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Discerning humanity.

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Not just any old superpower

VIDEO

Peter Kirkwood

Over the last few weeks Australians have witnessed an extraordinary attempt at censorship by a foreign power. I'm speaking of course about the Chinese government and its sympathisers trying to stop the screening of the documentary, *The 10 Conditions of Love*, at the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF).

Their campaign has been totally counterproductive, giving the film and its protagonist, Rebiya Kadeer, far more publicity than they ever would have garnered without it.

The documentary is a portrait of this 62-year-old grandmother who's become the unlikely leader in exile of the Muslim minority Uighurs in the far western Chinese province of Xinjiang (or as Uighurs prefer to call it, East Turkestan). She is in Australia to speak at screenings of the film.

Kadeer was once a wealthy entrepreneur in China, and worked with the Chinese government to further the cause of her people. But after speaking out against the government, she was imprisoned. She left China in 2005 and now lives in the United States.

The trailer featured here is from the 54 minute documentary made by Australian filmmaker Jeff Daniels.

Kadeer is a tireless advocate for the rights of the Uighur people, and her efforts go well beyond this film. As well as extensive media and speaking engagements, she has also recently released an acclaimed autobiography, written with Alexandra Cavelius, called *Dragon Fighter: One Woman's Epic Struggle for Peace with China*.

Kadeer rejects claims by the Chinese government that she is a 'criminal' and 'terrorist'. She says her struggle is not religious, and she condemns Muslim extremists and terrorists. What she wants is peaceful coexistence with the Chinese, recognition of and respect for distinctive Uighur culture, and a degree of autonomy.

This sounds very reasonable, but as is evidenced by efforts to stop screenings of the film here and to prevent Kadeer's visit, Chinese authorities will have none of it. They lobbied hard against granting her a visa. But after extensive checks, the Australian government found the allegations that she had fomented the recent violent race riots in Xinjiang to be baseless. As a result a visa was granted.

The Chinese consul in Melbourne contacted the director of MIFF in an effort to have the film withdrawn, and our ambassador in Beijing received a dressing down over the issue. Other Chinese films were taken out of the festival in protest. This was followed by a series of cyber-attacks by Chinese sympathisers on the MIFF website in an effort to sabotage it.

While we are in thrall to the economic might of China, this incident is a timely reminder that it is a vast country governed by very different values. As Michael Elliott wrote in an essay in the latest issue of *Time*, 'China will not be just any old superpower ... its values (let us say harmony and stability, rather than liberty and justice) are not those of the West'.

Asylum seekers good for Australia's soul

HUMAN RIGHTS

Irfan Yusuf

It must have come as a shock to his conservative Australian fans. Appearing on ABCTV's *Q&A*panel in April, conservative humorist P. J. O'Rourke turned his acidic wit on fellow conservatives who wanted to limit the number of asylum seekers entering the country.

While his fellow panellist, deputy Liberal leader Julie Bishop frothed at the mouth about how 'since last August there has been an increase in the number of people arriving by boat' and how 'the people smugglers are back in business', P. J. had this to say :

'You know, we in the States have much, much more experience with being all wrong about immigration than you do. I mean 36,000 you said in Italy? ... We laugh. That's a day in the United States. And we are so wrong about it. I mean, build a fence on the border with Mexico, give a huge boost to the Mexican ladder industry, you know ... the thing is when somebody gets on an exploding boat to come over here — they're willing to do that to get to Australia — you're missing out on some really good Australians if you don't let that person in.'

His very wide and very humorous tirade went even further:

'Let them in. Let them in. These people are assets. One or two of them might not be, but you can sort them out later ... I think conservatives are getting this wrong all over the world, I really do.'

So today's asylum seekers are tomorrow's 'really good Australians' and 'assets'. O'Rourke gave hard-headed conservatives more than just 'bleeding heart' reasons to show compassion to refugees. He reminded us that compassion also paid economic and nation-building dividends.

That was also the message delivered to the National Press Club on 11 August by exiled World Uighur Congress leader Rabiye Kadeer. A number of innocent Turkish-speaking Uighur men have been kept at the Guantanamo gulag waiting to be resettled. It took our American allies some seven years to realise the men posed no threat to anyone.

'All of the Uighurs in Albania, Bermuda and Palau are living very normal and productive lives — so we'd be happy if Australia took the four', Kadeer was quoted in *The Australian*.

The plight of the Guantanamo Uighurs in Albania, Europe's poorest nation, came to the attention of the international media in 2007 when Al Jazeera English broadcast a 24-minute documentary called *A Strange Kind Of Freedom*. The program detailed the experiences of four Uighur men who had been dumped in Albania with no apology from their American captors and no explanation for their

54 month detention at Guantanamo. (Continues below)

But how did these men end up all the way from Western China to Afghanistan and then Pakistan? The men fled China due to their support for the East Turkestani/Uighur independence movement. They ended up in Pakistan via Afghanistan in 2000, and were sold for a mere $5000 each to the Americans before being transferred to Guantanamo.

But despite living in limbo and separated from their families, these men are not sitting on their hands feeling sorry for themselves. Two of the men are training to become pizza makers, and they are all attending Albanian language classes. They receive some government assistance.

At one stage, Albania was the only country willing to take the Guantanamo Uighurs. Now some Uighur men have also settled in small Pacific Island nations which have no Uighur or other Turkish-speaking communities. Which raises a simple question — if an impoverished nation like Albania and North Pacific island nation of Palau can accept Uighurs, why can't a wealthy nation like Australia?

Australia doesn't exactly have a good record in welcoming even its own citizens who were former detainees at Guantanamo Bay. The fact that credible reports showed our men, David Hicks and Mamdouh Habib, were also abused and tortured did not move our political leaders (apart from Bob Brown and a few other lonely voices) to place pressure on the United States.

Indeed, a profile of former Foreign Minister Alexander Downer published in *The Australian* on 9 September 2008 showed him having a good laugh when mention was made of the torture of Australian detainees and the practice of water-boarding.

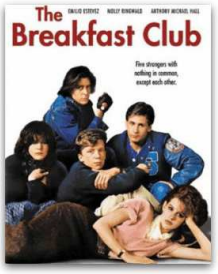
And if a recent Red Cross survey on attitudes to torture is any indication, it seems many Australians have a fairly lax attitude toward torture. Some 47 per cent of those surveyed said they believed it was acceptable to torture prisoners of war in some situations.

That's POW's, not former 'enemy combatants' and 'suspected terrorists' such as the innocent Uighur men our country is being asked to adopt. Australia has established Uighur and Turkish communities and could easily accommodate the few remaining ex-Gitmo Uighurs. If we refuse them, we won't just lose the opportunity to have good citizens. We'll also lose another piece of our collective soul.

The gospel according to John Hughes

FILMS

Tim Kroenert



Scene from my year 11 common room

He is destroying that chair. Dismantling it. Tearing it limb from limb.

He begins with the legs, which, each in turn, he flexes and twists, first weakening then snapping the tubular metal. Discarding these, he moves on to the base, using strong hands to prise it apart from the goose-pimpled plastic seat. More flexing and twisting, and soon the base itself is in fragments.

Now the seat, a single piece of moulded red plastic. Using his foot as a fulcrum, he levers the plastic backwards and forwards, until a white seam appears along its concave middle. Then he sets about trying to tear along that weakened seam. A more difficult task than he had assumed, but he makes headway, slowly.

He performs the entire procedure with an air of bored focus. I watch from across the room, bemused at the senseless destruction of that innocent chair.

The gospel according to John Hughes

My first viewing of *The Breakfast Club* was a formative experience. It was 1997, a full year before the day I witnessed the chair-mangler at work. We watched it during a year 10 English class. A hilarious film. Moving. Quite profound. The gospel according to John Hughes. (It was his first masterpiece; his second was *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*.)

I don't use the word gospel lightly. Here was a secular film that extrapolated, in teenagers' language, the notion of 'love thy neighbour'. Love is understanding difference, recognising shared humanity, accepting others and treating them well. It sees through cliques and types.

A simple device for this contemporary parable: five teens of varying types — a 'jock' (Emilio Estevez), a 'prom queen' (Molly Ringwald), a 'geek' (Anthony Michael Hall), a 'freak' (Ally Sheedy) and a 'thug' (Judd Nelson) — are forced to spend a Saturday together in detention.

