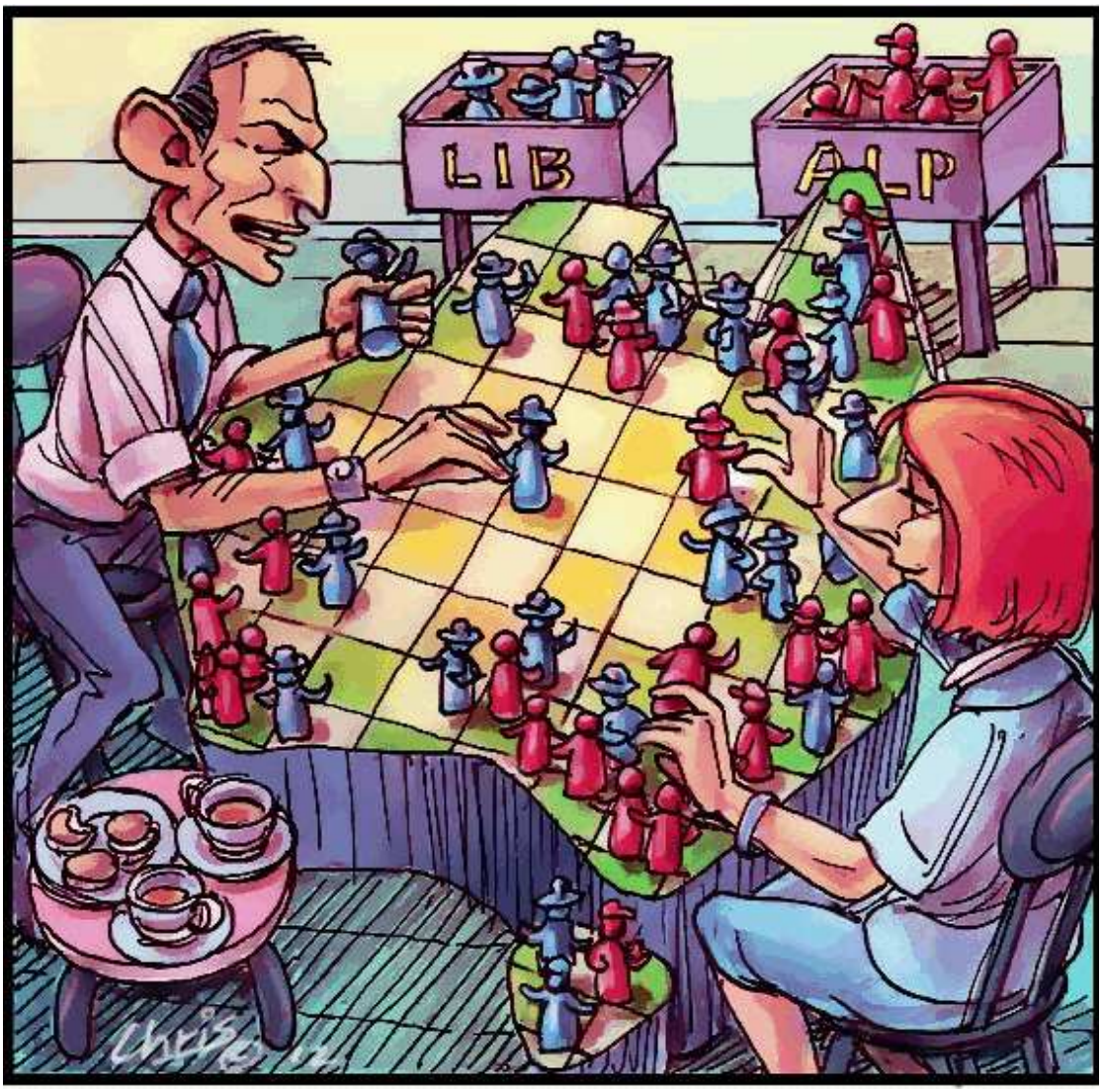
EUREKA STREET .com.au
Discerning humanity.

2 November 2012 Volume: 22 Issue: 21



Eureka Street is published fortnightly online, a minimum of 24 times per year by Eureka Street Magazine Pty Ltd

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Church needs state help to deal with abuse

THE MEDDLING PRIEST

Frank Brennan

These are not easy times for Catholic priests; and they have never been easy times for those children in our society who have been sexually abused, a disproportionate number of them by Catholic priests.

When in Sydney in July 2008, Pope Benedict XVI apologised in these words:

I ... acknowledge the shame which we have all felt as a result of the sexual abuse of minors by some clergy and religious in this country. Indeed, I am deeply sorry for the pain and suffering the victims have endured and I assure them that, as their pastor, I too share in their suffering. These misdeeds, which constitute so grave a betrayal of trust, deserve unequivocal condemnation.

I adopt his apology without demurrer.

Whatever our religion or none, whatever our love or loathing of the Catholic Church, what is to be done in the name of law and justice? Clearly the Church cannot be left alone to get its house in order. That would be a wrongful invocation of freedom of religion in a pluralist, democratic society.

The state may have a role to play. As our elected politicians decide how best to proceed, they need assistance from lawyers committed to justice, not lawyers acting primarily to protect or condemn the Church. The Church in Victoria has admitted that 'in the past 16 years, about 620 cases of criminal child abuse have been upheld by the Church in Victoria'. In the Archdiocese of Melbourne alone, 301 complaints have been upheld since 1996.

Professor Patrick Parkinson, probably the nation's most experienced academic lawyer in the field, having conducted the 2009 Study of Reported Child Sexual Abuse in the Anglican Church and having advised the Catholic Church on its Towards Healing protocol, informed the Victorian Parliament last month:

[T]here were 44 allegations of abuse [since 1990] within the Anglican diocese of Melbourne which fitted within the criteria of our study.

Archbishop Hart [the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne] referred to 60 priests ... of the archdiocese of Melbourne, who are substantiated offenders against children. We found 78 across the country against whom allegations were made in the Anglican Church. It gives you a sense of the scale of the problem.

If the Anglican and Catholic figures are statistically comparable, we all need to know the explanation for the discrepancy. If there be particular problems in the Catholic Church, they need to be identified for the good of all citizens, not just

Catholics.

Parkinson says 'we have come a long way ... The reality is that we have come light years on from 1997 ... I think all churches have radically changed their attitudes to all of this.' Speaking of those things which helped to influence the change, he told the Victorian parliamentary committee 'the Wood Royal Commission in New South Wales was very important, and generally an awareness that this was a problem not just for the Catholic Church'.

In 1997 the Wood Royal Commission noted: 'While a good deal of evidence and assistance was provided by the Catholic Church, it is not the case that the Commission finds particular fault with that Church or its constituent bodies. Indeed, its response to the matters disclosed by the Royal Commission is held up as a model for other Churches and religious organisations to follow.'

Recently there have been unresolved questions raised about Catholic Church processes by the ABC *Four Corners* program. I am one lawyer and dedicated Catholic who is mightily relieved that Tony Whitlam QC has been appointed to inquire into the Church processes in the Armidale case which featured on that program. And it is a relief to know that Frank Vincent QC is assisting the parliamentary inquiry in Victoria.

These two eminent and reputable retired judges will hopefully assist all persons including victims and church members wanting transparency and better processes. Presumably if they think more State resources are needed to accelerate prosecutions for past criminal offences or to enhance procedures for contemporary detection, avoidance and deterrence of child sexual abuse, they will say so, and they will be heard loud and clear.

At the moment, there is little that any Catholic priest can credibly say on this issue in the public square. I make this plea to all lawyers having a commitment to justice:

While putting aside any religious prejudice, please contribute fearlessly to the debate on how religious and other organisations charged by the State with responsibility for the oversight of the care and nurture of children can perform their tasks without undue risk of abuse and with State protection of all children assured.

And please advise how we can better deal with complaints which surface decades later, whether or not the now adult victims want to go to the police.

Eco-spirituality's overwhelming agenda

VIDEO

Peter Kirkwood

With the introduction of the carbon tax in July, we are beginning to experience the consequences — perhaps most noticeably steep rises in the cost of electricity — of attempts to address the threat of climate change.

This comes in the context of fierce community debate not only about measures to counter climate change, but whether the phenomenon even exists.

This video features a man who has led the way in the religious realm in thinking and talking about a range of ecological issues, including climate change. Theologian, ethicist and Uniting Church minister, Noel Preston has been outspoken about environmental problems.

As well as an interview about what he calls eco-justice and eco-spirituality, the video contains excerpts from a talk he gave recently at the annual Sea of Faith Network conference held on the Gold Coast.

Preston has a strong history as a campaigner on a range of social justice issues. He served as the inaugural convenor of the Uniting Church's Commission on Social Responsibility, Queensland Director of Action for World Development, and was founding director of Uniting Care Centre for Social Justice.

