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## My pop's Anzac nightmares

### REVIEWS

*Tim Kroenert*

'That was fairly close.' Even to my 15-year-old mind it sounded like an understatement. My maternal grandfather, Graeme Mills — Poppa — had just finished describing a long, hard night in New Guinea during the Second World War, when, as a stretcher bearer, he'd tended to two landmine victims, including one who had lost his leg. He spent the night darting between the two maimed men, providing physical aid, and whatever comfort and assurance was possible. Turns out he was lucky that he didn't end up laid out alongside them: the next morning he discovered that the entire narrow ridge was riddled with mines.

I carelessly lost the original recording of that interview, which I conducted as part of a high school assignment around Anzac Day; to my knowledge, it was one of the few times Poppa spoke so openly about those experiences. But I still have a copy of the article I wrote, which captures snippets of his voice, along with my observation that his 'face is expressionless; he is simply an old man reminiscing about events from his past'. There is also a youthful jingoism contained in my closing line, 'Those who returned, we should thank for the life we are able to lead today. For those who fell — Lest We Forget.'

In my naivety I missed the gravity of Poppa's stories. He was, I noted in the article, 'apparently ignorant to exactly how exciting' they were. Of course, to someone who lived through those experiences, 'exciting' probably doesn't come into it. Poppa was a Salvationist and a cornet player, who joined the military so that he could play in its marching band, which had impressed him with a performance in his hometown of Broadford in country Victoria. When the war broke out six months later it was duty, not adventure, that took him to New Guinea as part of the brutal [Salamaua—Lae campaign](#) .

I don't know how he felt about Anzac Day. Unlike the [Vietnam veteran brother](#) of Julie Kean, who wrote in *Eureka Street* this week, he did participate in the annual parade, and years prior to the interview he was proud to allow me to wear his medals for a parade at my primary school. But his memories of the war read to me now not as thrilling tales of derring-do but as a kind of sustained anxiety dream. 'We were fired upon by a Japanese Woodpecker [machine gun]. The chap standing next to me was hit in both feet. The shells went between my feet, cutting the dirt out from under me. I quickly jumped down the blind side of the hill.'

That war is not an adventure, but a nightmare, is the overriding message of a new Singaporean-Australian film, *Canopy*. Written and directed by first-timer Aaron Wilson, it stars Khan Chittenden as an Australian fighter pilot, Jim, lost in the Singaporean jungle in 1942. It is a technical tour de force; brooding soundscapes, deft editing and menacingly beautiful cinematography combine to create an immersive evocation of the physical and psychological horror of this

particular wartime experience. The elements, the jungle itself, seem at one with the distant thunder of explosions and burr of gunfire, a murderous beast with Jim already in its belly.

The film has its shortcomings. Other recent 'human versus nature' epics, such as Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity* and J. C. Chandor's *All Is Lost*, have married similar technical proficiency to a well-plotted story. *Canopy*, by contrast, never really progresses beyond its brooding first act. It does, however, contain a touching, prolonged digression: Jim encounters a similarly stranded Chinese soldier (Tzu-yi Mo); pushed together under perilous circumstances, the two men become allies, then friends. They bond over their shared humanity, despite the lack of a shared language. This provides a positive emotional fulcrum for what otherwise would be a cinematic dirge.

There is another story about my Poppa, of which my mother's sister recently reminded me. 'He and a small party of others were separated from the main party in the jungle with no rations. He discovered a small tin of Vegemite in his pack which he mixed with water and shared out.' I am uncomfortable with the quasi-religious dimension of the Anzac tradition and troubled by the Australian tendency to revere and glorify its military past. But I can't help but be touched by small human stories such as this. Likewise, for all its shortcomings, *Canopy's* focus on the small moments between two frightened men appropriately balances humanity against horror.

## Anzac myths beyond the Alan Bond test

AUSTRALIA

*Ray Cassin*

At some point, the Anzac story that Australians celebrate each 25 April passed out of history and even beyond legend to become myth.

Myths, almost by definition, do not have a fixed beginning. But in this case there is a convenient, if arbitrary, marker of the change in the national consciousness. In 1983, when his yacht *Australia II* won the America's Cup, Alan Bond hailed the feat as the greatest Australian victory since Gallipoli.

Bond was obviously hazy about the details of the Dardanelles campaign in 1915. And I am not suggesting that serious historians no longer write about that campaign in accordance with the canons of scholarly research — of course they do.

Nor do I deny that mythmaking began early in the story — indeed, from its very beginning, when Keith Murdoch, father of Rupert, and other war correspondents began filing despatches that distinguished the supposedly bronzed, fit, insouciant and occasionally insubordinate Aussie Diggers from the pale, undernourished and allegedly pusillanimous British Tommies alongside whom they fought.

What Bond's ludicrous misspeaking does indicate, however, is that at least by the 1980s the mythmakers' interpretation of the significance of Gallipoli was dominant in the popular consciousness. Anzac had passed into myth not only because a disastrous defeat had somehow been re-imagined as a glorious victory, but because the heroic strivings of the Diggers had become the benchmark for all other forms of national endeavour.

Does 25 April 1915 really mark the birth of a nation, as so many young people, who march each year wearing their grandfathers' medals, apparently believe? By the bizarre Bond test of what's worth including in the national story, it does.

There is no doubt that Anzac Day has a much stronger emotional resonance for Australians than the official national day, which commemorates the anniversary of British settlement on 26 January 1788. The celebration of Australia Day, like that of Anzac Day, has also been marked by increased popular participation in recent years, despite the inherent conflict in what the anniversary is capable of symbolising: one person's 'settlement' may be another's invasion and dispossession.

But Australia Day has never had, and does not seem likely to attain, the solemn quality that Anzac Day has always had, and which leads many to regard the latter as the 'real' national day.

There is a third option, of course, though it arouses neither the reverential awe associated with Anzac Day nor the conflicted emotions of Australia Day. Indeed,

the anniversary of federation on 1 January hardly strikes an emotional chord at all for most Australians, despite the best efforts of historians as different as John Hirst and Clare Wright to remind them what an extraordinary achievement it was.

Australia is not only one of the oldest continuous democracies in the world — the extension of the franchise to women in 1902 made it more fully democratic than the US or the UK could claim to be until several decades later — but it is also that extreme rarity, a nation that achieved unity through peaceful negotiation and the ballot box. No wars or revolutions brought about the federation of the six Australian colonies in 1901 — and that, perversely, is why the event fails to inspire all but a few.

In the decade after federation, Australians had no doubt that their new democracy was a social laboratory and a model for the world. But before another decade had passed that mood of national exultation had been eclipsed by another, which fused mourning for the dead with pride in having survived the ordeal of war.

And so it has remained. The federation narrative of national identity, which arose on these shores and that from the outset included men and women, has been overshadowed by another, martial narrative that until very recently was overwhelmingly masculine, and that takes as its notional beginning Australia's subordinate participation in a military clash on the other side of the world between the British and Ottoman empires.