Each has environmental and personal reasons for being who they are. A combination of nature and nurture, compounded by the eternal adolescent quest for individualisation, and the converse but equally powerful forces of peer pressure and social and familial expectations.

They're all alike, though ostensibly so different. At the start of the film, the differences lead to tensions. As the film progresses, and following a few cathartic hi-jinks and head-ons, they learn empathy. No matter what your clique, it's never

easy being 'you'.

I had problems with the film, even back then. It bothered me; this use of types, to make a point about the wrongness of seeing the world in terms of types. It bothered me that of all the guys, only Brian the geek didn't get his girl. (Although with a male-female ratio of three to two, the odds were against him.)

But these equivocations were subsumed by appreciation for the characters' sometimes shocking lessons in empathy. Most powerful is a monologue by the 'thug', John Bender, where he play-acts his drunken father first berating, then physically abusing him. Even tough guys hurt sometimes.

The mangler and me

A lesson learned, but easier in theory than in practice. If we're speaking about types, then the chair-mangler was our 'John Bender'. I never spoke to him. Not once in the two years we were at the same school. In truth I was scared of him. My type wasn't supposed to mingle with his type.

It's hard to 'love your neighbour' when you're a teenager, and it feels like it's you against the world. It's hard as an adult too, although hopefully retrospect feeds wisdom. No doubt the chair-mangler had his own struggles in trying to be the best person he could be; perhaps he wrestled with them, as he wrestled that chair to bits. It's worth remembering, whenever someone sleights you, that they too may have their own chairs to mangle.

I must admit I sometimes wonder what the chair-mangler is doing with his life today. And I think of *The Breakfast Club*, and how I can best live out the gospel according to John Hughes.

American filmmaker John Hughes died of a heart attack last week, aged 59.

Limiting discrimination won't harm religious freedoms

HUMAN RIGHTS

Moira Rayner

By the mid to late 20th century, increased diversity and the horrors of state-sanctioned religious and racial hatred led Australia to exempt religious institutions from more secular laws than taxation and property laws. The rise of anti-discrimination laws in the 1970s gave them immunity from the duty not to discriminate against members of vulnerable groups.

In Victoria the Equal Opportunity Act exemptions are under review generally; amendments proposed to the religious ones have caused a predictable opposition.

The exemption from the duty to discriminate was meant to protect (initially) individual religious people's human right to believe, worship, demonstrate and promulgate their faith. The Victorian Discussion Paper acknowledges that state's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities requires finding a balance between the individual right to freedom of thought, conscience religion and belief, and the right of all human beings not to be subjected to discrimination on any ground at all.

The Equal Opportunity Act allows religious and quasi-religious groups and individuals to 'discriminate' lawfully. The Paper proposes to remove the blanket exemption for 'religious' activities which appear to be really secular, leaving intact total exemptions for 'core' or intrinsic religious practice, such as appointing persons to be involved in religious ceremonies and responsibilities — ministers/priests, preachers and ceremonial participants.

Not so, however, for exemptions protecting Church-established schools. Section 75 (3) of the Act, first passed in 1977, allows religious institutions to discriminate (on any ground) in employing their staff if the school is directly under, 'a body established for religious purposes'.

The Discussion Paper suggests limiting this exemption, together with the 1994 amendment in Section 76, which extended the same broad exemption to schools established 'to be conducted in accordance with religious beliefs or principles', but not directed or governed by a religious institution.

It's worth mentioning that this amendment came after an intelligent, well-behaved year 12 student successfully complained of sex discrimination because he was excluded from one of these 'para-religious' schools for wearing a neat haircut no longer than an average female student's. The Supreme Court ruled against the immunity claim of the publicly funded, private school that was not, but wanted to appear to be, Anglican.

Religious bodies argue that limiting blanket exemptions will destroy religious freedoms. Actually, many of 'their' activities are now run by separately incorporated entities, governed and managed like any business, publicly funded to provide services subject to rigorous contractual obligations that don't include 'God'.

Both sorts of organisations have been able to refuse to employ or dismiss any staff for an otherwise discriminatory reason, such as living in de facto relationship, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexual orientation, or unacceptable marital (i.e. divorcee) status.

This is still defended on the basis that any service can be a religious vocation and that a 'religious environment' requires certain pureties of everyone in employment. With respect, it is difficult to see the relevance of the beliefs or lifestyles of, say, a cleaner, gardener or clerk, in an independent, para-religious school.

The paper suggests broad exemptions for 'core' (that is, in-house) religious functions and a limited one for extended or 'non-core' activities, such as service-provision, which the organisation should have to prove is of an 'inherent religious nature'.

It's suggested that provision of services to the public is not 'core' to the observance of religion. But this won't work. Most major religions require believers to act out their faith in daily life: Christians and Jews alike believe that God requires them to 'act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God'. A believer's spiritual and temporal life should be indivisible.

But should that entitle that individual to disobey a secular law not to discriminate? And what is it about the 'cold steel' of proving the 'reasonableness' of proposed discrimination in 'para-religious' institutions that causes offense?

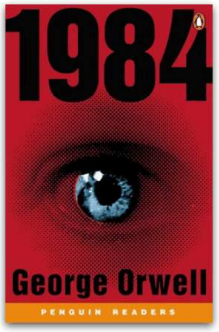
One great leader said, 'Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and unto God that which is God's'. If the activities are 'inherently religious' surely it would be easy to provide the evidence that religious values and faith drive the services rather than meeting a contractual arrangement.

After all, it was the same leader who bantered with a Samaritan womanl, respected and placed women among his disciples, socialised with 'sinners and publicans' some of whom became his apostles, welcomed children, wept over the dead, and embraced and healed society's lepers and other outcasts, without discrimination.

Economists and other prophets

BY THE WAY

Brian Matthews



It hasn't been a good millennium for prophets.

In ancient times seers and diviners of one kind and another had the ear of the populace whom they awed, mystified, incited or simply scared the pants off. All kinds of 'evidence' was called upon by these negotiators with the fates to justify their prognostications.

Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, warned against being too adventurous on the ides of March, seeks an opinion from his augurers. They slaughter a beast — as you do — and examine its innards. This process, known as haruspication, leads them to conclude Caesar should 'not ... stir forth to-day/Plucking the entrails of an offering forth/They could not find a heart within the beast.' Bad news.

Even worse comes from his wife, Calphurnia, who reports that overnight 'A lioness hath whelped in the streets/And graves have yawned and yielded up their dead.'

Caesar has already been warned by a soothsayer to 'Beware the ides of March' and when, on the very day, he encounters this gloomy fellow on the steps of the Capitol, he rather smugly points out, 'The ides of March are come', to which the soothsayer, with the eerie prescience and mordant wit common to his kind, replies, 'Aye, Caesar, but not gone.'

Meanwhile, Cassius is persuading Brutus of exactly the opposite. To hell with all the signs: 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars/But in ourselves that we are underlings.'

Shakespeare, as we know, played pretty fast and loose with myth and legend, but his portrait of your better class of superstitious Roman is persuasive. Caesar was mad not to be influenced by such explicit omens,

Explicitness, however, is what subsequent prophets lacked. 'The young red black one will seize the hierarchy/The traitors will act on a day of drizzle,' warns Nostradamus, with what may be dire prediction or a weather forecast.

'Remember all ye that existence is pure joy; that all the sorrows are but as shadows ... but there is that which remains,' proclaims Aleister Crowley obscurely. A member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, he received in later life a mystical message called *The Book of the Law* and proclaimed a new and splendidly convenient principle for the whole of humankind: 'Do what thou wilt.'

Yorkshire's Mother Shipton, whose conception allegedly resulted from her

mother's union with a demon, was more helpful when she predicted in 1641, 'Carriages without horses shall go/And accidents fill the world with woe' but, like her prophetic brethren, she was not immune to a touch of the vague apocalyptics: 'The time shall come when seas of blood/Shall mingle with a greater flood.'

Nearer our own time, Manning Clark detected a prophetic streak in Henry Lawson but perhaps the most interesting modern 'prophet' was George Orwell. Of his great novel, *1984*, he said: 'I do not believe that the kind of society I describe necessarily will arrive, but I believe (allowing of course for the fact that the book is a satire) that something resembling it could arrive.'