He has been a member and convenor of a number of Queensland social action groups including Concerned Christians, People for Nuclear Disarmament and Citizens Against Corruption.

He has taken particular inspiration on environmental issues from the Earth Charter that was launched in The Hague, Holland, in 2000. He sits on the committee of Earth Charter Australia .

Preston has combined life as a vigorous social activist with a distinguished career in academia. He held senior positions as a lecturer at both the Queensland University of Technology and Griffith University, teaching in the fields of applied and professional ethics. When he retired in 2004, he was awarded the Order of Australia for services to the community in the field of ethics.

He has authored, edited and co-authored a number of books including *Exploring Eco-justice: reframing ethics and spirituality in the context of globaliaation*; *Beyond the Boundary: a memoir exploring ethics, politics and spirituality*; and *Understanding Ethics*.

Sex, addicts and religious cults

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***The Master* (MA). Director: Paul Thomas Anderson. Starring: Joaquin Phoenix, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Amy Adams, Laura Dern. 137 minutes**

Navy personnel on sabbatical sculpt the form of a spread-eagled woman from sand. One stands by, leering, before suddenly pouncing on the prone figure and humping it extravagantly. This is a key character insight: Freddie Quell (Phoenix) is preoccupied with sex, and inclined to regard women as objects of gratification.

But Freddie is also disturbed. He is oblivious to the bemusement of his onlookers, and moments later he wades into the shallows of the sea to unabashedly masturbate. It is likely that his experiences in the war (World War II) have exacerbated, but are not the root cause of, his obviously disordered psyche. American filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson's *The Master* is in large part an ambiguous and unsettling portrait of this bizarre loner.

Freddie falls in with a cult known as The Cause, led by the charismatic Lancaster Dodd (Hoffman). Freddie initially wins Lancaster's favour thanks to his knack for concocting robust chemical cocktails that appeal to the cult leader's proclivity for booze. Their relationship gradually takes on a kind of symbiotic and mutually destructive father-son dimension. Each man has his own charisma, and holds the other in thrall.

The Master, truth be told, suffers from some infuriatingly, deliberately oblique plotting, which makes its two-plus hours feel bloated rather than epic. But if you set aside expectations of clarity and resolution, and bask in *The Master*'s exquisite period detail, director of photography Mihai Malaimare Jr's magnificent cinematography, and the gorgeously ear-grinding score from Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood*, The Master* is a captivating cinematic treat.

Bask, too, in the joy of watching Phoenix and Hoffman — great actors both — share the screen. Watch the tics and twists of Freddie/Phoenix's skewiff face as Lancaster subjects him to a sadistic game of 20 Questions; a pseudo-psychological process designed to cement the pastor-protÃ©gÃ© hierarchy. Later, watch Lancaster/Hoffman simmer then explode at a cynic's questions, silencing dissent with fury. This is top shelf acting.

Lancaster's human foibles threaten to undo him. His alcoholism, like Freddie's sex addiction, is a pothole on the path to purity. A latter revision of his teachings allows for subjectivity where previously there was absolutism, to the chagrin of at least one particularly devout disciple (Dern). There are hints that for Lancaster, money and power are central, ulterior motives. His pious wife (Adams) struggles to keep him on the straight and narrow.

The film rebukes blind religious faith. I've never been a member of a cult, but I do have limited fringe experience of a particularly fervent pentecostal church. The film's portrayal of cult life chimes disturbingly with that experience. The cult members are attracted not just to the charismatic leader's promise of meaning, and to the possibility of belonging, but also to the eerie comfort of having someone else do their thinking.

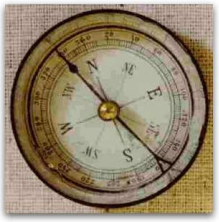
Freddie, meanwhile, remains an enigma. He goes to great lengths to prove himself worthy of Lancaster, and of The Cause. But ultimately he is utterly individualistic, finding meaning only in self-gratification. The film conflates his manipulation of women with Lancaster's manipulation of cult members. The plot may be thin, but Anderson gets a lot of mileage out of tracing the similarities between these ostensibly different men.

Post script: Paul Thomas Anderson will deservedly go down in history as a great American filmmaker of the present era. His love of film is reflected in the fact that he made *The Master* in the luxurious and increasingly rare 70mm format. Australian audiences can view it as the filmmaker intended at Melbourne's Astor Theatre — one of the few places in Australia still committed to showing films in 70mm Â-— in December.

Labor excises its moral compass

POLITICS

Binoy Kampmark



In politics, hypocrisy is a natural condition, a symptom of being economic with the vÃ©ritÃ©, to use that famed expression of Tory MP Alan Clarke. On Tuesday, it became evident that refugee policy is the last thing that should be made by the Australian government, be it this scrambling outfit, or any successor regime.

Officials, obsessed by sovereignty, slandering an Opposition that tried to do the very same thing when it was in government in 2006, decided to excise the Australian mainland for purposes of processing refugee claims. All arrivals on the mainland by boat will be sent to either Nauru or Manus Island for processing. Currently, arrivals are processed on the mainland and receive bridging visas and an assortment of working rights.

There has been a surge of numbers coming to Australia since the re-introduction of the Pacific Solution (5700 arrivals since 13 August), suggesting that offshore processing is hardly a disincentive. As one of the underlying rationales for the Pacific network is to deter people smuggling and their paid-up human cargo, Canberra is rapidly running out of ideas. Desperation has become the motivator of government policy.

It was already clear in the 1990s that Australian governments were seeking a solution to discourage the arrival of individuals to the mainland by sea. One of their precedents was the 1981 interdiction of Haitian asylum seekers heading to the United States under the Haitian Migration Interdiction Program.

The program was significant for spawning a processing system involving facilities in Guantanamo Bay, and ad hoc arrangements with Caribbean and South American countries. US President Ronald Reagan had described the arrivals as 'a serious national problem detrimental to the interests of the United States'.

Europe and Australia followed suit. The EU has undertaken measures to restrict the access of migrants and refugees, using a 'de-territorialised' regime of technology, verification and surveillance.

As noted by a student of ex-territorial processing in Europe (Carl Levy, in the *Refugee Survey Quarterly* in 2010), 'From 2005 and 2010, the advancement of exterritorial zones became bi- or multilateral projects of various constellations of member states and partners in the European neighbourhood or among South Saharan African countries.' Keeping people in distant processing camps has become a global philosophy.

By no means is Australia singular in its treatment of refugees in that respect. But it is distinct in its classification of zones of entry and arrival, a 'leader' in that

practice of qualified sovereignty.

The Gillard Government has gone further than Howard. A Howard Government measure that would have excised the entire mainland from the processing zone was defeated by a revolt by his own backbench assisted by the Labor Opposition. (Current Immigration Minister Chris Bowen was himself a vocal opponent of the measure.)

To her credit, the Coalition's Judi Moylan has expressed her desire, along with colleague Russell Broadbent, to have a repeat performance this time and cross the floor.

Labor on the other hand has effectively excised its own moral compass. Only Melissa Parke voiced concern about Australia's non-compliance with international law when this measure was put to caucus for approval.

There is that nagging issue of the Refugee Convention, which remains the seagull around the Ancient Mariner's neck. Article 31 makes it clear that principles of 'non-penalisation, detention and protection' must be observed. Even if the arrivals enter a country 'without authorisation', the principles are to be observed as long as they can show 'good cause for their illegal entry or presence'.

Nor does it matter how they arrive, a fact that has escaped the lawmakers of the commonwealth parliament.

The regime of excising offshore islands is itself punitive, suggesting that Canberra is intent on punishing people for the way they arrive, irrespective of what their status actually is. The scope has now been broadened. If this does not violate the Convention, it would be hard to see what could. 'Excision', stated human rights lawyer Rachel Ball , 'is an affront to justice and the rule of law.'

The modern climate of treating refugees is such that no one wants them. Certainly no one in Canberra, if they can help it. North Koreans in Australia — yes, North Koreans — are being deported to South Korea, because, of course, all Koreans are alike, and they don't really need to be here in any case.

The measure of excising the mainland for the purposes of immigration is extraordinary for the way it treats sovereignty. Paradoxically, states react with heavy-handed measures because they feel it their prerogative as free entities to do so. Ironically, such measures, for the sake of defeating the ambit of the Convention, actually qualify sovereignty.

Now that Gillard has achieved something Howard dreamt of doing in 2006, Labor has shown it can play the game of hypocrisy as well as any.

China's cupcakes and Australia's Asia fear

POLITICS

Michael Kelly

Asia, Paul Keating once observed, is 'the place you fly over' on your way to the real cultural centres of the world ... in Europe. He's changed his mind since.

But for the person who did a great deal to develop APEC — the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation organisation — it was a steep learning curve because for Keating most of his reference points were Atlantic: European and north American.

The report that Ross Garnaut produced in 1989 helped break down the enduring focus on Europe and the US. Garnaut went a long way to describing how Australia could avail itself of the opportunity in Asia in business terms, something that the mining industry had been doing with Japan through its immense growth period.

