EUREKA STREET

A MAGAZINE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, THE ARTS AND THEOLOGY
Vol 15 no 2 March 2004 $7.50 (inc. GST)

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Values & education

World Social Forum

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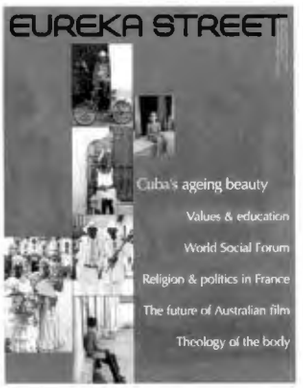
The future of Australian film

Theology of the body



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Patrons *Eureka Street* gratefully acknowledges the support of C. and A. Carter; the trustees of the estate of Miss M. Condon; W.P. & M.W. Gurry

Eureka Street magazine, ISSN 1036–1758, Australia Post Print Post approved pp349181/00314, is published ten times a year by Eureka Street Magazine Pty Ltd, 300 Victoria Street, Richmond VIC 3121
PO Box 553, Richmond VIC 3121
Tel: 03 9427 7311 Fax: 03 9428 4450
email: eureka@jespub.jesuit.org.au
http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/
Responsibility for editorial content is accepted by Andrew Hamilton SJ, 300 Victoria Street, Richmond
Printed by Doran Printing
46 Industrial Drive, Braeside VIC 3195.

This month
Cover: Images of Cuba by Jacqueline Dalmau, full story pp24-25.
Cover design: Janneke Storteboom
All illustrations by Janneke Storteboom unless otherwise indicated.
Cartoons: p10, p34 and p37 by Dean Moore, p33 by Katherine Brazenor.

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VOLUME 14 NUMBER 2 MARCH 2004

EUREKA STREET

Christopher Gleeson SJ

Values fruitful

Recent statements by government leaders accusing their own schools of 'values neutral' education demonstrate clearly how out of touch they are with teaching and learning in the nation's classrooms. 'Values neutral' education, if it ever had any support in schools, was a partner of the very deficient and long superseded 'values clarification' programs of the 1970s. Most teachers and educators now understand that it is an impossibility.

Values are different from attitudes which can change with seasons. Values have a permanence about them. A value is something precious, of great worth, something for which one is prepared to suffer, make sacrifices, even give up one's life. Values give meaning. Like the rails that keep a train on track, they provide direction, motive and purpose. They are the non-negotiables in our society, under girding our various 'bottom lines'.

While in the past, values education was seemingly the poor cousin in school curriculum, such is not the case today. Government and private schools have worked to enunciate clearly the specific values they wish to teach and promote. There would be agreement between both systems about the need to teach what has been termed 'traditional' values: respect for the dignity of every individual; the importance of honesty and the need to search for and adhere to the truth; the value of hard work and achieving high standards; the mutuality of rights and responsibilities; the protection of human life at every point along life's continuum; safeguarding the neediest in our community. These values have an enduring lighthouse quality about them and, as such, the term 'traditional' does not do them justice.

It is important then to recognise that not all values are equal. For simplicity, we can reduce them to two levels—instrumental values, those which enable us to achieve various ends or goals in life, and intrinsic values—those which are valuable in themselves in whatever conditions of life, in and out of season. Often the two are confused. A healthy economy, despite political argy-bargy, is simply an instrumental value, an important means to achieving a higher intrinsic value affecting people's quality of life. A healthy economy will facilitate the promotion of intrinsic values in schools outlined above.

In many non-government schools, because of their particular spiritual ethos and tradition, intrinsic values will very often adopt a religious hue. Christian schools, for example, will source their values in the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus. While this will be a source of difference between the government and independent schools, it should be remembered that both systems espouse intrinsic values, values that have a permanence beyond shifting tides of fashion. 'Values neutral' education was simply a fad that went by the wayside when serious teaching of values was developed in all schools during the 1980s. Our politicians have failed to keep up.

Author and University leader Jill Ker Conway once referred to these enduring intrinsic values as 'true north principles'—permanent values which, like true north, remain unchanged despite changes in our standpoint and perspective. Such values, Max Charlesworth once told a university audience in 1988, are 'true whether we think so or not; are good whether they suit our interests or not; are just whether or not they run counter to what we immediately want; are beautiful whether we happen to like them or not; are sacred whether we are willing to recognise them or not.'

Any teacher worth their salt would understand that 'values neutral' education is an impossibility. Assertions of this kind undermine the crucial role of teachers in our community. Teachers must be armed with all sorts of values. If they are passionate about their subject discipline, and good teachers are passionate people, they will hold dear what is precious in its content and method. Committed to the value of their own teaching subjects, they will be too discerning about the truth, too constrained by time and the demands of examinable curriculum to promote modish ideologies of the kind raked up in politics recently. A brief reflection on the teachers who shaped our lives will frame people who communicated a love for their subject, who made it clear where their values lay without imposing them, who emphasised that an opinion is only as good as the evidence supporting it, who demonstrated that not every opinion or option is equally valuable, who showed us the difference between the questions 'is something right?' and 'do I feel comfortable with this course of action?'

The fourth century theologian St. John Chrysostom, wrote of teachers: 'What is a greater work than to direct the minds and form the character of the young? I hold with certainty that no painter, no sculptor, nor any other artist does such excellent work as the one who moulds the mind of youth.' Teaching is too important a vocation in our community, too fruitful in promoting right values, for us to allow politicians to associate it with passé trends like 'values neutral education.'

Christopher Gleeson SJ is the Director of Jesuit Publications and former Headmaster of St Ignatius Riverview and Xavier Colleges.

What is anti-Semitism?

Anthony Ham's discussion of the new wave of global anti-Semitism (*Eureka Street*, January-February 2004) is welcome and timely, but his thesis lacks sufficient historical and political context.

Ham rightly condemns both anti-Jewish racism (Judeophobia), and anti-Arab racism (Arabophobia), but draws a very long bow in attempting to bracket both sets of prejudices as 'anti-Semitism'.

Clever semantics aside, anti-Semitism has long been understood in the modern world as involving prejudice directed specifically at Jews. This is because the language of anti-Semitism—typically via conspiracy theories claiming Jewish control of either communism or capitalism—has produced anti-Jewish genocide. In contrast, there is no historical or contemporary example of anti-Arab discourse leading to anti-Arab genocide.

This equation of victims of racism also subtly neglects the subtext which is that one of these victimised groups (the Arabs) has often persecuted the other (Jews). For example, the Jewish population in Arab countries has declined from 856,000 in 1948 to just over 7000 today reflecting a combination of popular anti-Jewish feeling and discriminatory government policies. And more recently, the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia report *Manifestations of anti-Semitism in the European Union* has confirmed that many of the worst anti-Jewish attacks in Europe have been perpetrated not by traditional fascists and anti-Semites, but rather by young Muslims, mainly of Arab descent.