In the world of Airstrip One — the London of Orwell's year 1984 — the rewriting or large-scale falsification of history, the purging of political opponents, the possibility of controlling thought by reductive restructuring of language, the use of ruthlessly efficient secret police, the planting of spies and provocateurs among the ordinary populace, the enforcement of discipline and sacrifice by constant reference to a threatening enemy, the use of intrusive surveillance technology, all in one way or another eventuated in the eastern bloc between the end of World War Two and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

In *Stasiland*, Anna Funder's brilliant study of life behind the Wall in East Germany and especially in Erich Honecker's East Berlin, the plight Orwell imagines for his anti-hero Winston Smith is played out in real life. An imprisoned society spies endlessly on itself. Informers — some of them children — report meticulously not only on the affairs, words and ideas of people in ministries, politics, industry, education, and so on, but also on 'activities at kindergartens and dinner parties and sporting events across the nation'.

Orwell's vision in 1984 is detailed and explicit and so, unlike the oblique fantasies of earlier prophets, it is easy to assess if he was 'right' or 'wrong'. *Stasiland* shows him to have been uncannily accurate, even allowing for the profound gloom and pessimism that gripped him in the writing of that novel.

But the 21st century is surely the age and apotheosis of the prophet. Our prophets are called economists. They prophesy relentlessly and they are often — sometimes spectacularly — wrong. But like all of their kind over the centuries, they are unabashed by and unpunished for abject failures. They just pop up again from each new set of ruins, surprised yet unrepentant, princes of a plethora of evanescent predictions.

Young Somalis are Australians too

MULTICULTURALISM

Ben Coleridge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THE AGE
Melbourne terror accused in court outburst

In recent days the spokesmen for the Melbourne Somali community have been getting a work out. The alleged involvement of some young Somali men in a terror plot has placed them repeatedly in front of cameras, to explain the profound challenges their young people are facing every day.

Thus, on the ABC's *Stateline,* one community leader described the atmosphere at the Ministry of Housing flats in the inner west suburb of Flemington where many of Melbourne's most recently arrived Somalis live: 'If you go to most young Africans, they're unemployed. Some of them will actually sit down and tell you "I have no future in this country."'

These are words that should galvanise us: 'I have no future in this country.'

Early this year I heard almost exactly the same confession from a young Somali girl. I was tutoring her, as one of a raft of volunteers involved in an after-school tutoring scheme that was run by the Somali community and sponsored by Jesuit Social Services.

This teenage girl told me how she hated school because she felt dumb and people told her she was dumb. She said she did not know what was going to happen to her. I found this confession painful. My time at school and now at university has oriented me towards promise, pointed me to the possibilities that lie ahead. Perhaps I had assumed that a refugee arriving in a new country, a safe haven, would automatically feel a sense of promise too. But remarks like those of the young Somali woman, demonstrate long before alleged terror plots come into play, that we make this assumption far too easily.

The Somalis in Melbourne now, like other African refugees, have come to Australia with singular and vivid experiences that often include war and trauma, poor health and limited access to education. Even considered by themselves, these are isolating factors. But in Flemington isolation and separation seem structured into the Somali community, if only through their dwelling place. The high rise apartment blocks loom grey and cold, removed from the rest of the suburb by car parks and a freeway. In their distinctiveness, they represent the first difficulty encountered by Somali young people. if we are honest with ourselves, we shall acknowledge that those Ministry of Housing towers in themselves symbolise living 'outside' mainstream norms of success and inclusion. Fnding themselves concentrated in these flat complexes, Somali immigrants can come to understand themselves as lesser citizens, even as 'unsuccessful' families.

Adults also face subsequent difficulties: language impediments, unemployment, financial difficulties and thwarted hopes. All these affect integration. When the

children go to school, with poor English and faltering confidence, it can be hard to make friends. Among school mates, young people from the flats experience all kinds of pressures, to be cool and 'western' and all the rest. At home, a completely different set of expectations and parameters exist. No matter where they are, they are not quite comfortable. And so, amongst both parents and younger people, a sense of separation can become pervasive.

The commentary of recent days calls to mind a conversation at 'Flemington Tutoring' not long after Barack Obama was elected President of the United States. The group at my table, teenage girls and boys who had either been born in Australia or arrived at a young age, got talking about their backgrounds. In the course of things I asked a few questions: 'So you're Australian citizens, right, but how do you see yourselves? Do you think of yourselves as Australians?' 'Nah man, of course not, we're Somali!'

'OK, you know Barack Obama?'

'Yeah I love him, he's sooo cool, his father was a Muslim, Hussein.'

'Yeah right. Well Barack Obama's dad was Kenyan but he was growing up in America: what do you think he thought of his nationality?'

'He would've thought he was American I reckon.'

'Why? Wasn't he similar to you?'

'Nah, cause in America it's cool, like you can be black, homey you know, but here it's not like that, we're Somali.'

Conversations like this reveal something very important: that for some Somali young people in our community, it is difficult to locate an overriding, inclusive identity that fits. Whereas in America the African American story is a constituent part of the American identity, in a Somali enclave in inner Melbourne the possibility of an African-Australian identity is less clear. These young people at this very moment are working out such an identity. It is so important that it not be formed in terms of 'threat.'

Here is a challenge for all of us. A stronger sense of communal responsibility needs to be rediscovered, a recognition that if there is a problem, then we all own it, not just the figures of authority and the bureaucrats who devise 'policy solutions.' The challenge to each citizen is to avoid mentally shifting responsibility for 'integration' on to government programs or indeed on to the Somali community themselves. The challenge is to actually enact what Australia's refugee program implies: real hospitality. That means the simple act of individuals taking an interest, and being open to friendship and to share a common Australian life.

Gliding in contentment

POETRY

Ivan Head

Wedge-tailed Eagle Southern New South Wales

Gliding in contentment's contempt of task
all along Jingellic Road's thread line
by Ulladulla station or further south to Yambla Ridge,
the Wedge-tail where the hill was ripped
by the drag-tool for wattle under-storey
contoured to the cairn, slides in the air,
conserving energy since no wing beats.
Undefeated in flight, wholly at ease
over the Wantagong Valley long and deep,
its green eye-range to the edge of a world:
seeing all, surveillant, dominant.
A dead Kangaroo's ribbed carcass
becomes death's carnal paddock carpet, furred.
Cloud blurs in the light, and beyond, the sun gleams
as the eagle glides by hillside
above or below my eye-line at the cairn site.

On a streaming easy line,
kilometers of small creatures' terror terrain
beneath the reigning kyrios of ripped earth
and replenished saplings and renewed creeks.
Its predator scrutiny pre-dates this ripped aorta,
this heart muscle opened to the beak, talon held.
A cavity of valley grabs lung breath,
exaggerated claws evolved to be good at this.
Now gliding easily over this valley floor

raptor eye seeking curious or hidden prey,
each taloned
and carried away.

The Road

Out running I ran into the God.
A portal black with no depth.
It was a gap in the visual field
A billboard no more signed than shadow

I ran though it
and though without depth
the further I went
the more it persisted.
An ambulance came
and took away my body.
I was not there.
I did not hear the siren.

Dear Flannery

Dear Flannery,
you've been dead since 1964
so I don't know where you are. But
if you have on your resurrected body
you'll be free from Lupus. I
thought about you last evening on the main drive
when an agile figure sped by.
I smelled essence of lemon
as if someone drew it from the air,
distilled it in passing.

For some reason it made me think of you, or,
'You were the very next thing I thought of'.
I hope we can still meet.
Your late reader and fan.

All Saints' Blackheath: July

In Summer's dye of straw colour
the heath traces the same straw shades
in the stone spire past its hundredth year.
Winter dries out from trampling,
over-mowing and by the spire
where people lie shirtless.
It's a big unfenced field.
Light scarcely seeps away,
hangs on late when the vapour trails of high jets
intersect as cold air art
by Summer's moon crescent.
The lit spire says to pilots 'bank North'.
The heath as open sea
invites possible transits
past the spire at shore's edge.
The high up glinting
cock's crow
betrays no one.
The vapour trails are very high
and lit up in a sun that from here
is already below the horizon

Stretched cirrus slashed brush strokes on long canvas,
a water-colour sky washes above the tree bank,

cumulous violet and mauve of this world as another.
On Friday as noon-chimes,
hundreds stand quiet by the spire.
They object to the bombers in the Tube.
Later and far above the spire clock
noctilucent fragments
far above breathing air
in sunlight from beyond all curved limits.