The Australian Government's white paper *Australia in the Asian Century* isn't exactly breaking news when it tells us the fastest growing economies and the greatest opportunities for Australia are at our doorstep. But like kids at a birthday party, we seem to focus more on the cupcakes than the host and guest of honour. And there's not a lot of a practical nature that suggests ways the reports content's will become more than aspirations.

Why do we need to be reminded of something we already know? And what does this white paper say about how politics work Australia, where Australia really is in relation to the opportunities and, if it's been so obvious for so long, why do we need rousing exhortations from the Prime Minister to try harder?

Politically, you might appreciate ASEAN nations' judgement that they don't want Australia any closer. From the Asian perspective, Australian approaches to the region are fickle and opportunistic — we're in things where there's something in it for us (like the reduction of trade barriers); then we're not, like when we push back boats of asylum seekers, a policy devoid of multilateral considerations. We engage with the region when it suits us.

This fickle, ambiguous and opportunistic approach leaves Australia with neither the credibility nor the relationships to deliver a better outcome for all parties.

But the real problem is at a cultural level — inside Australia. For a country whose second most spoken language is Chinese, whose immigration quota had more Chinese than English migrants two years ago, you only have to press a few sensitive buttons and all the fears emerge.

Not just fear of the relatively few asylum seekers who reach Australia by boat, or the fear that allows Alan Jones and Barnaby Joyce to talk about 'selling the farm to Asians' and be believed. It a broader culture of fear, which bubbles to the

surface any time a politician or shock jock wants a ratings hit. The fear is deep in Australia.

The only antidote to fear in any area of life is engagement and experience which take a person away from abstractions, stereotypes and self-protective generalisations. But despite lots of travel to Asia, Australians don't seem to have the sort of experience that defuses the fear.

How do Australians find out what's happening in Asia? Who's letting Australians be informed about their region?

How many Australians know India's growth has been in decline for almost 18 months? That China is a place of widespread civil disturbance as the uneven wealth distribution in the country makes for constant social unrest? Do Australians know that the rising stars of Asia are not China, Korea and India but Indonesia and Vietnam?

If not, why not? Our myopic media, of course. Our televisions are full of live coverage of familiar scenes — the US primaries and the stump speeches in the US presidential election, news of the fading economies of Europe, and the tedious repartee that comes with minority government.

It doesn't have to be that way. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the BBC and CNN do more for their audiences than Australian media services could ever dream of.

Without an informed view, fear wins.

It is easy to be cynical about this white paper, which states the obvious at great length. Governments habitually welcome the 'fresh insights' and 'bold proposals' of white papers only to dismantle them for immediate political ends. Just look at how the Henry Tax Review was picked at and scratched until it bled to death.

Considering how long this latest paper took to see daylight, and the fact that the committee assigned to develop it had its efforts reworked by the Department of Foreign Affairs, makes you wonder what function it serves. Does it provide a map to the future, as it boasts? Or are its objectives of a more short-term nature, allowing the ALP to steal a march as it prepares for the upcoming election?

Commendable and well informed as the claims about opportunities are, where is the enablement to see the opportunities become achievement? The paper looks just like another exercise in political window dressing when, in reality, the same old practices that have left the opportunity unrealised for so long will be allowed to prosper.

Back road encounter in the Italian countryside

NON-FICTION

Kerry Murphy

We had driven up a narrow road in Calabria at night, on the instructions of the GPS, which assured us that our destination was close. The sky was black, and there were no lights anywhere. We became convinced that the GPS was totally wrong. Time to turn around.

But as we did, the car became unbalanced and the front wheel spun above the side of the road, which had collapsed. Try as we might we could not move the car back onto the road. All we could hear were dogs barking in the night. It seemed we were stuck somewhere in the countryside of Calabria.

After a short while a car approached from one direction, and then a utility from the other.

After some explanation of our predicament, the utilty driver produced a rope and helped tow us back onto the road, with the help of the car driver — whose bemused family sat watching this strange rescue of the Australian tourists' bogged car in the dark countryside of Calabria.

They offered us clear directions and we resumed our journey, grateful for the generosity of these people who we will probably never see again.

Italy is one of those countries that is rich in many ways, including in the fields of art, history, cuisine and sport. A common thought about the south though, thanks to movies like *The Godfather* and books like *Gomorrah*, is that crime and corruption are rife. Like many things, the reality is far more complicated, and colourful.

What may not be seen by the traveller is the effect on the lives of many ordinary Italians.

Italian politics is complex with many parties vying for votes. The country has five levels of government: municipal, regional, provincial, national and European. Currently there is a serious financial crisis and the appointed (not elected) prime minister Monti's austerity measures have led to protests, especially in Rome.

Meanwhile, fomer prime minister Berlusconi was convicted of fraud and sentenced to four years in prison, reduced to one by the sentencing magistrates. Previously he had hinted he would not return to politics, but since his conviction, he has promised a return to save Italy from Monti and the Magistratocracy that led to his conviction. His attack on the judiciary was very strong.

Meanwhile the right wing neo-fascisiti complain that there should be

commemoration of the anniversary of the 1922 march on Rome by Mussolini and his blackshirt Fascists.

On the ground, the response to this political mire is one of frustration and despair. Italians we have spoken with bemoan the fact that the government has no money, the economy is failing and wages are unpaid. In parts of Sicily, the police and garbage workers have not been paid for two months. The rubbish is piling up and the police work without pay, relying on their savings. We saw a protest sign that said 'In Sicily we work for free!'

The contrast between the piles of rubbish on the streets of Monreale and the magnificence of the mosiacs in the Basilica there is remarkable. Italians talk of the 'vergonia' or shame they feel when they see the rubbish, yet they seem unable to find a way of resolving the economic crisis.

In Sicily unemployment is estimated at around 25 per cent. Underemployment is also rife.

Widespread despair led to an interesting response to the recent Sicilian elections. Only 47 per cent voted, and a number of locals we spoke with admitted they voted informally, or made a protest vote by voting for a well known Italian comedian who offered himself as a protest candidate.

Others talk of the frustration with existing politicians, corruption scandals and prosecutions. One of the factors that has made it hard to defeat major criminal groups is their political protection in some parts.

Given all this frustration and despair, it is reassuring to experience the kind of true welcoming and hospitality we experienced that night on the country road in Calabria. The help offered to us by complete strangers at the moment when we needed it most was an experience we will long remember.

Maybe this true generousity of the 'ordinary Italian' will help restore hope for others.

Rembrandt's denial of Christ

POETRY

Grant Fraser

Rembrandt Van Rijn

On certain nights the ghost of Rembrandt Van Rijn

walks the galleries where his masterworks are kept.

Rembrandt's ghost

Heavy for a ghost, he rouses himself again
To trawl the galleries of his dead successes.

Although he is spruced with a garland of rosemary,

His winding sheet still reeks of mortality and paint,

And he still keeps a weather-eye

For the shades of old creditors,

For, dogged interminably by life's misfortunes,

Rembrandt Van Rijn died beyond his means.

Anna the prophetess

Dear Anna.

Indefatigable!

Your eyes still pore over the wake

Of your reading hand,

And the words churn in your implacable face.

Beneath my carapace of paint

You still count the burnished wonders of your God,

Meticulously refresh the ancient book

With your dogged curiosities,

O daughter of Jerusalem,

The Jewish bride

Fine fellow, dressed to the frothy nines,

More gorgeous even

Than your pink young bride.

Consider, sir, the placement
Of your right, proprietary hand,

And note that your bride's left hand,

Although bonded with a diamond,

Contains a small perceptible, no.

This, I fear,

May prove a most difficult tenancy.

The denial of Christ

I watch again as your Master pauses,

And I, too, am caught in the moment

Of my own expectation.

Peter, I gave you such handsome possibilities,

Had your face shining like a saint,

And yet still,

On this third occasion,

You can only find a lie.

St Matthew and the Angel

Ah, the roseate glow of her Flemish hair

And her fingers that barely kiss

The shoulder of the Evangelist;

Yet now he must weigh into words

The whispers of the comely Seraphim,

Must weigh the press of her words,

Must weigh the scent of her fingers,
Must weigh into whispers

The fragrance of her words.

The night watch

Consider the grandest worthies

With pike and spike and Aquebus

And muskets primed,
Puffed up with lethal expectations,
Jostling their importance
With elbows drawn.
Some favour helmets
And whims of rakish armour;
All are in their Sunday's best
Armed with deadly lace, embroidery and sash
Just so.
And there shines my sweet Saskia
Armed only with a chicken;
The retort of the starting musket
Still shudders in her startled face.
Ah, the gentlemen are thinking to move
And are ready to commence,
So I, in courtesy, shall turn my back
So that their clockwork may begin.