Ham then shifts course to attack the Israeli Government for attempting to discredit critics of their policies by accusing them of anti-Semitism. But putting to one side the cynical politics of Sharon and Sharansky, this claim is not entirely without foundation. To be sure, some hardline critics of Israel are not motivated by anti-Jewish prejudice, but equally some are. The distinction is not a simple one. It is clearly not anti-Semitic to argue that Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are illegal and immoral, that the Palestinian Arabs living in these territories should have access to the same national rights as Jewish Israelis, and that a two-state solution should be negotiated which addresses both minimum Israeli security needs, and basic Palestinian national aspirations. These views are advocated by a healthy minority within Israel itself.

Too often international criticism of Zionism goes beyond reasonable criticism of specific Israeli policies, to a negation of Jewish national rights per se. And any actions taken by Israeli governments to defend the lives of citizens are derided as illegitimate.

Ham should be commended for trying to place Arabophobia in a broader context, and I agree that experiences of racism should not be ranked in order of merit. But equally any equation of victims requires a careful historical and political analysis. Some forms of racism are different precisely because of their historical meaning, and their potential for genocide.

Philip Mendes
Kew, VIC

The undeserving poor

News of Frank Cicutto's departure from National Australia Bank follows the revelation of $360 million dollar losses on the currency trading desk. Cicutto had spent 37 years at the Bank, the last five as Managing Director and Chief Executive.

I have followed these developments with interest, and contributed an editorial to the *Australian Financial Review* (January 2004). I have studied rogue trader incidents in the past, and in a public lecture at the Melbourne Business School in October 2003 suggested that there was a real and present danger of such an event in the Australian financial system.

To many, the issue seems straightforward. An individual or several individuals commit fraud. An amount, possibly in excess of $360 million goes missing. The public expectation is that those concerned will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law, and those who supervised them up to and including the Chief Executive will be fired. Any larrikin who breaks a shop window and is caught helping himself to some of the merchandise would expect some hard time. Surely we are right to condemn those involved in the NAB affair?

Certainly this is the view of the Australian press. The fact is, schadenfreude sells. It always has. There is nothing so delicious as the downfall of the great and the good. On reading my piece in the *AFR*, a friend asked whether I knew this Frank Cicutto. I have met neither him nor any of the others named in the affair. Who am I to pass judgment?

My reading of this situation and similar episodes does not suggest that these young traders misappropriated large sums of money. Rather, it is a story of people caught in a hard place and seeing all of their promise—their fortunate life— about to vanish as in a dream. Yes, they respond inappropriately by venturing more. Perhapsthey break the law and commit fraud. But it is a very human response, as old as the Gospels. Don't we read in Matthew 25: 14–30 that the servants who ventured and won shared their master's joy, while the servant who buried his talent in fear of his hard master is punished? The demands of the fortunate life are indeed a hard master. The rewards go to those who venture and win.

They were fortunate once, but now are out of a job with families to support, facing criminal and/or civil law suits without near term prospect of employment. This is a paltry sum by comparison. Although no evidence has surfaced of his complicity in this affair, Frank Cicutto bears ultimate responsibility and his head is offered as ritual sacrifice. A sad ending for a proud 37-year career at the bank.

Dorothy Day wrote that it is indeed hard to see Christ in the undeserving poor. Perhaps these people caused their own downfall through greed and hubris. They have lost honour and position, and perhaps also their material comforts. Must they also lose our sympathy?

Stephen Brown
New York, USA

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the month's traffic

Pride of Erin

PATRICK O'FARRELL

'WITHOUT DOUBT or question, colonial Ireland dies with me and with my like—the transitionals. Transitional to what? To a land of cultural chaos and the walking dead? To fragments and ghettoes of materialist minds? Or, are we to break the spell that immobilises the past, liberate its pioneering greatness from the shackles of its sins and negligences, and return it to life with us?'

So Patrick O'Farrell—the renowned philosopher-historian who died last Christmas Day aged only 70—concluded *Vanished Kingdoms*, his extraordinary amalgam of personal, family and social history. His great double achievement —to revitalise our Catholic past, transforming our understanding of it, and to create the field of Irish-Australian history—was only part of his story. He was also a stylist who could be elegant, lucid, wry and idiosyncratic by turns, one of our finest writers who wanted, for himself and his readers, to see both the big picture and what lay beneath it.

In her profound obituary in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Professor Elizabeth Malcolm of Melbourne University referred to his *The Irish in Australia* and wrote, 'It is not merely a history of Irish settlement in Australia; it is an examination of the development of an Australian identity and an assessment of the role that the Irish played in this process. I think it not an exaggeration to say that what Manning Clark attempted to do in six volumes, O'Farrell did in one and with more panache'.

And, as Australia metamorphosed, he was alert to the fact that it is open—as our future unfolds to other cultures and religions to exert their own influence on the new Australia. He was an historian alive not simply to the past—and certainly not the mere passé—but to the pressing need for ceaseless examination of our individual lives: the personal, the ethical, the spiritual.

—John Carmody

Across the fence

RURAL AUSTRALIANS FOR REFUGEES

IN ALBURY IT IS 41 degrees. The man at the microphone is wearing a jacket, tie and a badge in his lapel—RSL or Rotary.

'My Name is Ian Skiller and I'm a horticulturalist from Tooleybuc.' He says to an audience of over 300 at the second annual Rural Australians for Refugees Conference.

A while back, he says, someone contacted him to see if he'd provide accommodation for a few Afghan blokes. Asylum seekers on TPVs (temporary protection visas). He said yes. Then he figured he might give the men some work. It all panned out well. Someone told him about Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR). He found a local branch in Kerang, joined, and got going. The men working for him needed services and language classes. He went to Canberra 'to get it sorted'.

He looks a little wry about how much was sorted in Canberra, but he now has very good relations with the National's MP for Mallee, John Forrest. They talk refugee politics on the car phone when Forrest is travelling.

Ian Skiller, having met the men and lived with them, is now a spokesman for refugees. And he looks as surprised about it all as the city people in the crowd. The folk from Albury, Wangaratta and Braidwood are not surprised. They have done similar things themselves. They understand both the problems of rural life and the local strengths. Country people have to depend on one another, hence the gradual acceptance of refugee employees in rural towns, rural industries.

Eighteen months ago, with Melbourne lawyer and refugee advocate David Manne, I went to Wangaratta for a RAR church hall meeting. Both of us were unprepared for the size of the crowd, and the preparation that had gone into the gathering—school displays, publicity etc. I remember best the gent in tweed jacket and hat who said as he walked though the door, 'No, don't give me any pamphlets. I want to listen and decide for myself.' Fair enough.

David was in Albury this time too, and as we sat in Charles Sturt University campus, we both remarked on the distance RAR has travelled in two years. Dozens of branches, thousands of members, and much work behind them—visiting detention centres, organising support networks, making friends, lobbying government. With its overflow crowd, workshops back to back, and intense discussion this conference was a social movement. The people who'd come already understood refugee issues and were there to learn how to work effectively, not to decide whether or not they would. Many had read the literature available—there is now a formidable Australian list, from Peter Mares' *Borderline* through Marian Wilkinson and David Marr's *Dark Victory* to Frank Brennan's recent *Tampering with Asylum*—and if they hadn't, some of the authors were there in Albury to be quizzed. There were also asylum seekers present, able and eager to speak for themselves.