The notion that the Diggers of Gallipoli and their successors in subsequent wars, heroic though they were, are somehow the paramount exemplars of Australian virtues does not survive scrutiny. Yet that notion will not be subject to much, if any, scrutiny when the young people bedecked in a relative's medals march tomorrow.

Nor is there likely to be any next year, when the centenary of the Gallipoli landings is commemorated. The Anzac myth of national origins has us so firmly in its grip that to question it outside seminar rooms is to play the role of the heretic. Perhaps only those who dissect the myth from within the military tradition, as the former ADF officer James Brown has done in his fine recent book *Anzac's Long Shadow: The Cost of Our National Obsession*, can now do so without courting accusations of disloyalty.

We have a duty to all the nation's dead, however, including those who died before 25 April 1915, to keep asking the questions.

## The peacemaker pope

### RELIGION

*Bruce Duncan*

Quite striking is the similarity between the warm response to Pope John XXIII half a century ago and to Pope Francis today. Both aroused enormous interest and broke through the gilded cage of outdated conventions and stereotyped expectations. Both stepped over barriers of ideology or religion to evoke bonds of a common humanity committed to promoting the wellbeing of all people, especially the poor and marginalised.

The contexts were of course quite different. The avuncular John became pope following the slow decline of the war-time pope, Pius XII, when the Cold War was at its height. As Peter Hebblethwaite described in his wonderful 1984 biography, *John XIII: Pope of the Council*, John played a role in allowing Soviet Premier Khrushchev to back down during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962.

Francis on the other hand comes from a developing country with acute problems of poverty and injustice. He lived through the 'dirty war' in Argentina, when 30,000 people were killed, including 150 priests, and even nuns. Because of his close involvement with slum dwellers, he was appalled at the workings of the international economy that tolerates such widespread social injustice and inequality. He is particularly critical of the GFC, and calls for thorough-going economic reforms to ensure outcomes are socially just and equitable.

Yet it was John XXIII who was the first pope to focus detailed attention on issues of world development, in his 1961 encyclical, [\*Mater et Magistra\*](#). He was writing following the rebuilding of western Europe with the aid of the Marshall Plan, and when there was renewed optimism that such rapid development could transform poorer countries. The Alliance for Progress between the United States and Latin America was under way.

These promising hopes were greatly undermined by the Cold War struggles and political movements in many developing countries, and the world soon teetered on the brink of nuclear war.

John initiated the Second Vatican Council in 1962, and was guiding it to engage more strongly with these great social issues of the day. He was alert to the issues of war and peace and, when he realised he was dying, issued an encyclical on peace, [\*Pacem in Terris\*](#), encapsulating his views and setting markers for the Council to follow.

He had been a stretcher bearer during the First World War, so knew the carnage and slaughter of war, with the immense toll of human suffering and the consequences for families and nations. Yet as a committed anti-Fascist, the Vatican diplomatic service had later kept him posted out of Italy and harm's way in Bulgaria and Istanbul.

Here he learned to experience the other worlds of Orthodox Christianity and life in an Islamic country. He recognised the values of people in other religious traditions, and the need for the Catholic Church to work more closely with them to preserve the common good of all peoples. He wanted the Council to encourage this wider cultural dialogue across religious and ideological barriers.

*Pacem in Terris* was drafted by Mgr Pietro Pavan, a discipline of the political thinker, Jacques Maritain, and signed by Pope John on 11 April 1963. It also drew from the writings of the 'New Theology' that spread before and after the war, insisting that the Church relate much more closely with the world of work and society, and abandon its Counter-Reformation fortifications.

The new encyclical caused a sensation internationally. It encapsulated beautifully how intently the Church was committed to promoting peace and human rights, and baptised John's expansive engagement with the world's social and political problems.

As well as appealing for peace and cooperation among peoples, *Pacem in Terris* was an appeal to people everywhere, deeply shaken by the near disaster of nuclear war, that peace required dialogue across Cold War boundaries, and practical collaboration through international organisations to promote human wellbeing.

Pope John said the Church needed to build bridges even with the Communist world, to help defend the rights of religious believers and to develop dialogue between different political systems and ideologies. John believed failure to relieve tensions and create better understanding would likely result eventually in another frightful war.

His encouragement of careful and astute dialogue with the Communist world aroused strong opposition among more strident anti-Communists, some of whom felt betrayed.

John died on 3 June 1963, less than two months after *Pacem in Terris*, yet his encyclical had a major influence on the Council and on Pope Paul VI, and helped make possible the advances in the documents on religious liberty and especially the landmark *Church in the Modern World*.

Like Francis, John XXIII faced opposition by more conservative people in the Vatican Curia and beyond. But he was determined to lead the Church forward, gently but firmly, opening Catholics to fresh ways of recognising the good in every person, in cultures and other religious traditions.

Francis is endeavouring to follow a like path, though this time in the context of competing forms of capitalism struggling to manage gross inequalities in living standards and life opportunities, at the same time as global warming dangerously threatens a sustainable future for the human race.

## A plague of killer robots

INTERNATIONAL

*Andrew Hamilton*

Killer robots are the stuff of sci fi nightmares. To speak of their ethical use sounds like an oxymoron. Their whole point is that they have no morality. But now killer robots — drones in an advanced stage of development — are a daytime reality. They will be autonomous in their operation, able to identify targets, track them down, work out the best way to destroy them, and learn from their failures — all without the need for human direction. These qualities do raise serious ethical questions.

Many of them are also raised in the ethical debate about the use of guided drones in military action. Over 50 nations possess drones, including the United States, with about 4000. They have been used to kill suspected terrorists in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, causing a significant number of civilian casualties. Many are launched from neighbouring air bases but controlled in Nevada.

The military like drones because they do not endanger soldiers' lives and are less costly than manned missions. In the face of disquiet about their covert use to kill suspected militants, President Obama defended them on classical 'just war' grounds, saying that they were being used in a just war against the terrorism of Al Qaeda and its affiliates, were authorised by legislation following the September 11 attacks, and responded proportionately to a clear and imminent threat.

This argument is faulty because its misuse of the metaphor of war subverted the point of just war argument. This theory was developed and used, not to justify war, but to insist that war should not be seen as simply a horrible and uncontrollable event without any moral boundaries. War was a human activity in which human beings were involved and had to take responsibility. They had to conduct themselves in human ways. Not all wars, nor all that happened in war, were acceptable

It visualised war, therefore, as between two opposed powers, each with authorities responsible for the making of war, and with soldiers responsible for their conduct. Those who participated in war could imagine from experience its horror and could appreciate the compassion as well as the brutality soldiers show in it. Just war theory rests on a moral imagination informed by experience of its human reality.

From this perspective, to speak of a just war against terror is to misuse a metaphor perniciously. You can no more declare war against terror than you can against hunger, fear, the devil, drought, piracy, people smugglers or death. You can resist, run police operations and be resolute in the face of them, but you cannot declare or wage war on them. The metaphor subverts thinking about just war because it misrepresents the human reality of the actions and relationships it

describes. The concreteness of the moral imagination gives way to a soup of analogies cooked with a stock of flowery metaphor. In that, anything goes for those who have power.