The Syndics Guild

Yes Gentlemen,
I have reserved to you your protestant black
And your bibs as white as souls;
And I was careful to record
The weights and practised measures of your eyes;
But I did allow as well
The flesh of face and hand
To rush with life like tropic fruit;
And again, old Volckert Janz
Is rising to protest such presumption;
He knows I could not pay my bills:
See how I have left his hand in livid shadow,

How it claws the civic chair.

Jeremiah: who laments over the destruction of Jerusalem

In shade,

Zebediah, the king blinded by his people,

Kneads his fists against his blindness.

In fire,

The great weight of the temple masonry

Is fallen:

Loud is the doom of its catastrophe.

In light,

Jeremiah, prophet without honour,
Is poised amongst abandoned things,

Lost within the gravity of his dolorous rest.

The return of the Prodigal Son

And now, Rembrandt Van Rijn,

Threadbare, footsore,

The burial shoes rotted,

The soles adrift,

Stands as a prodigal:

A ghost dithering at his own stubborn threshold

Before a father who, in seeming blindness,

By touch can see;

A father who by touch can gather in,

Span the grief of forgiveness,

Restore breath.

Obama and Romney's shallow thinking on drones

POLITICS

Benedict Coleridge

One thing Barack Obama and Mitt Romney agree upon, we know from the foreign policy oriented third presidential campaign debate, is the use of unmanned drones in anti-insurgent, anti-terror operations.

Obama has overseen an intensification of the use of this technology in the region of Afghanistan, Pakistan and southern Yemen. Romney commented in the debate that he would not depart from this policy, that he supported it 'entirely', that 'the President was right to up the use of that technology', and that Americans should continue to use drones 'to go after the people who represent a threat to this nation and to our friends'.

Romney did not volunteer how he had arrived at this position or how he might understand the moral rules by which he would govern application of this policy. 'I believe', he said, 'that we should use any and all means necessary to take out people who pose a threat to us and our friends around the world.'

The practice of using drones demands a less complacent approach than this, since it raises difficult questions about the conduct of war.

Some who support their use argue that collateral damage caused by drone strikes is far lower than that caused by conventional weapons like missiles or artillery. Thus, some have suggested drone strikes would have been a preferable response by the Israelis to threats from the Gaza Strip in 2008.

According to the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, of the 1390 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip during the January 2009 Operation Cast Lead, 759 had not taken part in the hostilities . In other words, although the operation was conducted by a modern, technologically sophisticated army, it caused over 50 per cent collateral damage.

But in a densely populated area, neither can drones isolate the targeted individuals. Moreover, the drone program is ongoing, and we cannot yet tally its full casualty list.

There are other issues raised by Obama's published guidelines for drone usage: for example, how do we define a serious as opposed to a speculative threat? Does that mean a military aged male spotted from several thousand feet digging a hole in a suburban roadside?

Well, perhaps. As Noah Schachtman at the Brookings Institution has pointed out, throughout the US drone campaign in Pakistan and possibly in Yemen, targets have been chosen for elimination based on their intelligence 'signatures' — that is,

'their behaviour, as captured by wiretaps, overhead surveillance and local informants'.

Earlier in the year when these issues were raised in a *New York Times* article, Obama's close oversight of the drone based targeted killing program was alluded to as motivated, in part, by a moral concern derived from classical just war theory:

Aides say Mr Obama has several reasons for becoming so immersed in lethal counterterrorism operations. A student of writings on war by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, he believes that he should take moral responsibility for such actions.

This comment was taken by various academics and commentators to imply that Obama was a student of 'classical' just war theory and that its tenets guided his decisions. Perhaps, but it also pays to recall a 2007 interview in which Obama stated that he was an admirer of Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian realism — a philosophical position that takes a different approach to warfare from classical just war theory.

To confirm the influence of Christian realism on Obama's worldview, look at his 2009 Nobel Prize acceptance speech which reflected key Niebuhrian themes: evil resides in the world and, tragically, force is often required to check evil where it arises. It is interesting to explore Obama's oversight of the targeted assassination program in light of his allegiance to Niebuhrian Christian realism.

Just war theory as outlined by Saints Augustine and Aquinas understands the waging of a 'just war' (for example a war in aid of a neighbour) as a moral imperative. It begins with an acceptance of the role of force in the world, a recognition that we live in what Simone Weil described as a 'kingdom of force'.

However classical just war theory sets strict moral limits to how force is employed. A 'just war' must not only be fought in a 'just cause'; it must be fought in a 'just manner'. But the important point is that classical just war theory begins from the premise that in some cases war is permissible. The Christian realism of Niebuhr begins with the admission that violence and war are intrinsically evil.

Christian realists join pacifists in their understanding that killing in war is morally equivalent to murder. But where the pacifist concludes from this that wars must never be fought, the Christian realist concludes that sometimes an imperfect world forces us to commit murder in order to preserve 'greater' goods like equality or justice. In other words, we sometimes have to contradict the teachings of the Gospels in order to realise good ends.

Unlike classical just war theory, Christian realism implies that when we fight any war, we cross a moral threshold. But here is the difficulty: if we have already crossed a threshold, if we've already dirtied our hands, does it matter if we dirty them a little further in order to secure victory? We've already committed an evil by

waging war, does it then matter how we fight it?

What guidance does Christian realism offer here? How does it help us set limits to the use of drones?

Moreover, if the war we are engaged in is understood as a 'just war', then, if we are guided by Christian realism, doesn't it become easier to argue along utilitarian lines for the use of any means to achieve a 'just victory'? The moral question is whether to go to war or not — but once engaged in a 'just' war, the 'moral' thing to do is win.

So, as Michael Walzer warns, in a war that is 'worth fighting' the rules tend to lose standing — the moral requirement of victory comes to override the standards set by the war conventions.

That is why it would be helpful to know what Romney means when he supports the use of 'any and all means necessary to take out people who pose a threat to us and our friends'. It's also why we should look to Obama for ongoing engagement with the ethics of drone use in the light of classical and modern just war theory.

As Niebuhr himself argued, wrongs are often committed 'by good people ... who do not probe deeply'.

The Tony Abbott gender gap

POLITICS

John Warhurst

The emphasis on the relationship between Tony Abbott and women is fuelled by opinion polls that consistently show that he is less popular with women voters. Newspoll has him trailing Julia Gillard among women as better prime minister by 41—34 per cent. The same poll showed Gillard trailing Abbott among men by 42—36 per cent.

But gender is only one factor. Public opinion polls and academic voting studies reveal many ways in which support for political parties and leaders varies according to demographic categories. Other common newspaper poll categories include age, state and urban-rural location. Academic studies add other categories such as religious denomination and church attendance.

Some of these variations are fairly stable over time and don't vary much according to party leader. For instance rural voters, especially farmers, traditionally support the Coalition parties disproportionately.

The fact that Abbott and Gillard are now the leaders offers voters more variation than ever before with one of the leaders being a woman. In other ways, too, including religious belief, there are differences. Although both are city representatives of similar age, Abbott is from Sydney and Gillard is from Melbourne. All of these differences may produce variations in voter support for the leaders and for the parties they lead.

Abbott's relative unpopularity with women does appear to have a personal component, even though women voters have become increasingly attracted to Labor since 30 years ago when it was Labor not Abbott that suffered from a negative gender gap.

There are plausible reasons for his apparent 'gender trouble'. His personal style has long been characterised as macho and aggressive, a style that many women voters do not find attractive. Well before he became leader his role was that of his party's head-kicker. His personal policy preferences include emphatic opposition to abortion, a position that is not popular with many feminist women, but which has not become his party's policy.

It is plausible that this combination has contributed to his 'gender gap' with women voters. Each of these attributes are popular with some women, it is true, but probably not with a majority of women.

However, undue concentration on the role of gender in shaping voter choice serves to downplay other very interesting variations.

Age is one. Gillard is much more popular than Abbott among younger voters.

The same recent Newspoll survey showed Gillard was rated better PM over Abbott among 18—34-year-olds by 41—35 per cent (almost the same as her gender advantage). Similarly Abbott was ahead of Gillard as better PM among those 50 and older by 40—36 per cent. Age is as big a factor as gender.

The same is true of the location of voters. The same Newspoll reported that in the five state capital cities excluding Hobart, Gillard led Abbott by a margin of 41—36 per cent. Similarly among non-capital city voters Abbott leads Gillard by about the same margin, in this case 41—34 per cent.

Finally, in Victoria, her home state, Gillard led Abbott by a huge 45—33 per cent. But in Abbott's home state of NSW, he led Gillard by a much smaller 39—38 per cent.

Some of these variations are no surprise and are part of the accepted wisdom of voter studies. Older voters and rural voters are disproportionately more politically conservative than younger voters.

These statistical differences may be less personal than gender and thus attract less attention. It is the duelling personalities of Abbott and Gillard that contribute especially to the focus on gender. But ultimately these other characteristics will be equally important in determining the outcome of the next federal election.