Proceedings began with a welcome from Charles Sturt's head of campus, Professor Gail Whiteford. 'This is what universities should be doing', she declared. The traditional role of the academy was 'to be the critic and conscience of society'. Sir Humphrey would call her brave.

Keynote speaker Frank Brennan followed Wiradjuri elder, Nancy Rooke, who in the course of her formal welcome and call for every one to 'go in peace and unity together' remarked, 'These people who have come to our land have made a big difference'. Sometimes Aboriginal generosity is breathtaking. Frank Brennan said that if Albury were ever to be excluded from the Australia's immigration zone, it would still be Wiradjuri land. That set the tone of the conference which was often heated and enthusiastic, wry and informative.

Marilyn Webster, a local RAR member, was a salutary critic. She wanted better communication within RAR and she wanted it now. Barrister and refugee advocate Julian Burnside was legal-encyclopaedic as he walked the audience through the maze of claim and appeal that asylum seekers face. His opening gambit was to remark that, like Zsa Zsa Gabor's seventh husband, he knew what to do but wasn't sure how to make it interesting. He managed.

But there was no levity later when he questioned Sussan Ley, Liberal Member for Farrer, representing Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone, as to why she continued to refer to asylum seekers as 'illegal' or 'unlawful'. Ley had joined the conference as part of a hypothetical panel ('It's 2010 and you are Prime Minister elect in a shared government of

reconciliation'] with Senators Andrew Bartlett, Kerry Nettle and Labor's Member for Chifley, Roger Price. Sir Humphrey would have called her very brave.

Even more brave—or lazy—was the *Border Mail*, which didn't wait for the conference to get into swing before it ran the banner headline 'REFUGEE SHOWDOWN' on its Saturday morning front page. Crystal ball journalism.

But the metro dailies and the electronic media picked up some of the issues. Jill Singer who attended, spoke the next day on Jon Faine's local ABC conversation hour. Manus Island became a talking point and the Catch 22 nature of our immigration sieve ('the asylum seeker didn't ask for exactly the right form by name so we couldn't/wouldn't/didn't process him' etc.) got the exposure it deserves.

'A small group of committed citizens can change the world', said Albury's Dr Penny Egan-Vine. She was quoting Margaret Mead, and her words could have been a self-congratulatory rallying cry. But on this occasion they weren't. More of a challenge, that if small groups of committed citizens fail to act, then we entrench a system that is manifestly unjust.

—Morag Fraser

Descending gloom

Racing officials were pleased when 3000 people went to a twilight meeting at Flemington early in January. Metropolitan night racing has been with us since the 1990s, but judging by the turnout at Moonee Valley before Australia Day, these might as well be phantom meetings.

The Moonee Valley Racing Club had done its best to attract patrons, but scarcely reached beyond the hard core. The entertainment provided hardly touched them: a Bush Show for kids, the Frankie J. Holden Band, and the national anthem, sung by a well-coached 16-year-old. Most dire was where teams of men ran up the straight while eating a pie, hopped back in sacks and completed the course by pushing a beer barrel—the 'Aussie games.'

The Club is recovering from the unthinkable: stuffing up the Cox Plate last October. The weather may have been chancy and the field below par, but it was

summa theologiae

Theology of conversation

Passing on inherited wisdom is always fraught. Especially when the wisdom clashes with that of the prevailing culture.

I recently attended an instructive workshop for Catholic young adults on the 'theology of the body'. The participants were keen to know how to live sexual relationships in a human way. The workshop was superbly led by young teachers who were open, knowledgeable and thoroughly familiar with the Catholic tradition. They first invited the participants to raise questions for discussion. They listed serious issues concerned with sexual identity and behaviour. The young adults were then invited to summarise Catholic teaching about sexuality. They responded with a list of prohibitions: no sex before marriage, no abortion, no contraception, no IVF, no divorce, no homosexuality, no condoms for AIDS, no tricks. Love made a late and timid entry.

In the ensuing discussion, the teachers dealt knowledgeably and openly with the issues, appealing to the wisdom found within the Catholic tradition, including the writings of the present Pope. They found it hard to find quotations that spoke tellingly to their listeners. But they led the participants into the Catholic tradition in exploratory and respectful ways, treating the young as contributors to and not simply as objects of church teaching.

Later the conversation became fixed on prohibitions. The catalyst was a TV program about Catholic attitudes to the use of condoms by AIDS victims. From the human framing of sexual relationships participants turned to the authority of external teachers and the prohibitions which they issued.

The excellence of this workshop showed the difficulty in passing on a tradition that is unsupported in the wider culture. A distinctive group can expect that the young will see its attitudes as negative in prohibiting practices the culture allows. Its attitudes will also be misrepresented by the culture.

The Catholic Church has an interest in leading young people beyond negative images to a positive Christian understanding of sexuality. This requires good conversation. In good conversation about sexuality, the Christian understanding is presented as a high ideal. When Christian attitudes are opposed to other attitudes as good against evil, instead of as ideal opposed to not ideal, young adults easily feel that their friends, and perhaps themselves, are rejected. They will not then continue the conversation with the tradition.

Good conversation also emphasises what is central to human living. It does not focus on the defects of messy ways of coping with hardship. To attack, for example, the use of condoms by AIDS victims instead of encouraging people in relationships blighted by suffering to nurture their love for one another, condemns young people to see a rich tradition as harsh and distorted.

When entering their tradition through conversation, the young must believe that they can contribute to the wisdom of the group. To stress the unique authority of the elders distracts the young from the rich patterns of human living that tradition commends.

The language in which wisdom is passed on is one of simple words and simple human gesture. The Catholic rhetoric of sexuality—partly legal, partly philosophical, and in part lushly theological—often forgets its roots, which is in a humble language spoken by ordinary people. ■

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archimedes 

Monkey business

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DELVE far into the media to recognise what a difficulty homosexuality presents for the Christian churches and to society in general. It's no less a problem for biology.

In terms of Darwinian evolution, being gay seems both maladaptive and inefficient, going against the grain of maximising your contribution to the next generation. And if there were a skerrick of a genetic component to homosexuality, natural selection should have removed it from the gene pool long ago. Yet estimates of homosexuality remain steady at about ten per cent. This is thousands of times higher than the most prevalent of deleterious genes. So how does homosexuality persist, and at such high levels?