If the use of drones cannot be justified as a legitimate action in a war against terror, grounds need to be found to justify it for what it is: the killing of people suspected of crimes without trial, outside the killers' own nation, and without the authority of those ruling the countries where the suspects reside.

The metaphor of war conceals the increasingly dehumanised character of this kind of killing. The killing is done at a distance with no direct human contact with the person being killed. Its processes are bureaucratised, unpublicised and described in the abstract language of technology. People are simply targets.

The use of killer robots continue these trends in the use of military force. It is a further step in the withdrawal of human agency, accountability, imagination and freedom from the planning and conduct of violence. It makes killing a technological question that can be conducted without thought for the innocence or guilt of the person killed, no thought for the community where they are killed, no intimate acquaintanceship with what is involved in a violent death and no human accountability for the taking of blood.

The operational advantages of the use of killer drones may be conceded. They may save military lives and lessen the risk of trauma to those who guide conventional drones. They may be better able to assess local data and to respond to sudden changes in the context than human beings.

But that does not justify their use ethically. If you take away from the conduct of military action human responsibility, human imagination of the human suffering of the intended and incidental victims of violence, human recognition of the shared humanity of killers and victims and human space for compassion in conflict, you will take away the conditions for any humane ethical reflection on it.

## **My brother the silent veteran**

AUSTRALIA

*Julie Kean*

He was handsome and sophisticated, that older brother of mine.

He was 20 but wore his slouch hat with the ease of a veteran. He was home briefly in Melbourne's north before heading off to jungle training in Queensland. The familiar jeans had been traded for khakis, and he crossed his legs and leaned casually against the Ford Falcon posing for what are now grainy and washed-out colour photos. He reached for his cigarettes with the air of someone who understood the world and his place in it.

It was a lottery. Numbers in a barrel that sent young men-boys to fight a foreign war. Foreign place, language, culture. Did he know why? Twenty years old and off to fight a war in a tropical jungle. From Pascoe Vale to Vung Tau. From war service weatherboard home to army tent. From home to battalion. What did he think?

My parents — his parents — knew about wars, but I didn't and my siblings didn't and now my children and their children don't.

I was 13 when he went to Vietnam. There was a kind of perverse status to be derived from having a brother called up for national service, and for him to head north of the equator was a further plus. That set this family apart from all those who had older brothers who were not called up and who continued to be plumbers and bank tellers and university students.

We drew a tacit distinction between those who battled, and those who serviced the battle. My brother was an army storeman and that put him in the latter category, and in our minds that absolved both him and us of guilt by association and enabled us to make light of his term of duty.

What did he see? What did he know? What did he understand? What did he rationalise? What did he manage to forget over his subsequent 34 years?

We'll never know because he never said.

He never said, but I knew that sending a 20-year-old to war was not good for him, or me, or his country. When I participated in a Moratorium March in Melbourne it remained my secret rather than betray our young boy-man and all the others. I knew that my brother's life and the lives of all the other brothers were worth more than forced service in a war they didn't want or understand.

My brother came back. He worked, he married, he farmed, he reared seven children, he ran small businesses. He never participated in Anzac Day. He skirmished with his demons in the form of phobias and health problems. He died a young man at 54 from leukaemia.

Another casualty of war.

## **Sympathy for Barry O'Farrell**

AUSTRALIA

*Moira Rayner*

Australians hold most MPs in low regard. We don't really expect a high standard of behaviour from them (especially after the revelation of factional deals in WA that saw the ALP lose a popular senator), premiers, prime ministers, or even governors general (after Sir John Kerr) and judges. There have been many examples, too many, and this cynicism has had a corrosive effect on civil society.

The worst is the underlying loss of faith in the merit principle, when it is so very obvious that social relationships and deal-making behind closed doors help choose the short lists and crucial manipulation of decision making. Women and racial and religious minorities have always known that the self-satisfaction about their own merit of those who benefit from the unspoken conventions of the day rests on sandy ground.

Yet when Barry O'Farrell fell on his sword on 16 April I understood the nuanced decision he had to make because he, apparently honestly, swore he hadn't received a very expensive bottle of Grange from a lobbyist.

Occupants of public office are expected to act in accordance with their oaths. An anti-corruption commissioner, for example, should be someone whose own conduct is not just seen to be, but is demonstrably, judicious, ethical and proper. Even a minor failure in that was the reason that, several years ago, I resigned as an acting corruption and crime commissioner in another state (i.e. filling in for the real commissioner in particular cases).

I had visited a dying, long-time friend in his hospice, after commission officers had, that morning, caught him in possession of illegal drugs and proof that he had stolen from his employer. He was deranged, and not the man I had known for 20 years, and I wanted to help him make a good death. Foolishly, I went in alone. I resigned immediately after the parliamentary commissioner told me what the staff and others might think of my visit.

In my case, it didn't end there, but in O'Farrell's it should.

O'Farrell offered his own resignation immediately after his sworn evidence to ICAC, that he had not received an expensive bottle of wine from a lobbyist, was spectacularly revealed to be false. ICAC had already announced that it was satisfied that he had not acted corruptly in relation to the matters it was examining, regarding the conduct of business with the NSW Government by a water corporation.

O'Farrell's resignation, like my own, was not an admission of guilt, but a remarkably prompt acknowledgment of the seriousness of undermining public faith in the institutions of government. He did not act as if it were a bribe. He did not

say he had lied. He acted ethically and immediately, having won office on the back of scandalous revelations about vast networks of cronyism, nepotism and corruption within the previous ALP administration.

Many years ago Nick Greiner, then Premier of NSW, also left office, after Ian Temby found that certain conduct of his in relation to a proposed appointment was 'technically' corrupt. Greiner was an articulate, able politician who had never behaved like other premiers and king makers of recent notoriety, well known in not only NSW, but Queensland and even WA, for seriously worse behaviour, infinitely worse than a 'technical' offence.

Anti corruption bodies like ICAC ruin the lives and careers of many politicians, sometimes merely by exposing their names in public hearings. Sometimes this is justified, and sometimes it is not. Any such body should enjoy such enormous executive power for just a short time, and be regularly reviewed like any other public institution, to make sure that they do not mirror what they purport to supervise.

Meanwhile, we will continue to have such problems at all levels of powerful institutions, because we live in a real world where power is exercised by nods and winks, relationships and homosocial reproduction: these are not the days of the Roman Republic, but the dying days of its emperors and generals.

## **Furze fires cast a pall over the coast**

CREATIVE

*John Kinsella*

### **Mute swans of Lough Ine**

In the oxygen blue of the saltwater lough  
a pair of swans snag glare from a deep  
world as intense as the clear-felled once was,  
intense as preservation and famine walls  
or the creek whose rapids feed tidal salt  
an inland sea concentrated in basin and trough;  
redmouth gobies and sunstars and hydroids  
indivisible declared loudly on signs to fathom  
reflection, those seahares, dogwhelks and fifteen-  
spined sticklebacks, porcelain crabs breaking  
the glaze of information, how we read pristine  
anomalies as swans paddle over verticals  
unafraid of what might come from below,  
heads dipping into the looking glass.