Gillard and Abbott should do all in their power to increase their popularity in the voting segments in which they are weaker. For Gillard her weakness lies among older, rural, male voters. For Abbott his weakness lies with younger, metropolitan, women voters.

Sins of the Church and the BBC

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

The Jimmy Savile scandal in Britain shows the Catholic Church is not alone among trusted public institutions that have been undermined by their own culture of silence and denial.

The late Jimmy Savile was the legendary BBC entertainer whose sexual abuse of more than 300 young women was recently revealed amid accusations that the BBC suppressed its own reporting of the abuse because it feared tarnishing its brand.

Colm O'Gorman is an Irish activist who founded the clergy sex abuse victim support group One in Four. He wrote in *The Tablet* at the weekend of the hypocrisy of the BBC and his own involvement in the public broadcaster's investigation and reporting of abuse crimes in the Church.

When [a powerful institution] either discovers serious wrongdoing within its own ranks, or indeed is itself guilty of wrongdoing, it often acts to cover up such corruption in an effort to protect its reputation and its authority.

He goes on to make the point that silence is the culprit; 'the silence of those who shared rumour and gossip but who failed to act to protect desperately vulnerable children and young people'.

Rumour and gossip lack credibility. They serve the damaging silence because they ensure the incriminating information is cloaked with uncertainty. They neutralise its potential to damage the institution but also to bring justice to the individuals who have been harmed.

Another indication of cover up is managers doing everything that is required but not the one thing necessary. This might have been the case after then BBC head Mark Thompson was told at last year's Christmas party that BBC *Newsnight's* Savile investigation had been terminated. He gave this account to the *New York Times*:

I talked to senior management in BBC News and reported the conversation ... There is nothing to suggest that I acted inappropriately in the handling of this matter. I did not impede or stop the *Newsnight* investigation, nor have I done anything else that could be construed as untoward or unreasonable.

The 'one thing necessary' would have been to blow the whistle if there was a reasonable possibility that what was being said in hushed tones was true.

Whistleblowers are respected individuals willing to sacrifice their own professional future in order to help victims, who do not themselves have a credible voice.

Thompson's professional future is set to lie at The New York Times Company, where he expects to take up the position of CEO two weeks from today. But in an interesting twist to the story, the cautious approach that would have pleased the governors of the BBC could prove his undoing at the New York Times.

That is if the paper's public editor Margaret Sullivan had her way. Sullivan, seemingly an afficianado of bold journalism, wrote in her blog last Tuesday that: 'His integrity and decision-making are bound to affect The Times and its journalism — profoundly. It's worth considering now whether he is the right person for the job, given this turn of events.'

Rape culture in life and theory

COMMUNITY

Ellena Savage

About two weeks ago, the internet exploded with new information about the most famous kiss in history . In an interview, the woman in the image revealed that the photo captured her being accosted by an intoxicated sailor. 'It wasn't my choice to be kissed. The guy just came over and grabbed!' The image became a talking point about 'rape culture' and our selective blindness to sexual violence.

And then, a column appeared in the *The Vine* criticising the misappropriation of the words 'rape culture' . Author Luke Ryan wrote that 'everyone who is using the phrase rape culture needs to stop ... To my mind, it's a bland and egregious cheapening of the rhetorical playing field that does as much damage to the cause of anti-rape politics as do the jokes and articles and images that cause these writers so much angst in the first place.'

What he's talking about is the utility of language, and that we ought to think carefully before we bandy about words as loaded as 'rape'. If everything is rape then nothing is rape, the logic goes. I understand how this could be seen to endanger a volatile topic. But the terminology is deliberately confronting. The reality of living in such a culture is a daily confrontation to girls and women. It is real, and we are naming it for what it is.

The only time I have decisively called out a man for touching me inappropriately, he reacted aggressively, shouting at me as if I had done something inexcusable. This was not a random bloke on the street, but a peer of mine: ostensibly educated, and employed by a reputable media company. This naming of sexual harassment was taboo, it was all a bit embarrassing.

There are many reasons why women don't call out this behaviour more often: fear of injury by the perpetrator, or of being forced into an unwanted legal proceeding, or the unrelenting thought that maybe they didn't mean it like that. The burden should not be on the victim to redress injustice.

If this particular man's sense of entitlement was so unshakable, even when I confronted it directly, I don't feel optimistic about these cultures changing any time soon.

Language is a powerful weapon, and calling a rose a rose is the first step in a long journey. 'Smaller' acts of sexual violence that all women experience, including leering, wolf-whistling, hollering, touching, intimidating, and being followed, all make the larger crimes against women possible. By labouring the distinction between harassment and actual rape, we openly dismiss their cultural correlation.

It bears repeating the facts: the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimate that fewer than 20 per cent of rapes are reported, and, since 1993, fewer than 3 per

cent ended with a conviction. In the vast majority of cases, these crimes are committed by a person known to the victim. A government survey in 2000 found that 59.3 per cent of women and 25 per cent of men in Australia had experienced at least one sexual assault.

I think these figures are more confronting than women's linguistic choices around how they talk about this.

It bears repeating too that this crime can have devastating and life-long affects on survivors, their families, and other women (and men) whose bodily security is threatened by this reality.

It is no exaggeration to call this a culture of rape, in the same way that it is not an exaggeration to say that young men are exposed to a culture of violence. A lot of men compare the fear women have walking alone at night to their fear of walking alone at night. Men are attacked by other men, and while the nature of such attacks is usually different, sometimes the violence they experience is irreversible.

These experiences are relevant to the discussion: if we all feel threatened by the possibility of packs of men in the street, perhaps there is something about packs of men in the street that needs changing. And considering it is men that we all fear, perhaps men could stop feeling alienated by the language feminists use to identify rape culture, and begin campaigning against rape culture itself.

Ignorance can be a violent thing: it is not simply that you don't know, but that you don't know you don't know. And if you are unwilling to identify the means by which we all make a rape culture possible, then you are probably a part of the problem.

Why Christians are obsessed with sex

RELIGION

Zac Alstin

The Hon. Michael Kirby recently said that those in the churches expecting gay people to be celibate should 'start thinking about the real moral questions in our society and in our world. They should lift their thoughts from the human genitals to real problems, on which their views may actually be helpful, such as animal welfare, refugees, modern social relationships, the protection of children, the state of the biosphere, global poverty', and so on.

I'm sure there are people — both inside the churches and out of them — who have an unhealthy fascination with sexual morality. Likewise, there are undoubtedly people who, in the guise of Christian piety, hold very unchristian attitudes towards men and women who are attracted to members of the same sex.

These people are missing the point of ethics, in particular the system of ethics first expounded by Aristotle and subsequently reconciled with the Christian faith by St Thomas Aquinas.

When I first started working in bioethics I discovered that the words good and evil have a very natural, normal, logical meaning. 'Good' means 'good for human beings', and 'evil' means 'bad for human beings'. Aristotle described the ultimate goal of human life as 'eudaimonia' or 'flourishing': actions that contribute to our flourishing are good for us, and actions that detract from our flourishing are bad for us.

The point of ethics is to work out (hopefully ahead of time) what it takes to flourish, and whether our actions assist or impede this goal. We know what it takes for plants and animals to flourish; what about we 'rational animals'? Most of the answers are already known, and widely recognised across human cultures and history.

Unfortunately ethics, morality, and basic terms like good and evil have become loaded with a range of other meanings. We modern Australians unwittingly inhabit an intellectual landscape shaped and scarred by centuries of countervailing thoughts, opinions, ideologies, and interpretations. We carry a lot of baggage — cultural, religious, and moral. Getting rid of baggage takes a lot of time and energy: you have to unpack it.

The only way to unpack the baggage associated with the word 'evil' is to study its precise, complex meaning and overcome superficial allusions to devils waving pitchforks. And the only way to get beyond the received wisdom that Christians are obsessed with 'genitals' is to study the ethics and reasoning which inform their

teachings.

Ethics is a radical science, but its range and scope is dwarfed by the significance of Christianity. Approaching both Christianity and ethics as truly revolutionary fields should cut us off from the prejudices and presumptions that shape our culture. There is, after all, nothing new in the demand that difficult teachings and philosophies be adapted to match the wisdom of this age. The Christian reply is that the wisdom of this age will come to nothing.

Kirby's mistake lies in thinking that sexual ethics is some separate, obsessive component of Christian teaching that could be blotted out or replaced with something more popular such as animal welfare.

But if some Christians are obsessed with sex, it is because many human beings are. The ethical 'supply' exists to meet the demand, and when it comes to sexual ethics, that demand is not being met by secular society.

Consider the secular constraints on gluttony, intoxication, sloth and violence. We are, to varying degrees, told to hold back. We are warned about obesity, the dangers of binge drinking, the need for exercise and the social problem of violence. We fear the natural consequences of these actions and are told to moderate our behaviour. But when was the last time you heard a warning about too much sex or the natural consequences of lust?