The answer, according to Stanford University biologist Prof. Joan Roughgarden, is that the Darwinian analysis is flawed. It rests on two assumptions which biologists almost never question—that organisms must be either male or female, and that the sole biological purpose of sex is reproduction. In *Evolution's Rainbow* to be published in May and previewed in *New Scientist*, Roughgarden takes issue with both contentions. She argues that sex, even homosexual sex, can be evolutionarily adaptive in ways other than directly through reproduction—for instance, through the establishment and maintenance of relationships useful to the successful rearing of offspring. In a broad survey of animals, and particularly our close relatives, the apes, she finds hundreds of examples. They may be heterosexual, such as female monkeys in India which are deliberately promiscuous, hiding the identity of the father, thus providing offspring general protection from predatory adult males; or they may be homosexual, such as the female bonobos who form cooperative groups, the members of which gather food collectively.

Whether you agree with Roughgarden's analysis or not, it is a fascinating example of how personality and culture affect the genesis of (supposedly) objective scientific ideas. Her thoughts would not, perhaps could not, have occurred to Darwin who spent most of his life as an independently wealthy, middle-class, country gentleman in Victorian England. Darwin had trained for the ministry, wrote books on natural history, and lived with a devoted wife who bore ten children—hardly a man to take issue with conventional church teaching and societal wisdom that sex was solely for procreation.

Roughgarden is from a different milieu. A Harvard graduate, she is an established evolutionary biologist and ecologist at one of America's most respected research institutions. She is also, in her own words, a 'transgendered woman', living in the San Francisco area during a time when it has become a centre of gay awareness and pride. The research into the prevalence of homosexuality throughout the animal kingdom, upon which her argument depends, was undertaken in response to that upsurge of self-confidence. No matter how one may view Roughgarden's theory, her basic arguments are not trivial. They draw attention to the fact that much of our biological theory was formed by people whose viewpoint and knowledge of the biological world was very different from today's.

Roughgarden's ideas have already stirred some controversy in gay and feminist academic communities, because some of the conclusions she draws are eminently debatable. The level of debate will only increase leading up to the release of her book. Not for the first time are the teachings of the church going to be challenged by a scientist. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

the $50 admission fee that reduced the crowd by 10,000. Add to this the refusal to include subsequent Derby winner Elvstroem in the field: although he was beaten narrowly in the Vase on Cox Plate day, he might have stretched his seniors.

On this night, Prancelot, in the colours of Dulcify which won a Cox Plate, led all the way in the first. The second was a 3000 metre race for ordinary horses. The start is at the 1200m mark. Round they go to the post and round again. We backed Tarlan, a jumps as well as a flat winner. He was wide early, but once the jockey got him to the rails in the straight he led thereafter. Freedman and Oliver combined to win the next on Dane Tryst and it was time for the feature race.

Last year's winner Yell, who went on to win three Group One sprints on the trot, was in again. In the spring his form tailed off after a first-up win at the Valley. The three-year-old, highly regarded Delzao was resuming. The rest looked consistent rather than exciting, save for the lightly-raced four-year-old mare Vocabulary. The race was run at a muddling pace. Yell was wide and finished fourth. Super Elegant had the race won but the jockey might have taken it easy, for Vocabulary swooped and scored. In the next race Mardi Gras looked so good coming on to the track that I felt sick for not having backed her. She won. Three quinellas and Tarlan bailed us out. We caught the 59 tram back, wondering what the Club can do to draw a crowd. There is even talk of the night trots going back to the Showgrounds, let alone the furphy of the Cox Plate going to Flemington. Do we really need a second Mackinnon Stakes?

Skite-time: this column wrapped Falbrav last October. He won the biggest race at the Hong Kong International meeting, his fifth Group One for the year. Two-year-old Bago rounded off his season with a six length victory in the Group One Criterium. He topped the European Free Handicap for two-year-olds. Watch for him in this year's classics.

—Peter Pierce

This month's contributors: **John Carmody** is a Sydney medical scientist and opera and music critic; **Morag Fraser** is an adjunct professor in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities at La Trobe University. She was an invited speaker at the RAR conference. **Peter Pierce** is Professor of Australian Literature at James Cook University, Cairns.

capital letter

The inconvenient truth

By any standards it seems a fine kettle of fish. Most of the intelligence gathered by two of the best-equipped nations on earth seems to have been false. False because the agencies were deceived, either by the 'enemy', or by people with an interest in promoting a particular response. False because analysts made wrong deductions as they either ignored evidence and analysis which did not suit their prepossessions, or because they filled in the blank spaces according to their preconceptions, or their feeling of what the target was up to. And they did this long before any idea of pleasing political masters, or the 'customers', came into it.

The customers made clear what they wanted to hear. When this was not the case, they doubted the analysis. Governments demanded that intelligence information be made publicly available so as to justify political decisions already made. The analysis became advocacy, often at the initiative of analysts themselves.

The closer one gets to the customer, the greater the anxiety to please. William Percy, a former senior military spook, gave a nice example to a parliamentary committee last year.

> 'It is my experience that initial assessments (made by the relevant desk officer) often undergo significant changes in tone during their progress up through an organisation, depending on the disposition of the various reviewing officers. A simple example of changes might illustrate the point:
>
> Originator/desk officer: *there is no evidence that*
> Section head: *it is unlikely that*
> Division head: *it is unlikely, but possible, that*
> Branch head: *It is possible that*
>
> Such changes are not incompatible, but they do alter the tone of an assessment.'

In the blame game for the false impressions given by governments about the existence, extent and threat posed by weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, claims that Saddam might arm terrorist groups, and of his links with Islamist organisations, it is almost impossible to find a formal pre-invasion assessment, whether in Australia, Britain or the US, with significant caveats about these findings. Only one intelligence analyst, Australia's Andrew Wilkie, made public his doubts before the invasion, resigning in protest at political misuse of intelligence. Britain's dissenters, Dr David Kelly and Brian Jones, did not voice their frustrations until after the war. While some unnamed American analysts leaked their concerns about the misuse of intelligence, they were swamped by the noise of those 'in the team'.

The public had ample access to information casting doubt on the claims, from other countries, independent experts (including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons inspections teams) and the broader debate. Even though most experts took the existence of some WMDs as read, there was, in Australia, a reasonably informed debate about whether we had a *casus belli*. Yet government could always claim that it had access to secret information to overcome any doubts. Australia's intelligence establishment, which also briefed the Opposition, did not demur.

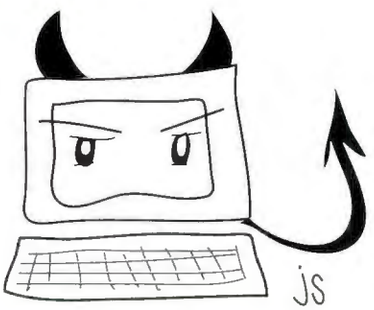
All this they did before the interventions of politicians and spin doctors, or the military who, once set for war, believe that disinformation is a part of operational security. Governments misused the assessments they were given, either via their own intelligence advisers or when directly briefed in Washington, Texas and London. They stressed the information which supported decisions they had made, and dismissed that which did not. 'Might have's became 'had's, tentative findings became conclusive evidence, and assertions by Iraqi dissidents became statements of fact. That's what politicians do. But did they lie? Not in the direct sense. Were they told of caveats on information they were given, or advised if later information undermined earlier assertions? Never directly. Following the 'children overboard' affair, the chances that an official can get to Howard with unpleasant news, particularly in writing, are slim. Howard's office screens everything, and there is no record of whether messages are passed on. Surely, in the prelude to war, senior leaders were reviewing the evidence on a daily basis? Not really. Australia's involvement did not turn on the intelligence information: we were just along for the ride.