When freedom of religion trumps free speech

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mick MacAndrew

In March, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a non-binding resolution for member countries upholding Religious Freedom over Freedom of Speech.

Practically, the resolution urges member countries to work for a world where forms of defamation of religion, made under the guise of freedom of speech, are considered an affront to human dignity. Because they restricted the freedom of adherents of a religion they would not deserve the protection of laws upholding freedom of speech.

The move has been criticised by many as limiting human rights. But it should be seen in the context of the ever deepening debate between proponents of religion and those of secularism. Those who uphold the good of religion are now asking what's next in the secularist's armoury or gun-sights. Secularists who seek legitimacy are asking where we can look for a foundation for values if we don't want to look to religion.

The consensus among those who agree to the resolution is that human dignity is a foundational criterion which can privilege freedom of religion over freedom of speech. Human dignity provides boundaries that restrict individual human rights and the human rights of groups and associations, if those rights infringe on human dignity.

How human dignity is established in a way that both religionists and secularists could commit to will be the next debate. Unlike many debates the United Nations has opened, and has been criticised for, because they have pitted the West against non-West, this one must deal with history and heritage. It cannot be hijacked by those who want to deny the past in order to build the present and future.

The concept of human dignity has a glorious history in both religious and secular disciplines, and across the East-West divide. The history of how both disciplines have developed the concept can help place human rights and freedom of speech inside boundaries that not only assure life for all, but leave room for a purpose for life for all.

Not only religions oppose secularists' demand that freedom of religion give way to freedom of speech in upholding human rights. A secular national court has held the human dignity of the members of a religion to take priority over a secular organisation's right to use what was determined to be religious imagery in order to promote its own aims. Many had considered this use to amount to religious defamation.

In April this year, Germany's highest court ruled against the United States based animal rights organisation PETA. The organisation's posters, used to promote vegetarianism, veganism and human dissociation with animals, juxtaposed photos of Jewish inmates of the Nazi Concentration Camps with photos of farm animals in cages and pens. These bore the banner, 'To Animals, All People Are NAZIS'.

The Court's ruling recognised that to the Jewish people, the Holocaust is now part of the identity of being a Jew. So any attempt to use the fate of the victims of the Holocaust for banal and trivial reasons defames the Jewish religion and impinges on the human dignity of its adherents.

Human dignity has been given definition, in part, because the protection of human life and the human right to religious practice has been given precedence over the right of a group to publicise its view that humans should be judged badly if they eat meat or associate with animals in any way.

Recent history, combined with 5000 years of serious reflection and study grounding regard for human dignity and the integrity of human association with animals, has been given prority over individual and group human rights in defining what constitutes life and its purpose.

The debates will continue, I'm sure, but I was pleased to read of these small but significant contributions to them.

Generation Y for yoghurt

COMMUNITY

Edwina Byrne

It's fashionable these days to make all sorts of claims about the latest generation to enter the workforce — my generation — Generation Y. Among other things, we are cocky, attention-deficient, home-bodied, highly educated, spoilt and tech-savvy; in other words, unemployable.

Indeed, the weekend broadsheets provide a seemingly endless litany about how we're being dismissed from our comfortable graduate programs, how we're failing to find new jobs, how we're setting our career expectations too high and even how the entire GFC might be just desserts for the generation who've had it all. Incidentally, this sort of commentary has not lessened my generation's tendency to egotism.

Whether we deserve it or not, Gen Y is copping a mouthful of humble pie in this economic downturn. Youth unemployment is at 12.3 per cent, and set to rise with the Government's changes to youth allowance. Smug observers suggest it's time to hunker down, stop making unreasonable demands, and accept that we'll have to tough it out in low-pay, low-benefits jobs for a few years. For once, everything's not just going to be handed to us on a silver platter.

I have two things to say to these observers. First: take a look at yourself. Yes, you're old, but that doesn't make you your dad. You are a Baby Boomer: you never lived through the Depression. Don't talk to me about hunkering down to work, hippy — I actually attended classes during my university degree, and am currently seeking out work.

'Starting at the bottom' just isn't as easy as it used to be. Even apprentices, clerks and administrative assistants need tertiary qualifications these days, whereas my dad, with a year 11 certificate, got his first job as a journalist by showing up the day another guy quit.

Point the second: If you could stop prophesising our doom for a moment, you might see that we're not as hopeless as we seem. In fact, we're pretty shrewd. How else do you explain the fact that while we struggle in this increasingly demoralising job market we're living in your house, eating your food, and being told how special we are (by you, our parents)?

We Gen Y-ers have cleverly secured for ourselves a very comfortable niche in society: staying at home longer, racking up degrees into our mid-20s, and receiving financial help from our parents long after we leave home.Strangely enough, rather than receiving congratulations for this success, we're vilified as parasites feeding off the success of previous hard-working generations.

A bit harsh I'd say. I know of comparatively few young people living at home against the will of their parents; perhaps we're less like parasites than bacteria. Good bacteria — the blue ones that come in yoghurt — hardly noticeable, eco-friendly organisms peacefully coexisting alongside you.

Yeah. And here's the thing about bacteria: it survives. It's ubiquitous in every habitat on Earth, and is vital in performing some really crappy jobs. If it thinks highly of itself, so it should.

So stop telling us that our lifestyle is intrinsically flawed, and that we're failing to address reality. Our reality just looks different to yours, and from our perspective, we're in a pretty good position to deal with any challenges that come along. We're an adaptive species, and even if worst comes to worst, we'll cope.

Yes, we're waking up to the fact that we may have to settle for less for a few years. Yes we might have to start at the bottom. But Gen Y, like bacteria, will survive this and other crises, and outlive you.

Regulation could make Kyle a good boy

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

Radio 'bad boy' Kyle Sandilands has regretted forcing a child rape victim to relive her ordeal on air for the entertainment of his audience.

'We're very sad for the girl and very disappointed and apologetic to anyone who took offence to it,' he said on air.

Station 2Day-FM's owners Austereo also regretted the incident. They acted to suspend the program as soon as the scale of the disaster became apparent.

It's likely that the real nature of the regret was best expressed in a headline in Tuesday's *Australian Financial Review*: 'Fallout from shock jocks could cost Austereo dearly'.

Columnist Neil Shoebridge wrote that the suspension of the program could mean $5 million in lost advertising revenue for Austereo.

He quoted media strategist Steve Allen: 'There wouldn't be any meaningful difference to 2Day's revenue over two weeks. But if they're off air for three weeks or more, there's going to be a loss of revenue.'

Mediaweek managing editor James Manning said on Sky Business Channel that he thinks they will be back.

'If they stay, they will lose a couple of sponsors and maybe a few listeners. The worst case scenario, if they go, is that a new show could lose all their sponsors and all their listeners.'

It's clearly a business — not a moral — decision.

The Ten Network's sacking of Sandilands from his position as an *Australian Idol*judge would be commendable if it was not also based upon commercial logic. For them, Sandilands would repel more viewers and advertisers than he would attract.

Self-regulation, and invariably self-interest and the survival instinct, govern how media organisations proceed in such circumstances. It seems the exploitation and psychological scarring of a 14-year-old counts for nothing. That's the way the government authority ACMA has set it up.

It's time for more government regulation. If the self-regulating radio stations were serious about their responsibility to prevent hurt to individuals such as the 14-year-old rape victim, they would employ safety measures such as a dump

switch or a seven second delay. They don't, and so it is time for ACMA to consider imposing rules in the way they did after cash for comment was exposed a decade ago.

Because the stations are primarily responsible to their shareholders, it's understandable that the bottom line will rule. They will act morally only if it is imposed upon them as a condition of their licence.

Individuals working in such organisations may want to behave ethically, but they are constrained by the commercial imperative and need the helping hand of regulation. Even retired radio 'bad boy' John Laws intimated this last week when he told VEGA 95.3: 'I never *wanted* to create mischief that would be damaging to people.' Commercial logic required him to create mischief.

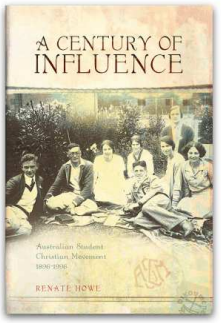
Regulation would have given him the freedom to do the right thing.