These other 'vices' are typical fodder for Christian morality, but the wisdom of our present age happens to guard against them, if only for consequentialist reasons. Only lust is held sacred, notwithstanding the protocols of 'safe sex', because lust is held in singular regard by our present culture.

It is natural for people to take offense when they are told that their behaviour is not good for them. But the true purpose of ethics is to inform those who dare to ask ahead of time 'will this really be good for me?' We would all like to discount the answers we don't like, but the moment we do, we have ceased to do ethics.

Christianity puts great demands on the faithful in all aspects of life. Yet as G. K. Chesterton wrote: 'The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried.'

Original sin and clergy sex abuse

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton

Being a Catholic priest during public enquiries into sexual abuse within the Church is a bracing experience. Infinitely less hurtful than being the victim of abuse, of course. But it prompts musing about the ways in which evil actions work out in a group and affect the individual members of the group and its perception by others.

In many cultures these questions run so deep they can be caught only through symbol. In Greek myths and tragedies they are explored through what happens in a family, or house, in which monstrous deeds are fated. They taint the house and work their way destructively through later generations. In the stories connected with Oedipus, for example, the consequences are fated and individuals are passive before them. Their best efforts to escape only create the circumstances of the doom that awaits them and those associated with them.

The proper response to such events when embodied in drama is one of terror and pity. This is how we would respond to a natural disaster when allowed to enter the human experience of those caught in it.

The Christian teaching about original sin can helpfully be seen through the lens of this myth. It understands the whole of humanity to be affected by a taint which goes back to Adam's sin. Its consequences are death. The curse that in the Greek tragedies affected particular families or groups is now universal.

This view of the world also appears to be quite pessimistic in assuming that the disastrous human condition cannot be remedied by human activity. Indeed it is more pessimistic than the earlier myths, because the doom does not attach only to particular groups but to the whole human race. All human beings and the groups to which they belong are equally flawed.

But in its Christian context the universality of original sin is a cause for optimism because we are healed from it by Christ. Neither individuals nor groups are doomed by fate. We are never helpless victims or collaborators of groups tainted by the evil that has been done by them. The evil that's been done can be repented of, apologised for, its causes addressed and reconciliation sought by attending justly and compassionately to its victims.

Within the Christian framework those watching this drama can respond with outrage at what has been done, encouragement for what is being done to address it, and analysis of what needs to be done. They are not passive spectators. But neither can they separate themselves from the group. They are aware of their own shared flaw and their shared good fortune at being rescued from original sin.

As a Christian understanding of the human condition this account has its limitations. And in any case it no longer has a strong claim on the public imagination. What has replaced it in public attitudes to the ways in which wrongdoing and guilt affect groups is also unhelpful in many ways.

When the canopy of universal sin and forgiveness is taken down, wrongdoing is commonly seen as marking a person for life. The proper response is harsh punishment and subsequent ostracism. Similarly, groups in which wrongdoing has occurred, like the Catholic Church, are seen to be corrupt. Apologies are not heartfelt; tears shed for the victims of abuse are crocodile tears; steps to ensure accountability of ministers or the protection of children are window dressing. Those associated with the Church are automatically and lastingly suspect. They can wash away their taint only by renouncing their membership.

At one level attitudes like this do not matter. Indeed at a personal level they can be salutary. In Christian tradition to be regarded as rubbish and to be beaten up are a privileged way of following Christ, not to mention a way of sharing some of what victims have suffered in the Catholic Church.

The real loss from such attitudes is incurred by society. The groups and individuals that are seen in this way will find it harder, not easier, to make up for what they have been part of and to contribute to healing in society. They risk being distracted from what really matters in all this - the welfare of the victims of abuse. Making boxers punch drunk in training is no way to prepare them for the big fight.

Ways to unwind regret

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***Safety Not Guaranteed* (M). Director: Colin Trevorrow. Starring: Aubrey Plaza, Mark Duplass, Jake M. Johnson. 85 minutes**

'Wanted: Somebody to go back in time with me. This is not a joke. You'll get paid after we get back. Must bring your own weapons. I have only done this once before. Safety not guaranteed.'

During the middle of last decade this ad, originally a joke classified published in 1997 in the American *Backwoods Home Magazine*, spawned an internet fad featuring a photo of a stony-faced, mullet-headed man as the purported time traveller . The tone of much of the ensuing parody was farcical.

Screenwriter Derek Connolly and director Trevorrow take a different approach to the same source material, opting for empathy over ridicule.

They envisage the kind of person who might feel compelled to place such an ad. Their answer comes in the form of Kenneth (Duplass) — maybe delusional, certainly eccentric, but motivated by a desire to rectify past mistakes. In short the filmmakers have taken a quirky time travel premise and turned it into a fable about regret.

They develop this theme through Kenneth's relationship with cynical magazine intern Darius (Plaza), who sets out to help glib senior journalist Jeff (Johnson) write a puff piece about the oddball Kenneth, but is gradually won over by the sincerity that underpins his strange behaviour.

Kenneth's pain over his past resonates with Darius's own deeply felt regrets (both backstories are revealed as the film progresses). The film elicits much warmth from the coming together of these two social misfits.

Like the comedies of Alexander Payne , *Safety Not Guaranteed* expresses humour and pathos at once. Comic scenes in which Darius (posing as a genuine respondent to the ad) rehearses combat moves alongside a deadly serious Kenneth; and in which Kenneth is caught by the employees of a science lab he is burgling, only to have them call tentatively for him to halt as he makes his getaway unimpeded, enhance rather than diminish its heart.

Even the film's most broadly comic subplot, involving narcissist Jeff's attempts to reunite with a former girlfriend, chimes with the film's exploration of the human desire to resolve regret by returning to the past.

Resolution for Jeff lies in the agony and necessity of letting go. For Kenneth and Darius, on the other hand, hope may be found in rather more metaphysical possibilities. The film's weird and wondrous climax is executed with the same

compelling assurance with which Trevorrow pulls together the whole unlikely scenario.

The song 'The Big Machine', written for the film by Bostonian muso Ryan Miller, is performed by Kenneth for Darius, beside a campfire on the eve of the mission. Despite containing one of the film's more contrived eccentric flourishes (Kenneth accompanies himself on the zither), the song poignantly encompasses the film's theme of tyring to transcend 'normal' everyday society and pursue something better:

Everyone in the big machine tries to break your heart ...

Maybe I'm wrong and all that you get is what you see.

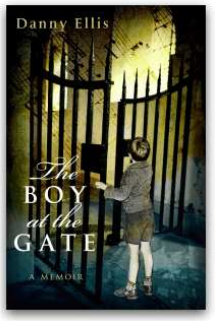
But maybe I'm right and there's something out there to believe.

At its heart, then, *Safety Not Guaranteed* is a spiritual film.

Music rising from the ashes of abuse

NON-FICTION

Frank O'Shea



During the time of big Irish families in the pre-pill era, boys might be under less parental control than ought to be possible today when the Irish birth rate, although the highest in Europe, is a modest 2.1. So, it was not unusual for boys to get into trouble and be deemed dangers to society or to property or to apple orchards.

The result was that they might be sent to the large industrial school run by the Christian Brothers in the north Dublin suburb of Artane. A frazzled parent might well threaten their child with such an outcome in an effort to frighten the recalcitrant one into conformity.

In practice, many of those who ended up in Artane were there because they had been abandoned or because it was the opinion of authorities that their families were unable to look after them. It was not a badge of honour for the family or a situation fondly anticipated by the child.

I came across the story of one such boy recently. Danny Ellis was an inner city kid, his father in America for work, his young mother not able or not willing to look after him and his four younger siblings. These were taken away to be cared for by nuns and finally his mother took Danny to Artane, telling him she had to go to hospital and would come back for him at Christmas. He never saw her again.

At the time, the school had some 800 boys in close dormitory and refectory quarters. It was no place for the timid or the weak. Discipline was primitive and based around liberal use of the strap, something that was widely known in society if only because it was common in all schools, if not always as enthusiastically.

Come the first Christmas, eight-year-old Danny opts not to go to a film in the city with the others, deciding instead to wait at the gate for his mother. He is seen by an old brother, long retired and given to praying aloud in the chapel, to the amusement of the boys. He knows Danny's situation and tries to break it gently to him.

He takes him in from the cold, gives him something to eat and drink. 'In one sacred moment that I would spend most of my early life fighting against, that saintly man carried me across the divide between my infinite soul and my tiny, tortured identity,' he writes.

In time, Danny was saved by being given the chance to join the famous Artane Boys Band, where he played the trombone. In their stylish red and blue uniforms and short flowing cloaks, they were a central part of big football and hurling

games of my youth. They played before the game and at half time, leading the teams in a formal march, 60 or more kids blowing brass and beating drums, followed by brawny hyped-up athletes.