There is no great case for Australia to investigate how we got the intelligence on Iraq so terribly wrong. We relied on false intelligence from great and powerful friends, even if our agencies sieved most of it, and rewrote bits from an Australian view. The inquiries in the US and the post-Hutton review will reveal most of the information. The sober but devastating report of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (www.ceip.org/intel) is a taste of what is to come.

For those who wonder about the quality of Australian government, a process so debauched on such an important issue, inspires little confidence. What of mundane issues such as determining higher education or health policies or participating in free trade negotiations, or even routine actions; a government appointment or the settling of a major contract? Is government only soliciting submissions that promote the decisions it wants to make? Decisions are no longer made as ministers argue the pros and cons with their public servants, but determined between the minister and his (or her) advisers where who said what, or what caveats exist is rarely documented. Too often bureaucratic dealings are with the minders, not the minister, and just what the minister knows is never clear. Formal submissions have been 'settled' with the staff before they go up for signing. In a government paranoid about leaks, ministers will not chance an official paper contradicting the ministerial rationale. It's this trend, not just this latest manifestation, that ought to have people worried. ■

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

snapshot



Having a devil of a time

The devil is quick to take up new technology. He is now into e-commerce. His mission: to seduce the Just Man into opening emails that promise him the kingdoms of the world.

The direct approach is unprofitable. The Just Man is too modest to yield to offers to expand or shrink the relevant parts of his body, too healthy to be tempted by cheap drugs, too chaste to lust after a good time with Melanie or Suzie, and too upright to covet the $10 million placed in his bank account by a retired dictator.

But the devil is accustomed to disguising himself as an angel of light. He insinuates guilt, 'You did not answer my email'. He appeals to fear, 'Your last chance to avoid disconnection'; he invokes the spirit of self-sacrifice, 'Important meeting'. When all else fails, he tries compassion, 'Of your pity, assist me'—an appeal from the widow of a now dead dictator to accept the $10 million.

All these wiles the Just Man sees through. But the devil has one more card to play. In the subject heading, he writes 'News Letter'. When his Apple Mac offers him this promise of instant connection and the knowledge of things hidden, the Just Man falls. He opens the message, and finds himself confronted by Suzie offering him unlimited Viagra.

More equal for some

Globalisation is profiting some in Australia, but not all. Australia is a country where poverty goes unnoticed while juicier topics like terrorism are favoured by media.

But the poor are still poor, no matter the strength of the safety net; and the poor rarely benefit no matter how high the budget surplus.

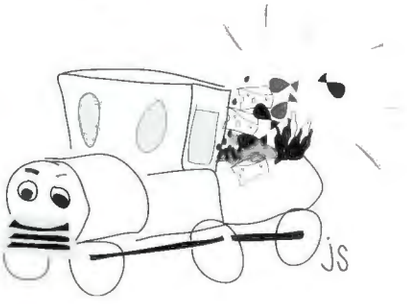
'When this occurs during a time of economic prosperity, it is cause for concern,' says Fr Peter Norden SJ, Policy Director for Jesuit Social Services (JSS).

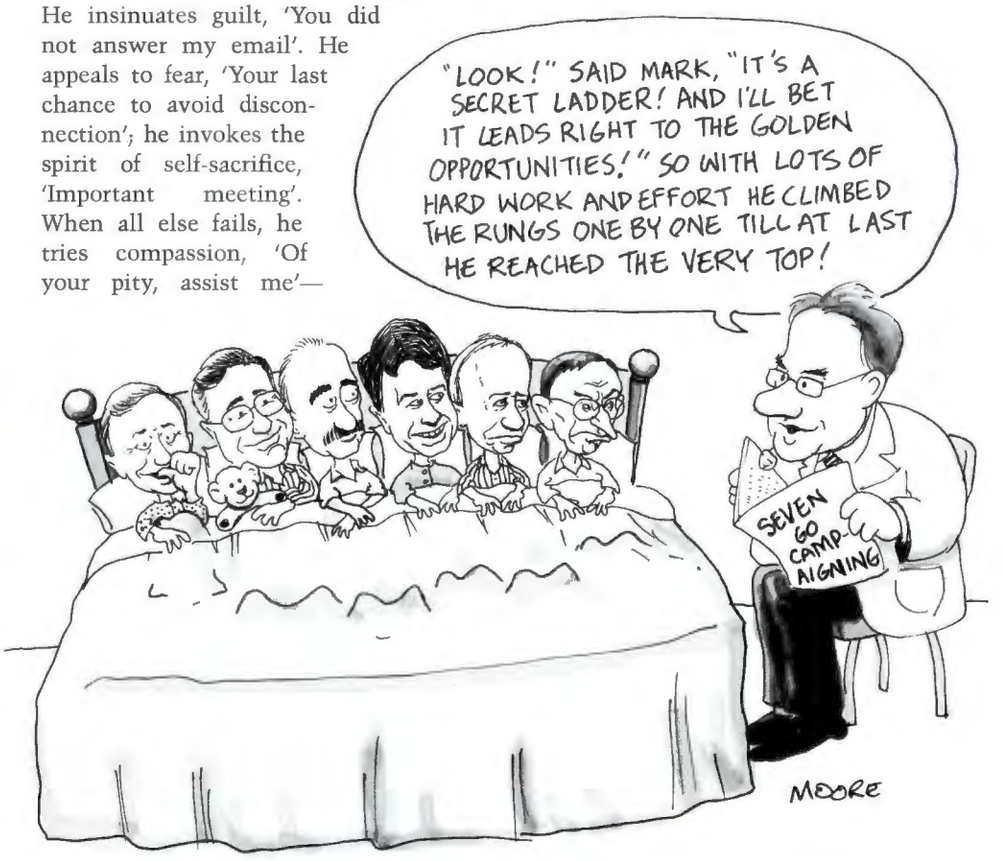
The Ignatius Centre, the policy and research arm of JSS, is to release a report following an ongoing investigation of locational disadvantage, which shows a lack of opportunity for some to access education, employment and reasonable wages.

Community Adversity and Resilience is compiled by Tony Vinson. Tony's professional career has been characterised by a commitment to change and social cohesion, so that all Australians can benefit from the equal distribution of resources.

The mission of JSS is to advocate on behalf of those who do not reap the benefits of living in the lucky country.

The report will be released on 8 March. For copies, or more information, contact JSS on 03 9427 7388 or visit www.jss.org.au.