### **Furze fires cast a pall over the coast**

You can see them cover the red sandstone range  
and spread over bogs from a vantage point high  
on Clear Island, furze fires that heat winter  
to spite itself. And leaving the island you catch  
an old man igniting a hedgerow, fire sucking light  
and throwing its carpet of smoke — no yellow  
flowers, just flame against itself. Irish breaks  
into English and vice versa, and clapped-out cars  
rise up from the southern harbour. Gulls balance  
precarious rocks. Cows out on the mainland  
taste drab, smoky air and wish for their sheds,

dark and suffocating, smelling of themselves  
and the rot of feed and stale light. Some cows  
caught furze flowers through winter bars,  
managing to put on a show, faint births,  
though now furze blooms in hay-feverish glory  
and are cut down in their prime on island  
and mainland alike, the Atlantic absorbing  
what it can, definition of blurred land.

## **In defence of Cardinal Pell**

### RELIGION

*Frank Brennan*

I write to defend Cardinal Pell in the wake of [Elizabeth Farrelly's claim](#) in the Fairfax press that Pell, when appearing before Justice McClellan at the Royal Commission, proposed a 'priestly child abuse insurance scheme' and that 'if you wanted to maximize the damage already done to countless children, you'd be hard put to find a surer way or crueller'.

I am a Catholic priest, a Jesuit, but I have never been on Cardinal Pell's Christmas Card list. It got to the stage a couple of years ago that he gratuitously published the observations that 'part of the key to understanding Brennan is that he's really not well educated in the Catholic tradition — in Catholic theology' and that for the Jesuits, Jesus 'has been almost displaced by (their) enthusiasm for social justice'.

He is not one of my fans, and neither am I one of his. But I think Farrelly has unfairly kicked him when he is down. More importantly she has muddied the waters about what is a critical issue for the victims of child sexual abuse suffered within institutions, including the Catholic Church.

Under cross-examination, Pell did float the idea of insuring a religious superior against negligence for failing adequately to supervise a pedophile priest. It was McClellan, not the Cardinal, who then floated the idea of a pedophile priest insuring himself. These were the critical questions McClellan put to Pell:

Cardinal, the criminal conduct we're talking about is a deliberate tort; you understand that? I mean, if you hit someone in the street, you may commit a criminal assault, but you will also be liable in the civil law for assault. Do you understand? There's no reason why the insurer couldn't provide insurance for a civil wrong, could it? They often do.

Pell, the lay witness, was simply carried along by the judge, who was in error. Pell finally answered, 'I simply don't know, but if you say that they can, good.'

After two and half days in the witness box, he was a man on the ropes.

You cannot and should not be able to insure against your own commission of a deliberate tort or criminal act. Any such insurance policy would be void. But that is not what Pell suggested. It was the judge who got it wrong.

While it is preposterous to suggest that anyone (including a priest) insure themselves against wanton criminal acts such as pedophilia, it could be very sensible and helpful for institutions which work with vulnerable children to insure themselves for any vicarious liability in relation to wanton acts committed by their wrongdoing employees, or for any negligence in failing adequately to scrutinise a prospective employee or to supervise an existing employee. That's what Pell was

suggesting.

The Australian Catholic Church, with the forced scrutinies of this Royal Commission, has hopefully been assisted in getting back to its mission and basic values, espousing truth, justice, compassion and transparency. As an institution, it has been dragged kicking and screaming.

Under cross examination, Pell had to admit that he, his advisers and his staff had fallen well short of the standards expected of a model litigant, let alone a Christian organisation. He admitted to the vast chasm between Christian decency and the tactics employed in pursuing John Ellis in the courts.

It was not until his last day in the witness box that Pell made the long awaited apology to Ellis, not just for the initial and sustained sexual abuse Ellis suffered at the hands of a deviant priest but for the hurt which had been inflicted on him by the Church ever since he had sought compensation and closure.

The Cardinal's long time critics found fault with his mode of delivery. He did not even look at Ellis who was sitting directly in front of him. And the apology came years too late. But it did come.

To date, there have been many hurdles for a victim wanting to sue anyone other than the criminal perpetrator. McClellan and his fellow commissioners will need to give detailed consideration to these hurdles, making recommendations to government about reforms which will impact on all employers and not just churches. Insurance for the employers could be a surer and kinder way to help piece together the fractured lives of those abused while entrusted to the care of institutions like the Catholic Church.

Pell's point was that such insurance might help victims of child abuse. And it just might. Though money is never the total solution, it can sure help with trying to put back together the pieces of shattered lives.

## **Easter memory loss makes plastic of the present**

### RELIGION

*Andrew Hamilton*

The Easter holidays are a reminder of how our secular calendar still honours the Christian society out of which it came. But the central symbols of contemporary Easter — the big football matches, the holidays and picnics — are a reminder of how widely the Christian meaning of Easter has been forgotten.

This is ironical because both the Jewish Passover, and the Christian Easter that echoes it, are exercises in memory. The Jewish child who ritually asks why this day is remembered among all other days is told a story of slavery in Egypt followed by deliverance by their God. The memory shows the power and good will of God. The remembering shows the hope that the story gives for the present day, even when all the things that make for despair are taken into account.

In the retelling of the story the past is stitched to the present and to the memories that shape the present. The boy who asks the question this year stands in line with other boys who asked the same question during the Holocaust. As participants remember the Passover and its deliverance, they also remember the forms of slavery that mark their personal lives and society and their hope for deliverance.

Easter is an even more complex exercise in remembering and stitching. The Christian liturgy of Easter retells the Jewish story of Passover in a way that stitches it to the climactic story of Jesus' execution and rising from the dead. In both the Passover and in Jesus' death the power and love of God are embodied. The story of the crucifixion, a definitive crushing of hope in a personal project and in a God who cares for the world, is unexpectedly shot through with hope and life.

In celebrating Easter people are invited to remember the first Easter, to stitch it to the torn rags of their own life and world, and to find in it the promise of new garments more resplendent and substantial than any worn by the kings of the day and praised by their courtiers.

Both Passover and Easter in their origins invite a treasuring of history, a pondering of the things that make for life and death and the hope for transformation. In our society this shared attentiveness to the past seems to have atrophied. The focus of celebration is on an infinitely plastic present and on what we can make of it.

That leads us to focus on the individual self and encourages the easy belief that we can make and remake ourselves to be the kind of persons that we want to be without regard to the lasting effects of our actions on ourselves and others. We can define slavery out of existence and do not need to enter the tragedy of death and loss. We surf down the superficiality of the immediate.

The devaluation of history and memory has a deeply corrosive effect on society and culture. Social institutions are layered, and grow organically. Habits of civility and respect for the rule of law, of individual and social rights, and for personal freedom have been built over centuries. They can be quickly eroded if the conditions that sustain them are not treasured and defended.

When we believe they can be disregarded for the sake of short term goals and do not attend to the processes by which in the past they have been built and corrupted, we put at risk our own culture.