The thousands in the stands were unaware of the harshness that these boys were faced with every day.

Some of the brothers probably knew older brothers who had known Edmund Rice himself. The Catholic educationalist who founded the Christian Brothers was strongly against corporal punishment; two generations separate a saint from followers who brought a reputation for cruelty everywhere they went.

The Ryan Report of 2009 opened the eyes of the country and the world to a still more upsetting form of cruelty; criminal behaviour that has forever trailed anyone associated with Artane. Even the brother who ran the band and was synonymous with it around the world was accused of sexual abuse.

Now in his 60s, Danny Ellis has made his livelihood out of the music he learned in Artane. He says that though there were always whisperings, nods and winks about sexual abuse, 'I never came across it while I was there.'

There is no upside to the stories of abuse in church-run institutions. There is only deep shame and anger. But I think of that old Christian Brother, nearing his dotage, trying to help a lost eight-year old child in the way that Edmund Rice would have done or De La Salle or Marcellin Champagnat.

And I know from my own experiences that there were many more of him than of the other kind.

Immigration for sale

POLITICS

Patrick McCabe

Australia's complex 'refugee issue' requires fresh thinking. In a recent article, Judith Sloan, contributing economics editor at *The Australian*, provided just that with her suggestion that 'free market economics' might offer an answer.

Free market economics embraces the market as a solution to humanity's ills. A central tenet is that governments are never as good at distributing resources as markets. Anything that can be left to the market should be. Sloan introduces us to fellow free market economist Gary Becker's idea to apply this logic to immigration.

Becker's idea goes something like this: Markets distribute resources better than governments. The right to migrate is a resource. So we should create an immigration market, by charging an 'immigration price' — Becker suggests US$50,000. Then we sit back and watch the market 'select' the best migrants.

Becker claims people most likely to pay to migrate are also most likely to possess desirable characteristics — to be skilled, young and committed to the country they are entering. Keen-eyed readers might notice Becker's omission of perhaps the most obvious group of people who would pay — those rich enough to afford it.

Becker accommodates poor migrants by allowing businesses to lend the immigration fee to prospective migrants in exchange for their labour upon arrival. Of course poor migrants tend to be unskilled, so one suspects this scheme would remain largely unutilised. Moreover, *The Economist* notes this arrangement would virtually amount to indentured servitude. Becker would allow 'some exceptions' for 'truly humanitarian' migrants — but only 'maybe ... a lower price' for those who 'maybe are too old to earn anything'.

Sloan goes on to present some 'ugly' statistics from a 2011 DIAC report: 'Refugees fare very badly in terms of employment and financial self-sufficiency,' she reports, 'for example, the employment rate of humanitarian migrants from Afghanistan was recorded at only 9 per cent — note this is not the unemployment rate — five years after settlement and nearly 94 per cent of households from Afghanistan received Centrelink payments.'

Sloan has a fuzzy definition of 'example'. Of thirteen nationalities or regions listed in the report, Afghans have the worst employment and welfare receipt rates. She also quotes these rates for Iraqis, who rank second-worst.

Moreover, Sloan's line about 9 per cent 'not being the unemployment rate' implies that the unemployment rate is much higher. In fact, it is 8 per cent. The

other 80 per cent or so pursue 'other' activities — studying, caring for families, and so on. They are hardly dole-bludgers.

Overall, 39 per cent of humanitarian migrants are employed five years post-settlement (a far cry from Sloan's 'example'). While 84 per cent receive some welfare, this includes any welfare, not just unemployment benefits.

To solve this alleged problem, Sloan suggests a heavily modified version of Becker's idea: 'allocate a certain number of humanitarian places to proven refugees who are prepared to pay [a bond] and/or forgo welfare benefits for a period of time'.

This is problematic. It remains morally repugnant, at least for non-'free-market economists', to preference refugees with money over those without. It would breach Australia's obligations under the Refugee Convention. And it is also morally repugnant to let people starve to death — which is what happens when someone can't find a job and 'forgoes welfare benefits'. The fourth problem is that the plan won't achieve Sloan's aim.

Her aim is to attract more 'employable' refugees — Becker's skilled, young, 'committed' migrants — so refugees don't drain our welfare system. This argument relies on the assertion that refugees who pay to migrate are more likely to get a job, an assertion easily tested.

Presently, 'boat people' pay a hefty 'immigration price' — they pay people smugglers, and accept great risks to their safety (a non-monetary price). Conversely, 'queue-sitters' simply apply for a humanitarian visa and pray for an acceptance letter. They pay no price save the danger of staying where they are, or in a refugee camp.

If Sloan is correct, 'boat people' will find work more readily than 'queue-sitters'. They don't. As noted, the least-employed nationalities are Afghanis and Iraqis — two of the top four most likely nationalities to arrive by boat, and thus those who pay the highest price. The most-employed refugees, with employment rates as high as 56 per cent within five years of arrival, are central and west Africans — the most likely to come via the 'queue'.

So if any correlation exists between a refugee's 'immigration price' and 'employability', it seems those who pay less are more employable.

Thinking creatively about the refugee issue should be encouraged. But Sloan's unconvincing proposal shows our response to the issue must be grounded in something deeper than a brand of economics that comfortingly reduces the world's complexities to a set of soothing supply and demand curves.

A feminist reading of the Koran

RELIGION

Ruby Hamad

It's hard to imagine any scenario in which shooting a 14-year-old child is justified. And yet, the Taliban attempts just this by insisting its attack on Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai (pictured) is ordained by Islam.

Yousafzai first attracted the group's ire for her insistence on the right of girls to be educated. At the age of 11, she gained international recognition for her BBC blog, in which she documented Taliban atrocities as they burned girls schools to the ground.

Following Yousafzai's shooting earlier this month, the Taliban released a statement claiming , 'We did not attack her for raising voice for education. We targeted her for opposing mujahideen (holy warriors) and their war.'

And so, the Taliban continues to paint Islam as an inherently violent religion.

Muslims are required to model their lives on that of the prophet Mohammed. Consequently, it is easy to assume the roots of radical Islam can be traced back to the prophet himself, hence the numerous Western depictions of Mohammed as an intolerant, murderous tyrant. Such depictions have no basis in history.

Mohammed was trying not just to introduce a new faith, but to transform Arabian society. He blamed much of Arabia's ills on the concept of *jahaliyyah*. Referred to as the 'Time of Ignorance' by Muslims to denote pre-Islamic times, jahaliyyah, according to historian Karen Armstrong , is better translated as 'irascibility', an 'acute sensitivity to honour and prestige; arrogance, excess, and ... a chronic tendency to violence and retaliation'.

In establishing an inclusive Muslim community (*ummah*), Mohammed sought to overcome the tribal ethos that had led to customs such as lethal retaliation for perceived transgressions, honour crimes and blood feuds, and whose patriarchal nature bred violence against women including wife beating, forced marriages and female infanticide, all of which Mohammed condemned.

Indeed women had such low standing it is not surprising that, after hearing Mohammed declare women's rights to inherit property and determine who and when they marry, women were among his earliest converts. For this, Mohammed was ridiculed for mixing with the 'weak'.

In his final sermon to the ummah near Mount Arafat, an ailing Mohammed seemed to wonder how his legacy would be fulfilled. 'O people, have I faithfully delivered my message to you?' he cried.

Sadly, it is jahaliyyah that one sees in much of the Muslim world today. It is in

Pakistan's ludicrous blasphemy laws , and it rears its ugly head every time fanatical preachers whip young men into a frenzy demanding they 'defend' the prophet's honour whenever the West is accused of insulting him.

But mostly, it can be seen in the way Muslim women's rights are being increasingly eroded. Mohammed accepted the taunts from other men (some of them Muslim converts) for what they thought was his too lenient treatment of women. In his day, as in ours, the advancement of women was seen as a rebuke to the supremacy of men.

The Taliban's claim that they did not target Malala for her stance on education rings hollow considering their history. Another of their targets, Sakena Yacoobi, founder of the Afghan Institute of Learning (AIF) has been surreptitiously educating girls in Afghanistan and Pakistan since the 1990s. 'Every day there is a death threat', Yacoobi tells journalists Nicholas Kristoff and Sheryl WuDunn in *Half the Sky*, a remarkable book that documents human rights abuses against women and girls around the globe, and describes how women are fighting back.

For fundamentalists who view women only as wives and mothers, education is a threat because educated women are more likely to delay marriage and pregnancy , and to have fewer children. With increased financial independence, they are also less likely to accept their inferior role in society.

Education, as Yacoobi discovered, also leads to a fresh understanding of the Koran. As well as advising women on their legal rights in civil and Islamic law, Yacoobi encourages women to show to their husbands verses in the Koran that call for respect for women. Often, both men and women are shocked to learn that such verses exist.