On track

The menu read rather like the *Twelve Days of Christmas*; 30 sides of smoked salmon, 45kg fillets of beef, 62kg of gourmet cheese, 75kg of barramundi, 240 portions of Maggie Beer pate, 3960 bread rolls, 2600 eggs, 100 cartons of Crown Lager and 1440 bottles of fine red and white wine. A fine menu for a fitting occasion as the *Ghan*—Australia's longest (1.069 km) train—made its inaugural journey. Adelaide to Darwin was the order of the journey, as the two locomotives required for 43 carriages gave Thomas the Tank Engine a run for his money.

Eight chefs and 40 crew hosted guests and passengers, including politicians past and present, train buffs and train spotters.

All on board received a colourful welcome to Darwin, including some partially naked locals who mooned the train as it approached the city. Thankfully, Federal Tourism Minister Joe Hockey was not naked despite losing a wager with train lover Tim Fischer that the link to Darwin would never eventuate. Sometimes a simple hello is more than enough.

Fuel to burn

As far as events in the Place de l'Horloge are concerned, Madame Gauguin is the one who knows all. Although busy about her daily chores, which require her to navigate at great speed the narrow and precipitous village lanes in her Renault Twingo, Madame Gauguin somehow knows who is coming and going, who is parking in the wrong place, and precisely when to address the strangers pausing irresolutely in their quest for the 12th century church further down the ancien chemin, which is also my street.

So, on the freezing fifth day of the new year, when Monsieur Dufours arrives in the middle of the Place de l'Horloge with a truck load of wood and climbs down from his cabin with mobile phone at the ready, Madame Gauguin is at his side.

Monsieur Dufours—a smiling young man with a mop of black hair and a laconic manner—is the one you ring for wood. In the first couple of weeks, my French, face to face, had been holding up pretty well, but I felt tentative about trying myself out on the phone. Putting increasing pressure on this tentativeness, however, was the daily depletion of the wood heap and the continued run of below zero temperatures. Working up to it over a day or two, I rang Monsieur Dufours and, with only a few amiable misunderstandings (no, I assured him, I wasn't travelling from Australia especially to buy wood), he promised to arrive: Vendredi at eight-thirty, which is about when the first light struggles over the mountain. Bring some bois d'allumage—kindling—I added with last minute confidence.

On Friday I am up and ready, having a quick coffee in the pre-dawn darkness. Rue de l'église, my street, is cold and empty. Not a shutter twitches. And the Place de l'Horloge, the length of a cricket pitch away, is silent, its cobblestones gleaming with moisture. Further down the hill, a swathe of bright golden light spills with the aromas of fresh loaves from the narrow doorway of the boulangerie. All of which would have been romantic and appealing if I hadn't been waiting anxiously for Monsieur Dufours—who is nowhere to be seen, not in the silences of 8.30 am, not at bustling 9.00 as the office staff of the Hotel de Ville across the square are arriving, and not at 9.30 when the builders renovating the Galerie d'Arts straggle in.

Directed to my very door by the indefatigable Madame Gauguin, Monsieur Dufours arrives at 10am sharp, looking and acting like a model of punctuality. Well, he is actually—Southern Mediterranean punctuality, a phenomenon I will experience again and again over ensuing weeks.

We shake hands and he walks the few metres back to the Place de l'Horloge to his truck, which he then reverses at great speed, a swashbuckling inch or so away from ancient walls on either side, until it's alongside the steps down to my door. Then he flicks a cavalier lever and the entire mountain of wood, which I had assumed must be for me and perhaps three other customers, cascades onto the narrow laneway, overflows down the steps to the house and washes up against the front door like a lumpy tide.

Monsieur Dufours smiles a dazzler, guns his truck and departs.

The dust from this invasion is still swirling when, at the 12th century church end of the lane, a silver Mercedes appears and, in the other direction, from the square, in a thrilling photo finish, comes the woman who delivers the post in her little van and Madame Gauguin. None of them can get past.

The man in the Mercedes, impeccably suited, already 'quinze minutes en retard', but admirably philosophical, hops out and begins clearing the wood from the ancien chemin. Madame Gauguin and the postie join in. For my part, I attack it with the manic intensity of the one who's to blame. French exclamations and pieces of wood fly everywhere. Soon the way is clear, the mail has got through, the Mercedes is on its way, and Madame Gauguin has gone home panting, pausing only to give directions to some random passerby.

All I have to do now is feed the wood, log by log, into the chute, next to the front door, that drops it into the underground cave. To do this, I need to unlock the hatchway covering the chute, a process requiring une petite clef, the whereabouts of which only Madame Gauguin knows.

Two hours later, all the wood is in the cellar, and I will have to go down and spend another couple of hours stacking it, but first I need kindling. Monsieur Dufours' idea of kindling turns out to be teenage logs as thick as your arm not long severed from the parent bough and so green that the warmth of the fire might very well make them bud, not burn. So I nick into the old cemetery, where there is an abundance of dead wood, and fill a rucksack with twigs and other flammables. I am just mooching home through the village, the rucksack on my back sprouting spindly sticks and stray leaves, when I run into Madame 'Franki'—American, elegant, slim as a stick of kindling.

'Ah ha,' she says, 'a hunter gatherer among us.'

I smile. Like Monsieur Dufours. A dazzler. ■

Brian Matthews is a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Victoria University, presently living and working in France.

Joshua Puls

Thinly veiled

I WAS FOREVER separating students when I was a teacher. It was particularly necessary with high school girls, whose capacity to talk perpetually might one day offer a solution to the world's sustainable energy problems.

Separation is a curiously ineffective thing. When I separated students, it did not affect their friendships, the subject of their conversation, nor, in most cases, the amount of attention they were giving me. They were just a bit further apart.

According to the Concise Oxford, the adjective 'separate' means not much more than 'physically disconnected'. I suppose that is right. When you separate things, or people, or ideas, about the only thing you can control is their physical location, and even that only temporarily. Things that are related will remain so, wherever you might try to move them.

So how do you separate church and state, intimately connected in a variety of ways, and lacking physical manifestations that can be neatly assigned to different sides of a room?

France has recently tackled the problem with typical Gallic pugnacity, planning to outlaw in state schools the wearing of headscarves by Muslim women, skullcaps by Jewish men, and large Christian crosses. (Thanks to popular culture and Madonna in particular, apparently the image of the Son of God hanging on a tree for the salvation of the world is no longer religious, provided the image is small enough).

Perceived by many to be principally an anti-Muslim measure, the proposal has been recommended by President Chirac, and readily embraced by the centre-right Government and a frightening proportion of the still mostly (if only nominally) Catholic French population.

It is a curious development in the land of liberty, equality and fraternity. This is the country that in 1789 embraced the idea that 'No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.' Yet, the Government is justifying its plans by reference to the values of the revolution and the need to uphold the country's secular identity.

In an unusual twist, the French share with the United States the same slightly bizarre thinking of that great architect of civil society, Thomas Jefferson. Although the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* was drafted by the Marquis de La Fayette, apparently he had more than a little assistance from Jefferson, who was then the US Ambassador to France.