In our society the devaluation of memory can be seen in our treatment of asylum seekers. The memory of the displacement of people in World War II and the determination to find refugees a home has been lost. So has the memory of the corruption of societies under Mussolini, Stalin and Hitler: the emphasis on control and security, the stripping of people from the protection of the rule of law, the scapegoating and demonisation of unfavoured minorities, the control of information, the neutering of parliament and the enrichment of those close to power.

There are uncomfortable echoes of these things in the behaviour of government in Australia, particularly in their dealings with people who seek our protection. The harm they do to people and to society is clear to see in the past. If we take pains to remember.

The remembering done at Passover and Easter remains important because it allows us to look back at the brutality of kings without flinching, to recognise in our time the naked brutality of kings and our complicity in covering it over, and to celebrate the sure hope that humanity will flower in the dust of kings and courtiers.

## Exploitation in gay adoption story

### REVIEWS

*Tim Kroenert*

***Any Day Now* (M). Director: Travis Fine. Starring: Alan Cumming, Garret Dillahunt, Isaac Leyva. 98 minutes**

Buyer beware: when the words 'true story' are attached to a dramatic film, 'true' is going to be a relative term. I'm comfortable with Australian filmmaker Robert Connolly's principle, that artistic license can be used to convey [the 'truth' of a story](#) even if facts are fudged. As such it's wise to take taglines such as 'Based on a true story' or the more nebulous 'Inspired by a true story' with a grain of salt. In the case of Travis Fine's *Any Day Now*, better make it a fistful. This is almost entirely a work of fiction, whose tenuous claim to truth obscures an exploitative core.

Fine's film is, on the face of it, fine indeed. It proffers for our consideration the experiences of a gay couple, Rudy and Paul (Cumming and Dillahunt), in 1970s West Hollywood, as they try to gain custody of Marco (Leyva), an abandoned teenager with Down syndrome. Fine heaps injustice upon injustice against these two flawed but kindhearted men, to the point where the viewer might feel they will choke on their moral outrage. Don't be surprised if you openly weep at times. Fine attacks the heartstrings with a velvet sledgehammer.

It's skillfully done, and impressively acted. Cumming's performance as the charismatic drag queen Rudy bears favourable comparison to Dustin Hoffman's best 'dramedic' work in the 1970s. Accomplished character actor Dillahunt (*Deadwood*) uncharacteristically plays the straight man to the more animated Cumming, as closeted gay lawyer Paul. Their early, lustful encounters quickly kick into a more serious gear as Paul supports Rudy legally and personally in his efforts to gain custody of Marco, whose mother, Rudy's neighbour, is in prison.

*Any Day Now* accumulates much sympathy for these characters as they are beset by brute social conservatism. Paul operates under a well-founded fear that his sexuality will imperil his career. His and Rudy's status as a gay couple is used against them during the course of their legal wrangling over Marco's fate. It's a gripping story, which appeals to the viewer's natural compassion for these marginalised human beings coming to blows with a society that continues to oppress them. The characters are portrayed with depth and dignity.

The film has the hallmarks of heartfelt social commentary. But commentary on what? If it really were a true story, then that fact alone might justify its existence. But Fine is on the record revealing only a passing similarity between the story he tells in *Any Day Now* and the events that 'inspired' it. What then does it have to say to us in 2014, in a time when same-sex parenting and support for same-sex marriage have become increasingly mainstream? Pry beneath the film's rousing

outer layers and you will discover a rather troubling vacuity.

A clue lies in the figure of Marco, who is more [MacGuffin](#) than character. We are expected to accept on face value that he will be better off with Rudy and Paul than in foster care. While this may be true, Fine offers scant evidence. Even given the sad state of Marco's life, Fine is more interested in the victimhood of Rudy and Paul, than the wellbeing of this most vulnerable young man. His use of Marco's disability and social disadvantage to make heroes of his crusading protagonists and sobbing messes of his audience is exploitative in the extreme.

## **Wily Harradine delivered for Indigenous Australians**

AUSTRALIA

*Frank Brennan*

I pay tribute to the great Tasmanian Catholic warrior, Brian Harradine, who died on Monday. He did some wonderful work in the Australian Senate, the chamber which Paul Keating once famously described as 'unrepresentative swill'. I was privileged to encounter Harradine up close during the 1993 Mabo and 1998 Wik native title debates in which he exhibited the finest integrity and commitment to Aboriginal rights.

The Wik debate was a poisonous political cocktail: a 4—3 decision of the High Court being considered by an unsympathetic Howard Government and a Senate where the Catholic Harradine had the balance of power. Harradine wisely retained the services of Sydney barristers John McCarthy QC and Jeff Kildea to advise him during the Wik debate.

The Wik legislation came back to the Senate for consideration three times. It is rare for government to present a complex bill to the Senate more than twice. As prime minister, John Howard needed the approval of conservative state premiers, especially Richard Court in Western Australia and Rob Borbidge in Queensland, before he could agree to any of Harradine's demands.

Armed with compromise proposals formulated by key Aboriginal leaders and their legal advisers, Harradine met with Howard several times during the second Wik debate. The compromise failed. Harradine phoned to tell me, 'I was talking to the wrong person; the Prime Minister doesn't have the authority to make the deal. But he'll come back a third time.'

A Queensland election followed. Borbidge lost office, and Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party won 11 seats in the Queensland Parliament. The canny Harradine picked the moment. With Borbidge out of the equation, he thought Howard would be more open to persuasion. With One Nation having done well, he thought Howard very unlikely to risk a double dissolution election where One Nation would get the balance of power in the Senate. He thought Howard had no option but to negotiate more favourably for Aboriginal interests.

He went back to Canberra with his list of demands.

Harradine successfully negotiated significant improvements to the lamentable Howard package. The key plank of the improved package was drafted by lawyers for the National Indigenous Working Group. It was the wily Harradine, who third time around in the Senate, rather than giving in, managed to deliver in spades on the compromise previously accepted behind closed doors by key Indigenous leaders and their advisers.

At the time, Noel Pearson told Kerry O'Brien on the ABC *7.30 Report*: 'It looks,

on the face of it, in this penalty shoot-out situation, Brian Harradine's won four-nil. Full credit to Senator Harradine for having promised us that he was going to hold the line. He's surely held the line. He's held out on a stubborn position.' Thereafter key Indigenous leaders, including Pearson, expressed their disgust at Harradine for selling them short. Harradine was not the one who had moved the goal posts.

It took some years for Harradine's critics to concede that he had improved Howard's land rights package more than was originally hoped for. Seven years after the Wik debate, when Harradine was retiring from the Senate, Andrew Bartlett, Deputy Leader of the Democrats, made this acknowledgment of Harradine's acumen on Wik:

The agreement he reached on the *Wik* legislation was one of the few cases I would point to where John Howard was bested in negotiations. Whilst the legislative merits of the Wik agreement were less than ideal, the sort of race election, focused on Indigenous people, that our country would have faced in 1998 if that agreement had not been reached would have been far worse even than the one we endured in 2001.