A brief history of Christian student activism

BOOKS

Avril Hannah-Jones

Renate Howe: *A Century of Influence: The Australian Student Christian Movement 1896—1996*. UNSW Press , 2009. ISBN: 9781921410956.



Like thousands of others, my faith was challenged at university. The challenge came from two directions. Studying women's history and feminist legal theory had me wondering why I was still part of the patriarchal church. And the popular student Christian groups on the University of Melbourne campus dismayed me with their conservatism and intolerance. There seemed to be no middle way between atheism and fundamentalism.

Then I discovered the Australian Student Christian Movement (ASCM), a small group committed to an 'intelligent faith'. It was feminist and queer-friendly, dedicated to social action, determined to relate Christianity to intellectual life. For years, it kept me Christian. So I read Renate Howe's centenary history of the ASCM eagerly, wanting to know more about the history of this movement that has been such a vital part of my life.

In 1896, when the ASCM (then known as the Australasian Student Christian Union) was established, Australia had only four universities, which were strongly opposed to any religious activity taking place on their secular campuses. Yet those who created the movement believed that Christian students could be agents of change in the university, the nation and the world.

Howe tells the fascinating story of a movement that did inspire many people to be change agents. The ASCM encouraged Christian involvement in Australian and international public life by relating Christianity to the issues of the day. It fostered an ideal of public service that influenced bodies as diverse as denominational missions, the Commonwealth Public Service, university Labor Clubs, and Australian Volunteers Abroad.

It encouraged Australians to see themselves as part of the Asia-Pacific decades before the rest of the country explored that possibility; provided the leadership of later ecumenical ventures including the Australian Council of Churches and the Uniting Church in Australia; and debated issues of war, peace and internationalism, encouraging pacifism after the First World War and subversion of the Draft during the Vietnam War.

While the ASCM initially supported the White Australia Policy as a way of maintaining living standards, and did not officially repudiate it until 1962, it did develop into a movement that challenged Australia's insularity. Initially

uninterested in indigenous issues, the ASCM supported the 1967 referendum and in 1988 'celebrated' the Bicentenary with the conference 'Strangers in our own land: Racism, Christianity, Justice'.

One of the most important contributions the ASCM made was as a venue for women to exercise leadership. Conferences were always co-educational, then, while men were absent during the First World War, women stepped into leadership positions and stayed there.

ASCM women led worship years before churches allowed it, and in early decades the marriages celebrated between ASCM members provided women the opportunity for ministry as the wives of ministers and missionaries. A few decades later, ASCM women were actively involved in the campaigns for the ordination of women.

The formation of the ASCM was inspired by the charismatic American evangelical ecumenist, John R. Mott. From the beginning the Australian movement had a tense relationship with evangelicalism, deciding not to adopt Mott's watchword of 'the evangelisation of the world in this generation'.

The ASCM refused to hold American-style university missions, encouraged liberal biblical interpretation, and supported the modernist side in the modernist-fundamentalist controversy of the 1920s. In 1930 the Evangelical Union split off from the ASCM, a division that has never been healed.

Since the 1960s the ASCM has been a movement in exile, unable to assume that the university is interested in anything that Christians have to say, instead needing to earn the right to speak through its actions. As the traditional churches head into a similar exile, the ASCM may have much to teach them.

Howe's history is primarily of the first 70 years of the ASCM, rather than its first century. The ASCM continued to change dramatically between 1968 and 1996, but Howe gives those decades short shrift.

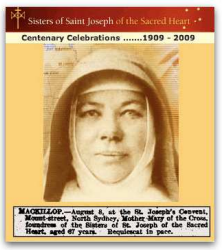
There are questions I still want answered. How did the ASCM, which supported women's leadership but usually paid women staff workers less than men and did not have a female chair until 1984, become the strongly feminist movement that I joined? How did it become proudly queer-friendly, years before the Uniting Church's sexuality debate made the front pages of newspapers?

Howe describes *Other Men Laboured*, the ASCM's 50th anniversary publication, as not 'forward-looking'. Her own otherwise excellent history has the same flaw. There is little recognition that in the decades following 1968 the ASCM continued to support, nurture and encourage students seeking to live out an intelligent Christian faith.

Patron saint of troublemakers

AUSTRALIA

James Martin



The headlines read: *Pope hopes excommunicated nun might become saint.*

Yes, you read that correctly.

Mother Mary MacKillop, the foundress of the Australian-based Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, was, in 1871, officially excommunicated by her local bishop, on the grounds that 'she had incited the sisters to disobedience and defiance'.

That same church leader, Bishop Sheil, had earlier invited her to work in Adelaide, where she and her sisters would eventually set up schools, a women's shelter and an orphanage, among their many works. But MacKillop's independent spirit was a threat to Bishop Sheil, who had her booted out of the Church.

Last month, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd spoke with Pope Benedict XVI about MacKillop's possible canonisation. Just last year, the pope visited MacKillop's tomb in Sydney during his visit to Australia for World Youth Day. Prime Minister Rudd said that the visit 'left a deep impression on the Holy Father'.

In April of this year, in an extraordinary gesture, Bishop's Sheil's successor, the current archbishop of Adelaide, Philip Wilson, made a public apology to the Sisters for their foundress's excommunication. Standing before her statue, he said that he was 'profoundly ashamed of the Bishop's actions in driving the Sisters out onto the streets'.

MacKillop was beatified (the next-to-last step for canonisation) by Pope John Paul II in 1995.

The idea of a holy woman who had been at loggerheads with the hierarchy — and was even excommunicated — is not new in the annals of the saints. The most recently named American saint, Mother Theodore GuÃ©rin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence of St Mary of the Woods, was once locked into a room in a presbytery by her bishop, who was infuriated by her (similarly) independent spirit.

Around the time of her canonisation in 2006, I recounted her story in an op-ed piece in the *New York Times,* called 'Saints That Weren't.' (Their title, not mine.)

It was a tough article for some Catholics to read, and I got letters by the dozens. Half of them praised me for reminding Catholics that being in trouble with the church hierarchy is no barrier for holiness; and the other half expressed fury that I was suggesting that being in conflict with the church was a requirement for holiness. (I was arguing only the former — and from history.)

The canonisation of troublemakers shows that the Vatican typically has a clearer

understanding of holiness than do some contemporary Catholics, who sometimes conflate holiness with being unthinking, uncritical or blindly obedient. But popes have often canonised saints who were held in contempt by some church leaders of their time. Here, for example, is part of the hair-raising tale of Mother GuÃ©rin's run-in with Bishop de la HailandiÃ¨re:

'At the time, the idea of an independent woman deciding where and when to open schools offended CÃ©lestine de la HailandiÃ¨re, the Catholic bishop of Vincennes, Ind. In 1844, when Mother GuÃ©rin was away from her convent raising money, the bishop ordered her congregation to elect a new superior, in a bid to eject her from the very order of nuns that she had founded. The independent-minded sisters simply re-elected Mother GuÃ©rin.

'Infuriated, Bishop HailandiÃ¨re told the future saint that she was forbidden from setting foot in her own convent, since he, the bishop, considered himself its sole proprietor.

'Three years later, Bishop HailandiÃ¨re demanded that Mother GuÃ©rin resign. When she refused, the bishop told her congregation that she was no longer superior, that she was ordered to leave Indiana, and that she was forbidden from communicating with her sisters. Her sisters replied that they were not willing to obey a dictator.

'The situation worsened until, just a few weeks later, Bishop HailandiÃ¨re was suddenly replaced by the Vatican. From then on, the Sisters of Providence flourished. Today its 465 members work in 10 states, the District of Columbia, China and Taiwan.'

Musty stories of dead nuns? Not so fast. These stories have profound implications not simply for Catholics in general, but perhaps for those American religious women who are the current focus of the Vatican's investigation — an Apostolic Visitation that is to examine their 'quality of life'.

Some of these sisters, and perhaps even a few congregations, may one day find themselves on the receiving end of some criticism, when the final report is released in a few months, or years. They may take heart in the story of Blessed Mary MacKillop and St Theodore GuÃ©rin.

And others. Even some of the most universally beloved saints have sometimes found themselves in conflict with the Church: St Joan of Arc, the patroness of France, was burned at the stake as a heretic by church authorities; St Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order, was locked in jail for a time by the Inquisition; and St Bernadette Soubirous, the visionary of Lourdes, was initially rejected by her local pastor, who refused to believe in her reports of visions.