Jefferson's enduring hex on church–state relations in western democracies came in 1802, in his *Reply to the Danbury Baptist Association*. The First Amendment to the US Constitution protects, amongst other things, the right to free exercise of religion, and it prohibits the erection of a state church. Referring to that clause, Jefferson wrote to the good folk of Danbury:

'Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof", thus building a wall of separation between church and state.'

In 1987 US Chief Justice Rehnquist called Jefferson's 'wall of separation' a 'misleading metaphor' which had freighted American constitutional history for nearly forty years.

THE PROBLEM IS obvious. Church and state cannot be separated by a wall. They cannot be moved to different parts of civil society, nor to different parts of an individual believer's life, any more than they can be moved to different sides of

a room. Jefferson separated actions and opinions with ease. I dare say Muslim believers may not find it so simple, and perhaps neither ought the rest of us.

In the United States the early citizens sought to shape a society different from the one they had known in England, where religion had for centuries been the basis of discrimination and persecution. The intensely religious men and women who sought and wrote the First Amendment did not want a society where religion had to be walled in; they wanted a political economy in which one's religion would be irrelevant. Don't blame the text for the fundamentalist theocracy that the US has now become; that is largely the fault of the courts and opportunistic politicians.

In a knee-jerk of anti-terrorist fervour, the French Government seems to want religion to be totally private, walled in.

The French have failed to heed the American experience, or at least do not seem to care. In a knee-jerk of anti-terrorist fervour, the French Government seems to want religion to be totally private, walled in. For the French, separation of church and state seems to mean that as you go about your daily life you should not be able to identify what another person's religion is, any more than you could identify what their political persuasion might be.

It is an attempt to protect the secular foundations of French society, but it is misguided. It makes church and state anything but separate. It is the state reaching into the minutiae of the daily life of its citizens, telling them what they may or may not wear. This, you might recall, was one of the oft-cited crimes of the Taliban.

For believers, this debate is about much more than apparel. For many Muslims and Jews and even for some cross-wearing Christians, these are not just customs of dress; they are the ordering of one's life. What you wear is how you pray. As one protest banner cried, 'France, you are my country; Veil, you are my life.'

If Chirac wanted to animate religious politics in France, he could scarcely have devised a better means than this. In eliminating visible religious divisions, the Government will inevitably crystallise and energise invisible ones. How you pray will become part of how you vote; it might also now have a bit more to do with whom you hate.

What then for Australia? Section 116 of our Constitution was drafted with the American First Amendment in mind, and is similar in its wording. It was not given its first thorough treatment by the High Court until the Federal Government sought to silence pacifist Jehovah's Witnesses during World War II. At that time, Chief Justice Latham correctly stated that section 116 is 'based upon the principle that religion should, for political purposes, be regarded as irrelevant'.

And so, by and large, it has been. In Australia, politics has remained mostly and happily free of religion. The 1955 Labor split is the obvious exception, which continues to serve as a reminder of just how ugly religious politics can be. In Australian politics, religious interests have to line up with all the others. Most people could not tell you what if any religion their local members, or even their national leaders, follow. This is not such a bad thing. Fortunately, it is very different from what America has long been and what France may yet become. The result of decades of American effort to erect a wall of separation between church and state is, ironically, a public life saturated with religion. In the United States and now in France, religion is political. It does not get less separate than that.

Perhaps the key to all of this lies in another statement of Chief Justice Latham. Section 116, he said, 'assumes that citizens of all religions can be good citizens, and that accordingly there is no justification in the interests of the community for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion'. Good advice for our times. ■

Joshua Puls is a lawyer and psychologist and is Chaplain of Newman College in the University of Melbourne.

Nicholas Way

Selective collectives

The Federal Government abhors workers using unions to bargain collectively. But there is different thinking for small business.

All political parties agreed. It seemed an eminently sensible reform to enhance the competitive position of small business. The Dawson report, a commitment the Federal Government made to business before the 2001 election to examine how competition law was working, handed down a recommendation to streamline the process by which small business can collectively bargain and boycott in its dealing with big business.

It was little wonder the Federal Government pounced on this recommendation, one of the few 'headline grabbers' to emerge from this eight-month review of the Trade Practices Act (TPA). It appealed to small business—one of the Federal Government's core constituencies that Liberal Party founder Sir Robert Menzies identified as being part of the 'forgotten people'. Nearly half a century later, when giving the 1996 Sir Robert Menzies lecture, Prime Minister John Howard tapped the same political sentiment. 'Menzies' success lay in building a broadly based constituency at the heart of which were the 'forgotten people'—Australians of the mainstream who felt excluded by the special interest elitism of the Liberals and from Labor's trade union dominance ... (They) include small business people who want to expand, invest and employ more Australians.' In mythology, if not reality, the cornerstore owner is an integral part of the heart and soul of the conservative side of politics.

What this commitment to small business means, in words if not reality, is that the conservatives see themselves as the natural defender of a constituency that often perceives itself as being squeezed by bureaucracy, big business and, of course, trade unions. When it comes to competition law, the 'villain' is big business. It is Coles Myer and Woolworths versus the cornerstore.

The Federal Government did not spell it out quite like that after the Dawson report was handed down in April last year. Criticism of big business was implicit, not explicit. Treasurer Peter Costello's press release put it succinctly: 'Rural and regional stakeholders and small business will welcome the introduction of a notification process to facilitate collective bargaining by small businesses dealing with large businesses.' But the Minister for Small Business and Tourism, Joe Hockey, was more effusive. In a press release titled, 'Victory for small business' (meaning a loss for big business?), he said: 'In a significant rebalancing of the relationship between small business and big business, 1.1 million small businesses, including farming bodies, will be able to collectively negotiate with big business. For the first time, local corner stores will be able to compete with suppliers like Coles Myer on price, while retail tenants should be able to better negotiate collectively with big landlords.

'Collective bargaining by smaller firms, where it does not have an anti-competitive effect, empowers small businesses to take on the larger firms. Measures include the introduction of a notification process for collective bargaining by small businesses, the quick turnaround of applications (14 days) and reduced fees.' (The legislation, incidentally, is still in the pipeline.)

The release is more significant for what it doesn't say than for what it does. For implicit in all of Hockey's comments are two underlying themes. First, that while much of big business pays lip service to competition, in truth they want to limit competition. The history of Australian business, especially before the Whitlam Labor Government passed the TPA in 1974, was a history of monopolies, oligopolies or cartels, often with government connivance or even support (the two airlines policy is an obvious

example). Certainly that famed comment by 18th century economist and philosopher Adam Smith seems apposite: 'People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices.' Second, that for small business, bargaining collectively is essential, not just for its wellbeing but its survival, when confronting the powerful commercial interests at the big end of town.