Paul Keating, who had done a fabulous job delivering the 1993 Native Title Act, Parliament's response to the uncertainties and possibilities opened up by the High Court's Mabo decision, was very upset with Harradine and anyone with access to him, including me, whom he labelled 'the meddling priest'.

Three years after Keating's law was enacted, Labor was out of office and the High Court had expanded some of the uncertainties and possibilities of native title in the Wik decision. In his 2011 Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration, Keating said the native title amendment law of 1998 'arose from the Coalition Government's so-called Ten Point Plan, a plan facilitated in the Senate with the support of Senator Brian Harradine under the advice of the Jesuit priest, Frank Brennan'.

He then said: 'As a Catholic, let me say, whenever you witness the zealotry of professional Catholics in respect of Indigenous issues, invariably you find Indigenous interests subordinated to their personal notions of justice and equity: because unlike the rest of us, they enjoy some kind of divine guidance.' This was reminiscent of Ben Chifley's remark about Bob Santamaria and the Groupers: 'One of the most dangerous individuals you could have in public life was a religious fanatic.' Chifley thought 'the religious fanatic is worse than the political fanatic'.

Keating was on to something when he spoke of Indigenous interests and notions of justice and equity. But personal notions of justice and equity do not count for much in the public square of a pluralist democracy like Australia unless those notions can be rendered comprehensible and adoptable by other citizens who do not share your religious or philosophical world view. Harradine understood this very well. He was assuredly a very canny politician. But I never knew him to claim any sort of divine guidance when making a political decision.

History vindicated Harradine's political judgment in the Wik debate. Not even

Keating has ever seriously suggested that Kim Beazley's chances of winning the 1998 election would have been enhanced by leaving Wik unresolved. If Wik had not been resolved prior to the re-election of the Howard Government in 1998, Howard would have told Harradine after the election that all deals were off.

Harradine and the other non-government members in the chamber of 'unrepresentative swill' would then have needed to assess the possibility of forcing changes on a strong new government with a fresh mandate to limit Aboriginal rights in the wake of a Wik election.

Once Harradine lost his position holding the balance of power, I visited him in his parliamentary office and gave him a feather duster I had purchased in Indonesia. With delight, he placed it on his wall. He was looking forward to the rest and recreation of retirement in Hobart and amongst the Tasmanian wilderness. Now he rests in peace. He was a good man, a fine Catholic, and a very canny politician. And, God bless him, he got Wik right.

## **Second chances for AFL's Indigenous prodigal sons**

AUSTRALIA

*Mike Bowden*

In November 2013 two coincidental events in Darwin demonstrated the powerful role that AFL football can play in the lives of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory. One was the announcement that former Melbourne Demons star Liam Jarrah (pictured) would wear the red and black strip of the Tiwi Bombers in the NTFL Wet season competition. The other, that Xavier Clarke had been appointed as coach of the NT Thunder AFL side.

Jurrah's fall from grace had been well documented. His rare football talent had not provided him effective protection from the sometimes overwhelming social challenges confronting young Indigenous men in the Territory. But now another chance had been offered.

In Darwin, Aussie Rules is played in sometimes atrocious conditions. Even when tropical thunderstorms thrash tonnes of black rain onto the oval, crowds are drawn to watch the silky skills and flawless dexterity of so many Indigenous players. Pundits were sure that Jurrah's skills would add to the exhilaration of footy in the Top End.

What was exciting about the appointment of Clarke was that he is home-grown. He attended primary school in Darwin and graduated from O'Loughlin Catholic College before being drafted by St Kilda FC. Clarke started his football career at the famous St Mary's FC in Darwin and now brings his experience back home to pass on.

Some may think Aussie rules is like a trampoline catapulting young Indigenous footballers into a fairytale AFL life. Certainly there have been wonderful examples of success. But for every bounce and somersault there is a twist. Many a trick fails to come off and our gymnast ends up sprawled on the matting.

While Jurrah at Melbourne FC could leap and hang as he flew for one of his famous 'speckies', he found the stress of daily life a sterner opponent than a ferocious full back. The recent resignation from Hawthorn FC of young Indigenous player Dayle Garlett echoes the hypothesis that AFL success depends on more than talent.

Clarke's AFL career was less flamboyant than Jurrah's. Recruited as a high draft pick, he never reached the heights foreshadowed by his talent. Perhaps the most significant feature of his career was that he was able to return to senior football and play well after suffering a number of serious injuries.

And that's what footy's about — the courage to get back up after injury, getting the hard ball, backing back into the pack, punching from behind, playing defensively to stop the other bloke from getting a kick, playing where the coach

wants you, being so fit that you have no time for anything but training, eating, sleeping and playing.

Australian football offers every player something that a cut throat sport like cricket denies them — a second chance. In the game played on the narrow strip, one snick off the first ball can end your innings in an instant. But in footy you can be beaten all day and then when the game is there to be won you can rise, mark, kick and goal and become a hero in seconds. You just have to keep working and believing.

These are the personal qualities that define a successful footballer, as well as a successful person. Some players have them before they start to play the game. Others have to develop them. And the game helps. Strong leadership is necessary. Coaching that develops resilience. Powerful support structures. The contest is central. Every player who conquers the challenges develops moral fibre.

Clarke has them and has been rewarded for it. He will pass them on. His story might inspire the likes of Marley Williams, the young player of Maori descent who recently stood down from Collingwood FC following his conviction on charges of grievous bodily harm. Williams may yet have a chance to live up to his potential.

As for Jurrah, sadly, in December, after three wonderful games with Tiwi, once again he ran afoul of the law. Many might say 'enough is enough'. I say if Jurrah has the courage to get back up; to ask permission to 'pull on the boots' for another go; to submit to the self-discipline and team discipline of AFL footy, then he deserves forgiveness and another chance. Hopefully he'll be a champion yet.

## Push for boycott ban reveals economic double standard

### ENVIRONMENT

*Fatima Measham*

A review of competition laws is providing an opportunity for the Coalition Government and industry groups to [push for a ban](#) against environmental boycotts. If the exemption on secondary boycotts is dropped, then campaigns against industry practices that are seen to be environmentally damaging, such as logging old-growth forests, will become illegal.

It is always a wonder to behold when economic liberals start tinkering with the conditions in which their corporate allies conduct business. According to the parliamentary secretary for agriculture, Richard Colbeck, Environmental groups 'can say what they like', campaign about what they like' and 'have a point of view, but they should not be able to run a specific business-focused or market-focused campaign, and they should not be able to say things that are not true'. He goes on to suggest there is currently no recourse to 'enforce accuracy'.

It is a strange protectionism that portrays entire industries as victims, defenceless against the barrage of readily available information — to which their public relations and marketing divisions can contribute, by the way. It turns out that the free flow of information cannot be so free as to disrupt capital.

It would also seem that the only legitimate choices within a free market are ones unimpeded by things like ethics, conscience or even unease. That seems to be the gist of the Federal Government response to the Sydney Biennale boycott. This campaign was instigated by pro-asylum seeker activists who had drawn the dots between Transfield, the key sponsor for the arts festival, and the contractor for Manus Island detention centre.