On a somewhat less exalted level, think of modern-day theologians like John Courtney Murray, Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac, who were either officially silenced or restricted in their teaching and writing, and then later 'rehabilitated',

and in the case of Congar and de Lubac named cardinals.

MacKillop was beatified in 1995. From the sounds of Prime Minister's Rudd's comments, and the implied message of the pope's visit to her tomb, she will soon become a saint — perhaps the patron saint of troublemakers.

Bonhoeffer's ethics not for show

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton

Two years ago in a time of rising prosperity, *The Monthly*published then opposition leader Kevin Rudd's article on Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He used the German theologian's life and integrity to define the ethical contribution that churches can make in Australian public life. He understandably described Bonhoeffer's ethical stance in categories that reflected those of Labor Party policy.

Bonhoeffer was a writer for many times. He continues to engage readers as a man whose thought, life and execution for resisting Hitler's policies were coherent. His ethics will be the subject of a conference in Newcastle later this year on the limits of tolerance. So it may be worth retracing the path walked by Rudd and reflecting on how his ethical approach might illuminate a different time of economic downturn and recovery.

Bonhoeffer's ethics are of interest less for his conclusions about particular issues than for his starting point. He was a committed Christian who asked himself how to respond ethically in his world. His focus was theological and practical. He was not an ethical theorist who asked how faith might be relevant to his theory.

The Church was central in his faith. So he did not see ethical response as the province of isolated individuals but of people gathered in the church. This view led him to emphasise the importance of forming the community to respond to their world. When he formed theological students for the confessing Church that was at odds with Hitler's policies, he laid great stress on discipline and the practice of prayer.

The determining factor in making ethical decisions was reality. This included the unique set of relationships and events that compose each situation. But his understanding of reality was also theological. The heart of reality was Jesus Christ, in whom humanity and the created world are joined to God. So reality included human misery and blindness, but also the salvation from these things promised in Christ's death. To situate ethics in reality was to be shaped to Christ and to act in a way that fitted the future world that God wanted.

It is no wonder that Bonhoeffer had a bleak view of human ethical resources. His times were those of crisis, from the disastrous German defeat in the Great European War through Hitler's rise to power ending in another war. He also found his own time as one of intellectual and moral crisis in which people had to respond to these extraordinary public events, but found their personal resources and their received theological and ethical frameworks inadequate for the task.

In our similarly demanding times Bonhoeffer's stress on character, with its

distinctive theological definition, is attractive. For him ethics was about persons together acting responsibly. It did not express itself in rhetoric about hard times and hard decisions, but in acting responsibly without regard to popularity.

The emphasis on the future in Bonhoeffer's ethics is also relevant today. All the signs suggest that the economic crisis has not led us to reflect to any purpose on what kind of economy and society we desire and will be able to afford. In particular the reality that global warming is likely to be exacerbated by an economy based on increased consumption and rooted in competitive individualism is either denied or ignored.

To face reality courageously you need encouragement and strength. In democracies the crucial decisions that shape the future world are made by politicians. The attention Bonhoeffer gave to nurturing faith and its practices may lead us to ask what kind of convictions animate political parties, and what kind of formation and discipline will support politicians in acting in accordance with those convictions. A three line whip does not seem effective in encouraging consistency between professed ideals and practice.

Bonhoeffer's lack of esteem for analytical and consequentialist thought in ethics also bears reflection. Both his experience and his theological view of the human condition made him aware of how strongly self-interest shapes analysis. A healthy disrespect for the certainties offered by economic analysts and a proper contempt for greed as the engine of banking and business are difficult to maintain. But they are essential in any ethical response to the future.

Finally, churches might find some illumination in Bonhoeffer's ethics. He suggests that ethical response is done quietly in the network of relationships and contingencies that shape public life. It is not about looking good or right.

Incest and redemption

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***Beautiful Kate*(MA). Running time: 90 minutes. Director: Rachel Ward. Starring: Rachel Griffiths, Bryan Brown, Ben Mendelsohn, Sophie Lowe, Maeve Dermody**

The 'tastefully nude' young woman is surrounded by cloudy blackness. These shadows evoke at once a sense of mystery and of menace as they gnarl around her milky form. Is she emerging from that darkness, or receding into it? Is she the predator or the prey? Do youth and beauty personify strength or vulnerability?

The publicity poster for *Beautiful Kate* is as ambiguous as the controversial Bill Henson photographs it so blatantly references. The film unpacks these ambiguities, not solving but exacerbating them and making them sing with empathy for the angst of family trauma, the pain of growing up, and the ripping, gripping claws of unresolved guilt.

Rachel Ward has written and directed a sensitive film, adapted from Newton Thornburg's eponymous novel, that makes an accessible and compelling story out of a scenario that might otherwise evoke moral indignation if not revulsion — namely, sibling incest.

Incest is but one of a cluster of dark secrets that have swollen and festered between 30-something writer Ned (Mendelsohn) and his father (Brown). When Ned returns to the rural Australian family homestead after a 20-year estrangement, these familial boils must be located and lanced if there's to be a chance of redemption for either Ned or the ailing patriarch.

When Ned arrives at the house with his nubile and flaky young lover (Dermody), he is initially reluctant to address the old wounds. But returning to the site of past traumas must necessarily awaken dormant memories. Dreamlike flashback sequences mete out the pertinent aspects of Ned's troubled back story.

We learn that there was an inappropriateness to Ned's relationship with his twin sister Kate. The extent of this aspect of their relationship — the part it played in Kate's death at a young age and Ned's subsequent escape from the family home — is revealed gradually and graphically. The simultaneous menace and mystery of youth and beauty comes into play. But there is also a sweet innocence to the scenes, so that while they are shocking, they are not sleazy.

Kate (Lowe), lively, lithe and passionate, remains an elusive figure. Many of her scenes are filmed from Ned's point of view, and our understanding of her is limited by his limited perspective. It is unclear what motivated her to pursue such a

relationship with her brother, although social isolation, the absence of their mother, the emotional distance of their father, the closeness of twins and the hormonal turbulence of adolescence are contributing factors.

Among the universally strong performances (particularly Mendelsohn as the emotional gelding Ben, and Brown as the rage and sickness-riddled father), Griffiths is a standout. She brings an understated strength and dignity to her portrayal of Ned's surviving sister Sally, who alone of the siblings has remained as a companion and, lately, nurse to their father.

Compassionate and thoughtful, Sally also understands Ned, more than he realises. She epitomises the film's theme of forgiveness (of self, of others), and plays a key role during a final act where the concealment of truth proves to be a most profound act of mercy.

Cory Aquino and the people's triumph over tyranny

POLITICS

Fatima Measham


Cory magic is back
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
In death, she revives People Power

To many outside the Philippines, the 1986 People's Power Revolution is just a footnote in world history. It occurred in a period of great political and ideological upheaval,including the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Few now remember the radical, unprecedented nature of the protest on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) in Manila. Hundreds of thousands of Filipinos had gathered to form a protective barricade around two rebel figures, Juan Ponce Enrile and Fidel Ramos, then Minister of National Defense and Armed Forces Vice-Chief of Staff respectively.

That civilians came to the aid of military figures seems improbable; in light of the ways in which the army and police were used during Ferdinand Marcos' dictatorship, it seems preposterous. For nine of the 20 years that Marcos had ruled, the Philippines was under martial law. Opposition figures were arrested, detained, tortured, or summarily executed by men in uniform.

If it hadn't happened, the revolution would sound like a fairytale. A people, oppressed by their own defence and security officials, gathered in droves outside two military camps in order to stop a dictator from arresting two of his own men.

People stayed on the street for four days, unarmed. They ate there, they slept there. They sang and prayed there. At times it felt strangely festive. In the end, they did no more to overthrow Marcos than simply be there.

It was the first instance in modern times where civilians, not the military, unseated a corrupt leader without even a call to arms. The term 'people power' was coined. For long afterwards its spirit was invoked in mass demonstrations elsewhere.

One of the key figures in this movement was a slight, fair-skinned woman. Little known to the rest of the world, but already loved by her people, Cory Aquino was a political widow. Her husband Benigno (commonly known as Ninoy) had been assassinated three years earlier upon his return from exile.