These verses prompt calls for a feminist interpretation of the Koran that rejects gender segregation and its inherent bias against women. Mohammed's vision of gender equality was so far ahead of its time it was completely misunderstood, and for centuries, women have accepted the fallacy that they are inferior to men.

Muslim women are the key to a Muslim renaissance and it is women like Yousafzai and Yacoobi who are the inheritors of Mohammed's legacy. Hostility to education has no basis in Mohammed's vision. How can it when the first verse in the Koran commands, 'Read. Read in the name of your Lord'?

Hearing God in Soviet Russia

POETRY

Michael Sariban

Voice and candle

(in memory of my mother)

1 On your knees

Easy enough to start feeling your presence —
isn't that why I'm here, eyes raised
to this intricate sky? Though you never
felt fully at home in cathedrals, if free
to plug in to spirit —
finding the speckled marble floors
a touch too cold, a touch too remote,
despite the lavish flowers, their promise
of fragrant heaven.
I doubt if any Renaissance dome
could have placed a cap on your devotion —
you on your knees in your own quiet space,
whispered words bouncing off high ceilings
and scrambled like radio code;
or in the clear acoustics of your tser'kov,
the human scale of a small Russian church,
incense raising the women's voices
as if they were angels' breath.
As you yourself are still breathed into life,
your voice ready to play in my ears, your face
anchored inside my computer, alive
in black and white.
Like this photograph I revisit — you
under a pomegranate tree, old before your time,

the love in your eyes reaching across
unimaginable space.
Voices, incense, lights. Only love
leaving a trace.

2 The sound of God

Like a bell-ringer deaf to everything
except the sound of his bells, you blocked out
the clamour of any religion that tried to shout
in your ears, on the grounds it might
drown out your God.
Before you were twenty you'd turned your back
on the bells of Kiev's Cathedral, never saw
its gold again, except behind your eyes.
Then blinked it away for good.
When ideology smashed the cathedrals,
turned icons into rubble, congregation
into crime — religion fell down in a heap,
or seemed to, on certain days.
Most people believed they knew better:
countless lips kept doggedly whispering
the fine-print headlines of saints.
If the State was a rock, religion flowed round it,
a stream fed from underground;
people sang in their sleep, under snow,
while the State blocked its ears to the sound.
Outposts of Russia sprang up in Berlin,
flourished in Paris, in Rome —
small congregations never in doubt
that their voices had never left home;
emigrants floating free in Europe,

anchoring homeland to sound.

In the end it comes down to silence
and a stillness still more profound.

3 Ashes and dust

Flames light every religion — fire as purification,
annihilation of sin. The Orthodox, too,
respect conflagration, but opt
to be planted in earth. So they can grow back
into their bodies. So they can stand up
at birth.
In the end you turned away from cathedrals,
preferring an underground chapel, long gone,
in a busy city street — a haven
from traffic's hell. A Catholic franchise, but to you
religion was not about borders; their incense
worked equally well. No luxurious flowers,
just a cellar with candles —
coins exchanged for thin sticks of wax,
small nervous flames lighting the dark
like the eyes of a favourite saint;
where you would try to bring even closer
a God never far away.
Your original Church took you back, no questions,
with Russian voices, with clouds of incense,
a brand you could no longer smell.
Whatever all those before you had seen,
none were willing to tell.
In the end it came down to a single candle
you never got around to lighting.
And the lingering echo of bells:

kolokol'chik, kolokol. The end of a war you'd stopped fighting.

Cycling and the Church out in the cold

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton

It was a coincidence that the report on Lance Armstrong and the response of the Catholic Church to sex abuse were prominent news stories over the same weeks. But deeper similarities between the scandals afflicting cycling and the Catholic Church may offer a broader perspective on each.

Of course the differences are much more significant than the similarities. In contrast to doping in cycling, sexual abuse creates direct victims, the devastation to whose lives is lasting and massive. The betrayal by ministers of the Church in poisoning in people the faith they are committed to nurture is also uniquely abhorrent.

But the causes of widespread abuse in the church and in cycling are similar in structure. They lie in cultures that have undermined rather than supported ethical behaviour, provided occasions for abuse, and promised impunity.

In the Church the prevailing culture commended an ethic not of responsibility but of law, paid honour to priests and religious, afforded them unregulated access to young people, and instinctively defended the institution. It was vulnerable to changing sexual mores and left people blind to the lasting harm suffered by victims of abuse.

Similarly, the ethical commitment of cyclists to refrain from taking unfair advantage in competition was weakened by the wealth and glory that flowed from doing so. The desire to protect the wealth and reputation of the cycling circuit also encouraged administrators to overlook the use of drugs. This slackness and the ready availability of new, temporarily undetectable drugs promised impunity.

The process through which public attitudes to the Church and to cycling changed were also similar. In each case reports of abuse circulated, were initially treated as random, but later led to a diffused suspicion.

The suspicion was crystallised by particular events. Widely publicised and horrific cases of abuse in the United States, Ireland and Australia led to revulsion and to the loss of trust in and within the Catholic Church. This was compounded by the failure of many church leaders to 'get it'. The Armstrong revelations have been a similar catalyst for cycling. The consequences of this broken trust for the reputation of the sport have yet to be seen.

To regain trust, both cycling and the Church have to address the culture that led to abuse, to prevent occasions of abuse, and to ensure strict accountability.

In the Church the primary challenge has been to acknowledge the lasting and

catastrophic effects of abuse, and to redress the harm done to its victims. This requires truth about the past and making those responsible for abuse and its covering up accountable.

A proper response, too, must change the culture that facilitated abuse by inculcating an ethic of responsibility, by seeing bishops, priests and religious as brothers and sisters and not as Lords, and by privileging truth over glory. It also means insisting on strict boundaries in relationships with young people and ensuring that abuse will effectively end ministry. All this is a work in progress.

Cycling will have the same tasks: to reinforce in riders and administrators an ethical approach to competition, to deal with the corrupt past and make people accountable for it, and to make it difficult for riders to have access to drugs in competition.

But the main challenge will be to make riders strictly accountable by ensuring they are regularly and unpredictably tested, severely penalised for drug taking, and that their financial records and those of the cycling associations are open to informed scrutiny to detect secret payments.

As in the case of the Church, the building of a culture is a long term project and will inevitably involve harshness initially.

Finally, if the Catholic experience is any guide, the loss of trust in cycling will also have lasting effects. Revelations of past drug taking and of official conniving will continue to receive publicity and will inhibit the regaining of trust. Measures taken to change the culture will long be viewed with scepticism.

Public disdain is a cold environment to live in, but its air is healthy. Lack of credence and the publicity with which public enquiries are conducted encourage self-scrutiny and the determination to prevent further abuse. They rightly forbid moving on. They also encourage humility, a rare but admirable virtue in all human beings, whether they go about in clerical collars or on two wheels.

Australia's cluster munitions shame

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

After Australia was elected a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council on Friday, Foreign Minister Bob Carr said : 'It's the world saying "we see Australia as a good country, a fine global citizen".'

For the next two years, other countries will take their lead from Australia when they are urged to act on matters of global importance. We have the opportunity to make a substantial contribution to creating a better world for all people.

However there are already signs that we are compromised and could be predisposed to squander that opportunity.

Earlier last week Australia acted in a shameful manner when we cynically ratified the international treaty to ban cluster munitions only after the Federal Government created a loophole that will destroy its effectiveness.

Cluster bombs release many small bomblets over a wide area, posing serious risk to civilians both during and after they are dropped. For years to come, innocent Syrians will continue to be maimed by Russian-supplied cluster munitions being used in the current conflict.

In 2008, 108 countries signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which prohibits the use, transfer and stockpile of the bombs. But before Australia finally ratified the Convention last week, the Senate passed into law the Cluster Munitions Prohibition Bill , which allows Australian military personnel to operate alongside US forces deploying cluster munitions, as occurred in 2003 in the Iraq war.

Moreover, according to former Defence Force chief Peter Gration, the Bill enables the United States 'to stockpile cluster bombs in Australia' and 'transit cluster bombs through Australia either by ship or by plane'.

He was one of 47 eminent and expert Australians who signed an open letter warning the Defence Minister, Foreign Affairs Minister and Attorney-General not to pass the legislation without removing the exemptions.

Malcolm Fraser wrote that the legislation is 'scattered with alarming loopholes that, to my mind, directly undermine the spirit and intention of the convention. These exemptions are unnecessary at best and add little or nothing to our national security. At worst, they run directly counter to the treaty's intent by setting a precedent which explicitly facilitates the ongoing use of cluster bombs.'

The legislation was passed in August, clearing the way for last week's

ratification of the Convention, in compromised circumstances. Australia has set a regrettable precedent that is likely to be followed by other countries who look to our example when they introduce their own domestic legislation to ratify the treaty.

Australia is hardly leading other nations towards a better world. We are not the fine global citizen Bob Carr says we are. If the Security Council seat is intended as a reward for exemplary conduct on the international stage, we don't deserve it.