In an interview with ABC Radio National, Arts Minister and Attorney-General George Brandis [said](#) 'I don't think that arts companies should reject bona fide sponsorship from commercially sound, prospective partners on political grounds.' He goes so far as to endorse moves to block government funding to arts organisations that refuse corporate sponsorship. In case it still isn't clear, the principal legal adviser to the Federal Cabinet and foremost officer of the law is telling us, 'Shut up and take the money.'

It would appear that money as a lever in the market is not meant to be wielded by ordinary folk. Many on the right side of politics who are hostile toward boycotts regard them as radical and misguided, anomalies in the free market rather an outcome of the conditions that they prosecute. Such hostility reveals that while they think it reasonable for the elite to direct or withhold resources as they will, it is preposterous for artists, environmentalists and consumers to do that. They should not be allowed.

Take, for instance, the [shutdown](#) of a government website that rated food

products according to their nutritive value. It seems an innocuous enough undertaking, approved by state health authorities. But according to the murmurs of approval that met its demise, providing information infantilises consumers.

The argument does not bear scrutiny. It would be a shallow agency that rests on superficial knowledge, insulated from third-party reviews or objective assessments. Who benefits from that? The reality is that someone has to lose when it comes to the till, and industries and companies would rather it be you. This is par for the course, but we should hope that governments don't then foster hostile conditions for critique and conscientious choice. If indeed this one truly believes that the individual is sovereign.

## **On the way to Golgotha**

CREATIVE

*Various*

### **Second coming**

There are new signs and wonders:

It is a sign, indeed, that complicities without number

Might be contained within a single nod,

And a wonder that so much slyness

Might brood within the single dimming of a wink;

For now, in the civilian alchemies of this second coming,

We are called to choose the dark yeast

That does not so much rise, as ooze and infiltrate;

And if we must sow,

We must sow in whispers, now,

In malignant fields;

And if we must reap,

Then we must reap in the certainties of scorn.

And when we are called to choose,

We must choose our neighbours coldly,

Nurse our denials close,

And keep assiduous lists

Of those we most prosperously revile.

For now, the chilling shadow of the salamander

Has crossed the threshold of our hearts:

We live in a time,

When Jesus, prophet, saviour,

Refuses, we are assured, to say yes to everybody.

*Grant Fraser*

### **Beyond Golgotha**

i.

A path of varicose roots  
rising from sodden ground  
showed the way to a rock  
placed upon a rock a face  
with random nails stuck  
like a half-crown of thorns  
in the roughly groomed clay  
The eyes stared out from bulbous sacs  
the mouth downturned  
like any mouth on any face  
on the way to Golgotha  
ii.

And there  
I saw a solitary bee,  
with stripes on his back,  
limping like a light plane landing  
fumbling to retreat to the anthole  
where the dirt was pushed away  
No spices no scents  
He was gone Perhaps for good  
I waited

iii  
until  
he stumbled from the dark  
stopped  
drunken in the light  
He regained himself;  
rose up as it were.  
And I was frightened  
that he might choose me

as a resting place.

*Marlene Marburg*

**Praise**

Sometimes each thing has its given moment — water  
limber from my kitchen tap — almost the whole sumptuous sense of it.  
Now that praise is a remedy so praised, I'm drawn  
not to a simple hymn but Hopkins and gash gold-vermillion, and the words  
he chose in fear his faith had fled on dark wings;  
words held dear, energised by nothing more than planetary spin.

*Steve Armstrong*

**Renewal**

Navy blue sky  
Heavy with promise of rain  
Still and velvety on this autumn evening  
Bewitches me  
Soft pillows welcome me early to bed  
A good book to end this blessed Easter Day  
And then, as if in final benediction  
The smell, the sound, of promise fulfilled  
The earth and I grateful for the blessing

*Margaret Quigley*

## Asylum seeker protest models 'habits of the heart'

AUSTRALIA

*Michael McVeigh*

On Sunday, tens of thousands of people across Australia took to the streets of our capital cities to protest the Federal Government's cruel treatment of people seeking asylum in our country.

Although linked with church services in various denominations, the Palm Sunday marches included people from diverse faiths and no faith. Those on the streets ranged from young children to the elderly. The march itself was conducted in a peaceful, suitably solemn mood. This wasn't a group of radicals trying to overthrow the government — it was Grandma and Grandpa, Mum and Dad and the kids, wanting to make a statement to a callous political elite.

Yet the protests drew barely a mention in our mainstream press. *The Guardian* published a report estimating a crowd size of around 6000 in Melbourne, while the headline on *The Age* website said, 'Hundreds rally for refugees'. I watched and took pictures as the crowd marched past me down Swanston Street in Melbourne for an hour, and if someone counted only 6000 people they were counting three heads for every person.

Sitting in the background to these protests is the survey earlier this year that found around 60 per cent of people in Australia believe we don't treat asylum seekers harshly enough. That same proportion of people, it seems, are completely unaware of the torturously inhumane process we already put asylum seekers through.

The biggest issue we face with asylum seekers is that we have a minority — albeit a larger minority than our politicians and mainstream press seem to want to admit — that are informed and aware of the issues, and are committed to finding a more humane response to the issue. And we have a majority that is uninformed, and uninterested, and is committed to whichever solution best removes asylum seekers from their line of sight so they can go back to enjoying the latest episode of *Masterchef*.

We can blame the media for the poor coverage of this issue, and for failing to inform people about the terrible conditions asylum seekers face. Yet they know better than us that those stories, even when printed, aren't being read. We can put the blame on asylum seeker advocates for not finding more creative and eye-catching ways to inform people and change their minds. But plenty have been tried and failed, and catchy campaigns on similarly divisive issues such as climate change have also done little to change mainstream opinions.

I was struck recently by a line from a [review of a recent book](#) called *Countrymen*, which explores why Denmark, of all the countries invaded by the Nazis, managed to save so many of its Jewish population. The reviewer points to

the complex web of forces that allowed the Danish people to resist attempts to exterminate a group of people they considered their fellow countrymen:

It is a story that reinforces an old truth: solidarity and decency depend on a dense tissue of connection among people, on long-formed habits of the heart, on resilient cultures of common citizenship, and on leaders who marshal these virtues by their example.

Rather than asking how we can become more decent towards asylum seekers, it's time to ask some bigger questions: What reserves do we, as a country, have to resist inhumane forces that besiege us? What is the 'tissue of connection' between people in a society in which, more and more, people don't even know the names of their neighbours, let alone spend time with people in a different socio-economic class to themselves?

What are the 'habits of the heart' in a society which seems to blithely accept that anyone on government assistance is a leech on the taxes of other 'hardworking' people? How can we have 'resilient cultures of common citizenship' when non-white Australians continue to be largely absent from our conversations and media, and when so many seem not to even think there's a problem with the way these people are treated?

And what hope do we have of having 'leaders who marshal these virtues by example' when there are people in our Parliament who champion the rights of Australians to be bigots and a Government which swept to power after a sustained misogynistic campaign against the previous prime minister?