Although such an assasination were not uncommon then, Filipinos had taken Ninoy's murder quite personally. It was outrageously brazen, taking place in daylight on an airport tarmac.

Aquino's grief, which may have otherwise been private, became the lightning rod for national outrage. The pressure on Marcos built up. It culminated in a 'snap' election between Marcos and Aquino. His victory was quickly exposed as fraudulent. Soon afterwards Enrile and Ramos withdrew their support from the government, so setting in motion the events that led to Marcos and his family

fleeing to Hawaii.

Filipinos will remember Corry Aquino for these events. She passed away on Saturday, having lost her struggle against colon cancer. Although her presidency was later marred by controversy, most people would give her credit for navigating the transition back to democracy with considerable equanimity and wisdom, despite her complete lack of political and economic experience.

In fact, she became a focal point of national pride, the embodiment of triumph over tyranny. Although others were involved in the overthrow of Marcos, including Archbishop Jaime Sin, Aquino's ordinariness — a critic called her 'just a housewife' — highlighted the burden she had taken upon herself, and revealed the strength of her character.

Part of her mythology is that she had initially resisted calls to run against Marcos (who derided her as 'just a woman'). After spending time in prayer at a convent, she decided to form a coalition party with Senator Salvador Laurel, who gave away his own ambition. She was inaugurated as president on the fourth day of the revolution. She relinquished her position promptly six years later, going back to live in the family home in the suburbs.

Her detachment from political power distinguishes Aquino from other Filipino leaders,. It now intensifies people's contempt for current president, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who reneged on a promise not to run for office after succeeding Joseph Estrada.

Since winning the 2004 election, Arroyo has been plagued by impeachment attempts and claims of human rights abuse and suppression of the press. Many comments on social networking sites that mark the passing of Aquino bitterly draw attention to the contrast between her and Arroyo.

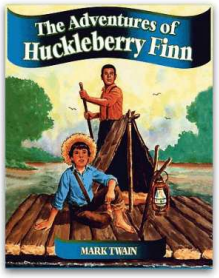
Cory Aquino's funeral cortege passed through EDSA on Monday and was attended by up to 40,000 people. As Filipinos worldwide mourn her passing, it remains to be seen how their grief will interact with their grievances against the present leader.

Remembering Aquino both recalls the hope and joy that attended her inauguration, and invites questions about what has really been gained since then.

A bookish look at cars and sport

NON-FICTION

Brian Doyle



Here's an idea: how about if all the cars and trucks and sports teams we name for fleet and powerful animals and cosmic energies and cool-sounding things that don't actually exist or mean anything (Integra! Camry!) are, effective immediately, renamed for literary characters and authors.

Wouldn't that be great? So instead of the Escalade we have the Evangeline, instead of the El Dorado we have the Elmer Gantry, instead of the Hummer we have the massive gleaming Huckleberry Finn.

And it's even more fun with sports teams — the Kimberley Kims! The Port Macquarie Patrick Whites! The Townsville Twains! Imagine the logo possibilities — the Twains with a bushy-haired Samuel Langhorn Clemens peering cheerfully over the bill of their ball caps, the University of Melbourne's Fighting David Maloufs with that wise bespectacled soul on their broad chests ... the mind doth reel.

And this allows us, at least on my home turf in the still-grappling-with-racism-although-slightly-less-so-today-what-with-our-black-president America, to sidestep the problem of sports teams being named for people with skin slightly darker than most of the people playing and following that team: Redskins, Braves, Chiefs, Indians. It's a dopey custom, and we are easily rid of it when we find ourselves rooting instead for the Cleveland Icaruses and the Kansas City Chinos (with the overture from *West Side Story* blaring from every speaker in the stadium).

For once city council and corporate board meetings would be riveting, as Los Angeles teams vie to see who can snag the names Marlowe and Chandler, and who will be the Los Angeles Easy Rawlins, with a box seat reserved for the great novelist Walter Mosley. The New Orleans Moviegoers, the Harvard University Fighting Henry Adamses ...

And the loss of so many weird and puzzling car names would be a great gift to the known world. Achieva, Cabrio, Elantra, Galant, Impreza, Passat, Reatta, Vandura, all gone and unmourned, and in their places we find the Deerslayer, the Scarlet Letter, the Augie March, the Joe Wilson, the Banjo Clark (for all that he was a real and wonderful man, was there ever more of an Australian legend than the national Uncle?).

Although there are some current cars that could and should keep their names: the Somerset and the Swift, for two, not to mention Stanzas and Dashers and Darts.

I can hear you arguing now: isn't it an act of wild creation itself, to invent ridiculous names for cars, names that sound sort of cool and dashing and fast at first, but as soon as you think about it you start laughing so hard your sprain your eye, and then you laugh harder imagining the eager devious souls who had to sell those names to the high priests of marketing, who many times incredibly must have said yes! when someone, clearly goofing or addled on too much cough medicine, said hey, how about we name the new model the Camargue? or Justy? or Nubira? which now I have to stop thinking about this because my eye hurts? And to answer your question, yes.

Anyway I think this is an excellent idea, because it leads to hours of happy dreaming about the University of Massachusetts Moby-Dicks, or the Kalgoorlie Kenneth Cooks, or the Toronto Robertson Davies, on which team every player is asked to sport the enormous glowing beard of the late salty soul for whom the team is named.

Such speculations, I find, are perfect for wasting the hours that a responsible man would be looking after the laundry and the parakeets, but this line of thinking brings me right to the late William Wharton, who would have smiled widely, I bet, if the Baltimore Orioles renamed themselves the Birdys in his honor, which they haven't yet. But they might.

That effing rain

POETRY

Margaret McCarthy

Rain at fifty-three

It rains in February.

Over number fifty-three

a single spitting shower from on-high

dampens the air-con intake fan on the rooftop that

stalled at 43c.

The drops are not an army.

Neighbours out their fronts — legs splayed, too far gone to sweat —

have gone a week too long.

Eff this sun. Effen night. Call that effing rain.

Each promised drop gives the roof

a temporary rash which

fades before the next gob hits.

The water does not rain as a team.

The inhabitants of fifty-three are inside and right-off.

Their sauna-ed lounge is darkened,

heated underfoot by upholstery and vinyl. The effs reach them sporadically.

The objects — knives and forks, stairway banisters, door handles —

rising towards

internal combustion are awake to the change.

The bread, sliced for toast, locked in a plastic sheaf with condensation, feels lucky.

Walls hold their ancient drips through layer on layer of paint, and quiver.

On the sill, plastic detergent bottles, warm as baby formula, go soft.
Shower frames, bath tubs, and their calcium stains,

hear the outside falls with hope of a cool scrub. None

know the difference between big rain and

little.

From outside the scent of bitumen is released.

Released are blistering rubber car brakes after a long downhill run.

Released is the dehydrated dog pee on the backyard slab.

Those who cannot move sit just where placed, still as salt shakers, baked from inside out, radiating, and wait, serfs to a demigod,

to be set free.

Hung-over drops shirk their duties. The rain is thirsty and self-absorbed — it neither cools nor brings life. The roof creaks under renewed sun strike.

The air-con refuses to restart.

The liberator is not this army.

The art of finding

The art of finding is easy to master.

A five cent piece from the gutter,

Roads heading out of town,

A window seat on a Boeing 747,

An extra breath in my jumper.

Finding myself

In a city on my own,

A sweet lover,

A sour one.

Finding friends with

Easy conversation,

Discovering joints, politics,

Knowing more than I thought.

Finding myself in

A house of God,

Without Him in it.

I've found beach houses,

Hand written directions,

Hard rubbish furniture as near as new,

Squashed jewellery,

Expired bus tickets,
My own mother at a fair

But things I lost —

I found peace in crazy times,

Good in everyone.

I found out for myself

What no one wants to know.

I found a gold charm bracelet

On the footpath,

And took it home.

Someone else's flattened memories

Along the path

Towards the stray cats,

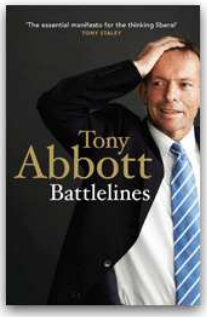
Car seat, fire trap house of

My lost property life.

