald's to increase prices, and claim the moral high ground at the same time. As South Australian Consumer Affairs Minister Gail Gago pointed out last week, while it is not against the law for outlets to charge different prices, it's not fair either.

Unfortunately McDonald's is not alone in its 'demand-based' pricing policy. Last May, the Southern Sydney Retailers Association (SSRA) discovered that a basket of 28 grocery items was 134 per cent more expensive at Woolworths Greystanes than Woolworths Fairfield.

SSRA president Craig Kelly said : 'It is simply about a lack of competition — at Fairfield, Woolworths has a small independent shopping centre directly opposite them and that keeps them honest in terms of price, but at Greystanes the independents have disappeared and that has allowed Woolies to pump up their prices.'

It's a matter of record that Woolworths and Coles do all they can to suppress competition. The German-owned grocery chain Aldi complained to the ACCC last year that the supermarket giants are using shopping centre lease agreements to prevent Aldi from setting up shop. The covenants require huge rental reductions if a competitor is allowed space in the premises.

Aldi's prices are one third lower than those of its larger competitors. But it has also led the way with a uniform pricing policy for all its 200 Australian stores. Its research discovered that 83 per cent of customers were unhappy with the variation in supermarket prices between suburbs.

The Federal Government is aware of unfair pricing policies, but has so far proved unable to make a difference. It continues to pursue a strategy that places too much trust in the retail giants to regulate their own pricing structures and trading conditions.

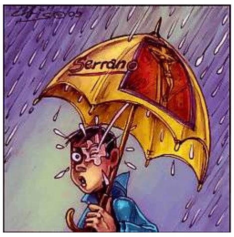
The Government set up a GroceryWatch website in order to allow consumers to compare prices. But that failed, and it's now being outsourced to *Choice Magazine*.

Choice has an outstanding record in consumer advocacy over half a century, but price monitoring is only part of the solution. The Federal Opposition had a point last year when it parodied the government's preoccupation with price monitoring. Instead the government needs to empower and push the ACCC to move against retail giants that are unfairly suppressing competition.

Art and the Piss Christ umbrella

ARTS

Jessica Frawley



Ask a person on the street what they think of Degas' dancers or Monet's haystacks, chances are you won't find too much controversy. After all they're not Tracy Emin or Bill Henson, or whoever it was that sent a pile of bricks to the Tate.

French Impressionism has become a veritable haven away from the jarring difficulties of the contemporary. Waterlilies, haystacks, ballet-dancers and race-days at Longchamp: the subjects are quite pointedly pleasant.

Contemporary art is less so. Ask that same person on the street how they feel about Andres Serrano's 1989 'Piss Christ', a photograph of a plastic crucifix submerged in the artist's urine, and immediately you'll find yourself thrown into the deepest, darkest chasms of aesthetic debate ... 'What is Art?'.

Impressionism makes for much easier conversation, and as we face recessions, depressions and global warming there has never been a better time for it. Despite being no closer to Paris than before, Australia in recent months has been recently spoilt with a glut of impressionist art: Monet and the impressionists in Sydney, Degas at the National. Monet, Manet, Pissarro, Degas, Renoir: their names are big and popular, their subjects pleasant and non-controversial.

I particularly wanted to see the Degas exhibition, not least because I lost my faith in him, as many do, in a less than fully-fledged undergraduate enlightenment. Needless to say 'Degas the misogynist' is a commonplace topic.

Impressionism was a controversial move away from the art of the time. But it has become increasingly difficult to revisit these paintings from that perspective as the big-name branding of art has become more common. Paintings that once would have once sparked discussion now sit happily on biscuit tins, umbrellas, notebooks and a whole range of other 'great-master' branded merchandise.

We have killed the controversy and challenges faced in the past by branding it to death. As the old masters have ceased to be confrontational, we are the ones who miss out.

The problem with brands is that they are necessarily simple and identifiable. Good, bad, cheap, expensive: it is easy to surrender our opinions to the all-knowing brand. The cult of celebrity has 'hit' art and it has altered both our perspective and our behaviour towards it. We visit Paris to see 'the real Mona Lisa', cram ourselves in to see 'a real Monet'.

The Great Masters have become A-list celebs and beneath the magnifying lens of time they have become larger and more intimidating than ever. The issue is not that these works are popular. That is a good thing. The issue is that in the face of this endorsement we've lost our confidence to re-explore them. It's not surprising that aesthetics have fallen out of fashion: we are all too fraught to say anything.

This is the advantage of the contemporary. It may be jarring, confronting and sometimes just questionable, but we feel liberated enough to have an opinion. We are happy to discuss whether Emin's unmade bed, creatively entitled 'My Bed', is really Art. We have an opinion on the Tate's purchase of a pile of bricks. We feel justified in abhorring the thought of photographing a crucifix in a vat of urine. Everyone has an opinion on contemporary art.

But when it comes to the big names of the past we're more reluctant to engage. Their names in glittering lights, the tombs of art history willing to interpret it for us, merchandise repeating the images from floor to ceiling of the gallery shop, and the awful feeling that you might just 'get it wrong': the celebrity of Art with a capital 'A' has overwhelmed us.

But despite the all the hype with which we have come to surround these names and pieces, the actual works on those gallery walls continue to compel us. Even now Degas' works are confrontational, voyeuristic and arguably misogynistic. But they are also incredible. Although we may find it easier to tidy up this contradiction into something more marketable and familiar, it would be reductive actually do so.

In years to come people might own umbrellas emblazoned with 'Piss Christ' and have miniature versions of the Tate's bricks upon their mantelpieces. But if they cease to discuss these pieces or ceast to try to enter into the mindset that was shocked by them in the first place, they will have missed the point.

The power of Impressionism Co. to maintain interest in turbulent times is commendable. But if we continue to reduce life, art, history, and even religion down to what is simple and marketable, we may one day find that the complexities and confrontations that compelled us to explore it in the first place have been forgotten. If all we have left is the umbrella and the biscuit tin then the economic crisis is the least of our worries.