Last weekend tens of thousands of people were modelling a greater set of virtues on the streets, and many more thousands continue to uphold them in their own lives, giving generously of their time and energy to support those in need in our community.

But as a society we'll be doomed to become less and less humane, and perpetuate more and more of the mistakes of the past, unless we can find a way to make these virtues mainstream once again.

## The people power of *Game of Thrones* pirates

AUSTRALIA

*Michael Mullins*

Last week's *Game of Thrones* series four premiere revealed Melbourne as the pirate capital of the world. An analysis published on the website [TorrentFreak](#) [shows](#) Melbourne, followed by Athens and Sydney, as the top city in the world for downloading the show without paying.

It's debatable whether it is technically illegal to download media content from sites such as Pirate Bay, rather than purchasing, in this case, a \$35 per month minimum Foxtel subscription. *Choice* magazine [says](#) it's a grey area, but gives qualified sanction to consumers who circumvent the strategies of online media companies and retailers that play hard ball to squeeze consumers in small markets such as Australia, where it's easy to create monopolies.

With this series of *Game of Thrones*, the Murdoch half-owned Foxtel negotiated exclusive, or monopoly, rights, so that it could charge what it wanted. But Foxtel knows that it doesn't really have a monopoly because it is competing against the likes of Pirate Bay.

The downloaders make a 'people power' claim to moral legitimacy because they think Foxtel's business model undermines the access they believe they are entitled to. Meanwhile Foxtel corporate affairs director Bruce Meagher [says](#) 'that's like justifying stealing a Ferrari on the basis that the waiting list is too long or the price is too high (maybe it's because you don't want all of the features)'.

Perhaps they're both correct.

It appears Meagher fails to appreciate that the human act of telling and listening to stories is essentially organic, and that the ability and right to buy and sell stories cannot be assumed. Since the beginning of human civilisation, stories have defined our identity and brought us together as social animals. Stories are not a cultural form of *terra nullius*, and human nature will not allow them to be wholly appropriated by business interests.

What the downloaders don't understand is the difference between a story and its *telling*. Story tellers don't own the stories but they should be paid for telling them.

The commodification of stories is in itself a product of human industry and the dignity of work. It's fair to expect us to pay a reasonable price to access particular 'tellings' of stories. Media production creates work for actors, writers and producers, and expands our horizons with a greater range of stories. It is a matter of regret that globalisation has killed many languages and folk traditions, but a fact of life that mass media products such as *Game of Thrones* have displaced ancient forms of story telling in the lives of small groups and tribes.

Regulation needs to ensure that everybody has access to the telling of stories that are considered culturally significant — including pop culture — at a readily affordable cost. Given the mass global interest it has generated, this would have to include *Game of Thrones*.

Until now, the Federal Government has used its anti-siphoning legislation to ensure that certain sports events remain accessible to all by stipulating that they must be shown on free to air rather than pay TV. Unfortunately these rules could be scrapped by the Abbott Government's proposed media regulation changes. Anti-siphoning should instead be expanded to include other culturally significant genres such as *Game of Thrones*. If it's not, the people power of the downloaders will prevail.

## **'Normal' royals are not like us**

AUSTRALIA

*Ruby Hamad*

There is a scene in the fourth season of [Downton Abbey](#) in which a suitor informs Lady Mary Crawley of his need for a wife. Unable to give her the time she needs to finish grieving for her first husband, Lord Gillingham says, 'We both know I need to marry. I don't need to explain to you how the system we're trapped in works.'

This exchange shows how even wealthy bluebloods may feel imprisoned by society's expectations. Humans install institutions and, through enforced loyalty, these institutions take on a life of their own, until we regard them not as systems of our own creation that we can dismantle at will, but as intractable truths.

While the aristocracy has changed dramatically since the 1920s, the royal family remains trapped in the institution we both love and hate. Some may dismiss them as [freeloaders](#) but how many of us would truly want to live life in the goldfish bowl that is modern day royalty?

Eight-month-old Prince George is capturing hearts on his first official tour to New Zealand and Australia. Oblivious to his celebrity status and his future obligations, the son of the wildly popular Kate and William represents our complicated, and contradictory, relationship to the royal family.

George is at once a novelty and, as media reports remind us, a regular baby. One of the most remarked upon events of his visit has been his 'play date' at Government House in Wellington. Ten babies were selected to [play with their future king](#), an honour that had one proud mum declaring she has 'a lot in common with the Duke and Duchess ... we've been through the sleepless nights and we can talk to them about our experiences'.

The casual play date occurred just days after the couple released an official but casual portrait with George and family dog Lupo. *The Daily Mail* [praised](#) the couple for their 'very modern approach to royalty' in which they let 'the public gaze in' with 'the promise of effortless informality'.

It appears that ostentatious elitism is out of favour, and the royal family is just like us.

Of course, if they were just like us, they would not be royalty. Yet we insist on having it both ways. Attachment to tradition won't allow the dismantling of the royal institution, but we all take seriously the claim to human equality. And so we stress that the royal family are just figureheads, that their continued existence as bluebloods is mere nostalgia, that, really, they are just like us.

But they are not. There are rules we must follow. Those who transgress may no longer lose their heads, but they will cop a shellacking in the media, particularly in

the UK.

When Paul Keating was presumptuous enough to steer the Queen with a hand at the small of her back, his recalcitrance earned him the [nickname](#) the 'Lizard of Oz'. More recently, *The Daily Mail* [took Julia Gillard to task](#) for not curtsying to the Queen, accusing her of 'disrespect' for merely shaking the monarch's hand.

It takes a certain kind of cognitive dissonance to lap up the concept of 'informal royalty' even as we tear down those who breach royal protocol by daring to touch them.

By clinging to this notion that they are just like us, even as we treat them as anything but, we brush aside the inconvenient fact that their status is a relic of a bygone era in which royal rule was enforced through brutal means. Where titles were bestowed upon the court's favourites and inherited purely by accident of birth, while 'commoners' were persuaded to accept their own inferiority by declaring loyalty.

How do we reconcile this with the modern notion of equality? How also do we accept that this wide brown land of ours is still referred to as 'Crown Land', overlooking the thousands of years of history of its First Nations? Is it right to forget that the British monarchy presided over colonialist expansion with all its associated genocides? A class system that bestows inherited superiority is a remnant of a more oppressive era best left in the past.

Now, I harbour no animosity towards the royals. They are merely living in the world as it is presented to them. But while the titles we perpetuate are merely symbolic, we are kidding ourselves if we claim that symbols don't matter. We may dilute them to make them more palatable, but in doing so we keep the original concept alive.

In the case of the royals, what we are keeping alive is the notion of inequality. Because royals cannot be royals *and* regular people, no matter how often Kate gets [photographed](#) doing the shopping at her local grocery store. And so we continue we fawn over them, even as we force them to make pretences to normality.

Many of us will gush about that one time we saw the Duchess of Cambridge in our own backyard, even as we marvel at how ordinary she seemed. 'She is a mum,' [effused](#) one New Zealand 'commoner' to the waiting media at one of Kate's official engagements. 'Just like me.'