The Liberals' hidden intellectual arsenal

POLITICS

Sarah Burnside



Tony Abbott's recent book *Battlelines*articulates his vision for Australia (including a radical rethink of federalism) while expanding on the nature of conservatism. Abbott, the Shadow Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, has previously characterised *Battlelines* as both 'a personal book' and an exploration of 'some of the policy positions that a properly liberal conservative political position might produce'.

The book has been greeted with waves of warm approval by columnists at *The Australian,* in contrast to the outright hostility with which the newspaper greeted Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's essays in *The Monthly.* A recent editorial in *The Australian* regretted that 'Australian conservatives have conceded the intellectual high ground to Labor, which from Gough Whitlam on has presented itself as the party of ideas'.

This viewpoint was also aired by international affairs columnist Greg Sheridan shortly after the 2007 election, when he wrote: 'It is the great strength of Labor that it has so often studied and celebrated its own history, and indeed imposed its interpretation on the nation as the generally accepted version of history itself.'

The statements cited above reveal two common assumptions: that Australian history is shaped according to the dictates of the Labor Party, and that public debate around ideas of substance is similarly dominated by the left. These assumptions need to be examined.

The concept that those on the right in Australian politics are excluded from the national conversation is profoundly at odds with reality. That the myth of left-wing hegemony is so commonly accepted illustrates the effectiveness of the 'culture wars' in which the former Howard Government was an enthusiastic participant.

The attacks by Howard and his Ministers on 'political correctness' and on 'the chattering classes' echoed the strategy adopted by the Republicans in America over the last two decades. In *What's The Matter with America?,*the American journalist and historian Thomas Frank demonstrated the effectiveness of the Republican war on the 'elites' of the 'liberal media' in cementing the perception that conservatives were the true underdogs.

In fact, the Liberal Party and its supporters have arguably been far more astute than the ALP in nurturing academics and research fellows sympathetic to the 'liberal conservative' cause. As a result, conservatives can draw on a plethora of high-profile think-tanks, including the Centre for Independent Studies and The Sydney Institute, to research and enunciate their ideas.

The apparent desire of Australian conservatives to assume the mantle of the underdog also belies the past successes of the Liberal Party. Many of the books by Labor politicians — from Gough Whitlam's *The Truth of the Matter* to Mark Latham's *From the Suburbs* and Lindsay Tanner's *Crowded Lives* — were written during long periods in Opposition.

Conservative political parties governed Australia at a federal level for the majority of the 20th century. During this time, successive prime ministers — including Menzies, Holt, Gorton, McMahon, Fraser and Howard — were able not merely to put forward ideas or write narratives, but to implement policy. To make a fairly obvious point, it is self-indulgent to complain about not writing history when one is able instead to make it.

Given the Howard Government's denigration of Australian universities and its crippling cuts to their funding, too, it is surprising to learn that the modern Liberal Party concerns itself with history. As a humanities subject, history is not directly vocational. Nor is it marketable. Funding the study of history at a university level was not a priority of the former Liberal government.

Finally, history is by its nature contested. Although political parties will always proclaim the wisdom of its leaders and programs, good history is not written to advance the fortunes of a political party or to grind an ideological axe. John Howard's failure to appreciate this fact contributed to the destructive and farcical 'culture wars' which *The Australian,* unfortunately, seems keen to sustain.

Mum and dad investors cop economic tough love

ECONOMICS

Catherina Toh

In Australia we can't lay claim to a financial scam the size of Bernie Madoff's ponzi scheme in the United States. But we have had our fair share of financial disasters that have affected thousands of mum and dad investors. Westpoint, Opes Prime and Storm Financial have ruined many people.

The Australian media has been flooded by stories of individual investors adversely affected. Some have lost their homes. Many must rely on the aged pension rather than the comfortable retirement they had planned. Some retirees have been forced to return to work.

Most of the media coverage has skirted around the fact that the Storm Financial investors were expecting to increase their wealth exponentially by investing with money they didn't have and couldn't afford. There seems to have been almost a sense of entitlement to amass wealth out of proportion to one's financial standing. This is echoed in the corrupt activities of former Queensland minister, Gordon Nuttall.

Following this materialistic version of the 'fair go' spirit we have reacted to this devastation as we do to other disasters. We demand that the government bail out the hapless investors and look to regulators and financial institutions for compensation.

In the Storm Financial case we expect that investors, many owing more than what their share portfolios are worth, will be compensated by the financial institutions that provided the mortgages and margin loans.

In the United States it is different. There, investors have been hit, not just by Bernie Madoff, but also by a string of other collapses. Although in the Madoff case many investors were extremely wealthy, many were also mum and dad investors. Many have seen their life savings and retirement funds disappear. As in Australia, homes have been lost and retirees wrenched out of retirement.

But even though the SEC was clearly inactive and had failed to act on complaints it received for years about the Madoff operation, there isn't a loud chorus calling for government bailouts.

In some cases, the investors have access to the Securities Investor Protection Corporation, a compensation scheme for investors caught up in brokerage firm failures. But the anger and sense of betrayal rightly felt by investors has been directed against Mr Maddoff himself, his wife and family and, more recently, against his trustee in bankruptcy.

Judging by the stories in the media, people in the United States expect personal

responsibility for investment decisions. They express guilt, anger, disbelief and heartbreak but rarely claim that investors didn't know what they were doing or that the government should have somehow prevented them from entering into their contracts.

In this free market world, your investment decisions are your own. An investment ethos of tough love balks at taxpayer subsidies for anyone foolish or unlucky enough to make the wrong investment decision.

The response even to the large scale predatory lending practices that led to the sub-prime mortgage crisis and the GFC was unsympathetic. If you bought a house with money you didn't have and couldn't afford, of course you were going to lose it. Those who did are seen to have gambled on the property market and lost. That the odds were stacked against them from the start was not reason enough for the government to make good that loss.

In Australia we prefer to see people as victims. We do not expect they will exercise even basic common sense when they enter into financial transactions. A fair go means you must have a safety net when increasing your wealth. Our calls for government bailouts and compensation cement our perception of mum and dad investors as financially illiterate children. The parent government is required to rescue people and to clean up the mess.

We won't be able to stop financial collapses from occurring and dragging mum and dad investors down with them. Bt we can reduce their likelihood by improving the financial literacy of investors and by making it clear that there is no safety net. A bit of tough love, after the style of the United States, might be the answer.

In praise of slow arrests

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

Technology is assisting police to do their job in ways not contemplated a few short years ago. But unfortunately officers are not always aware of the consequences of their use of the new tools, and their training is often inadequate.

On the propaganda front, Victoria Police Deputy Commissioner Ken Lay announced last month that his officers would begin using Twitter to shame offenders such as hoon drivers. But in response, it's likely the hoons will step up the practice of glorifying their exploits on YouTube.

Perhaps most worrying is the increased deployment of tasers. Last week, Western Australia's Corruption and Crime Commission announced an investigation of the use of the technology by the state's police. This follows a taser incident last month in which a 36 year old man from a remote desert community caught on fire and suffered third degree burns.

There have been 68 complaints alleging police misuse of tasers since they were introduced into WA in 2007. Four of these complaints have been upheld and a further 24 are still being investigated.

Meanwhile in Victoria, the Office of Police Integrity tabled a report in state parliament on Thursday which outlined investigation findings that police are inadequately trained to deal with volatile situations, particularly those that involve mental health or drug and alcohol problems.

As the availability and use of tasers becomes more widespread, they are being seen as a fast and easy means of restraining such individuals. But 'fast and easy' is not what's needed for a suitable response that properly respects the rights of the individuals being apprehended.

Quite the opposite. Traditional constraints such as handcuffs were far better suited to officers acting cautiously and reflectively in difficult situations. Tasers expedite the apprehending of the alleged offender, and it would seem to follow that they make hasty, unreflective judgments more likely.

That said, if the alleged offender dies during the course of the attempted arrest, there is potentially more information available to the coroner to decide whether the outcome was just.

For example, Taser Cam is an optional attachment which initiates a video recording when the safety catch is released. The file can be downloaded for storage and viewing. The result is a record of the subject's behaviour before the weapon is deployed. It is a valuable investigation tool, and also useful for training and practice.

Last week's Victorian Office of Police Integrity report was critical of the state's police administration for so far failing to purchase the Taser Cam option. This would appear to suggest that Victoria Police gives a lower priority to accountability. Accountability is essential if the the ability to make cautious and reflective judgments is lost for the sake of the expeditiousness of tasers.