What the Federal Government is saying is that there is a power imbalance between big and small business. It fits neatly, and deeply, into the party's psyche—the guardian angel of the forgotten people. At the same time this Government has consistently argued, since returning to power in 1996, that any power imbalance between employers and employees is largely the figment of union bosses' imagination. On the labor front, employers, big employers included, can be trusted. Sure, not all of them play by Queensberry rules, but, in the main, businesses value their employees and treat them equitably.

THINK ABOUT IT. Small business is encouraged to act collectively—a potent weapon in dealing with big business. But employees, with minimum rights enshrined, should trust their employer. Indeed, as the former Workplace Relations Minister Tony Abbott once said, employees should see bad bosses like bad fathers or husbands—'they tend to do more good than harm'.

In the public furore that followed that comment, Abbott retreated from this position. But it was Dunkirk, not Stalingrad. He was always returning to the theme that the cooperative workplace, the caring employer, the loyal, committed worker, was the norm. While he held the Workplace Relations portfolio from January 2001 to October 2003 he articulated this position with conviction and passion. He used his speeches, arguably more than any predecessor, Liberal or Labor, to explain the philosophical underpinnings of the Federal Government's approach to workplace relations.

IN A SPEECH TITLED 'Reflections of a New Boy' to the H.R. Nicholls Society, in March 2001, just two months into holding the portfolio, he said: 'There are few more heavily regulated activities than dealings between employee and employer. Australia's workplace relations system assumes that workers and bosses are incapable of managing differences, that workers are always weak and gullible, bosses are always greedy and manipulative, that daily relations need to be governed by complex rules, and that the inevitable disagreements must be resolved by someone else. I'm sure Australians are better than that. Good workers are always in demand. Most bosses try hard to keep the people they've trained. Even conceding a few bad apples, do we really need a system that assumes the worst of the people in it?'

He later added: 'The Government believes that human enterprises work best when participants talk among themselves first rather than to third parties. Workers, managers and owners should be talking to each other rather than to unions, employer organisations, commissioners, judges and courts at the first hint of a disagreement. We're fundamentally opposed to lazy management that would prefer to talk to a union organiser than its own workforce.'

What Abbott and his colleagues believe, and what they argue unions either don't believe or don't understand, is that people in a company, from the manager down to the cleaner, have more uniting them than dividing them. The real enemy is the competitor down the street, not the boss in the carpeted corner office. And most workers know and appreciate this. '[The] preoccupation with beating the boss rather than beating the competition means that some union leaders would rather see a business close than compromise their demands. If a business subsequently complains that its cost structure is too high, the standard union response is to reduce competition rather than boost productivity because the competition unions understand is between capital and labor rather than between business and business,' he told the Confectionary Manufacturers annual industry lunch in December 2001.

Where this position leads Abbott, and the Federal Government (his successor, Victorian Kevin Andrews, who refused an interview for this article, is, judging by his press statements, on the same wavelength), is inexorably to a position where unions have no role in the workplace. Workers will be more productive, cooperative, flexible and their morale higher without unions. How else can this comment by Abbott, made to Commerce Queensland in August 2002, be interpreted. 'I'm pleased that as well as hundreds of thousands of (collective) agreements with unions, ... that we now have an increasing percentage of (non-union collective) agreements ... I'd like to see that continue,

and develop, and expand in the months and years ahead. Not because I have anything against unions. Responsible unions have a lot to contribute to Australia. *But because I believe that in the end it is impossible to run business, it is impossible to mange an operation, without having a direct relationship with your staff. And if what you want is a direct relationship with your staff then what you should do is negotiate directly with them, cut out the middle men, and try and go for agreements that reflect the fundamental bonds of trust and confidence that should exist between workers and the managers at any particular workplace.'* (my emphasis) In policy terms, this approach has been most evident in the Federal Government's fervent commitment to Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs)—individual contracts between employers and employees—and a policy that small business (20 or less employees) should be exempt from unfair dismissal laws. (This proposal has failed to get Senate approval.)

Unions and Labor simply decry this position as old-fashioned Tory union bashing. While there is an element of that in Federal Government utterances, especially when it comes to the left-wing Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and the Construction, Forestry, Mining & Energy Union (the only two large unions that still wield genuine industrial clout), it also reflects a belief that unions—which emerged as the vehicle by which workers collectively responded to the excesses of the industrial revolution—are relics of a view that society is based on class and therefore no longer relevant. To steal Leon Trotsky's memorable line, they should be consigned 'to the dust heap of history'.

That the Federal Government has implicitly taken this position at this time in our history is difficult to comprehend. Unions, as the Federal Government tells us ad nauseam, are in decline. Possibly terminal decline. Union numbers have halved in the past two decades for many reasons: their own ineptitude, the changing nature of work and better and emboldened employers to name some. Industrial activity is at historically low levels. Workplaces, union and non-union, are more productive.

So does it reflect a government unsure of its liberal principles? Does it mean the right to collective action is the preserve of some—small business—but not others—unionised workplaces? How does this dovetail with Abbott's opening paragraph in that same speech to the H.R. Nicholls Society: 'The Liberal Party's animating principle is freedom: not absolute freedom because freedom can only exist in a context of order, stability and fairness—still, as far as it is reasonably possible, individual, social and commercial freedom.' Freedom is the 'light on the hill' to which we always aspire and the yardstick by which we wished to be judged.' It is a sentiment none of his colleagues would quibble with.

In this context surely freedom encompasses the right to join a union, especially for Andrews and Abbott, practising Catholics no doubt aware of *Rerum Novarum*, and, in the later case, an unabashed devotee of the late B.A. Santamaria. In years past, unions enforced closed shops. So, too, did employers. Today, with a few notable exceptions (CBD building sites), union membership is voluntary. Many employers, too, chose to negotiate with unions, in part respecting their employees' choice to be in a union. While the Federal Government would argue, vehemently, that it does not oppose the right of workers to join a union, the continual stream of statements emanating from Canberra questioning the legitimacy of unions undermines their position in society. It is not subtle. Unions, big and small, militant and passive, left and right, are all lumped in the same basket.

When the Premium Group, a group of about 300 dairy farmers in south-east Queensland, got permission from the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) to negotiate collectively with the milk processor Pauls in August 2001, no one on the conservative side of politics railed against this collective action. Nor did they when agreement was reached. Indeed, quite the opposite, judging by a statement issued by federal Agriculture Minister, Warren Truss, in April 2003. In a move eerily similar to Labor handouts to their union constituency, he dipped into taxpayers' money to provide $100,000 for workshops designed to help dairy farmers bargain collectively. 'The ACCC's decision to allow dairy farmers to bargain collectively is a fair and sensible one, and should redress some of the imbalance in market power currently present in the dairy industry,' he said, without a hint of embarrassment. No doubt Pauls' workers got a similar handout to bargain collectively. ■

Nicholas Way is a senior writer for *Business Review Weekly*.

Barcelona

Thieves are brazen we were warned.
Women hold their bags tight.
Bikes roar impatience along the narrow streets.
On Las Ramblas an angel shows us mercy

for a price, Superman fails to fly
and a juggler drops his spinning balls.
The crowd drifts on.
An African in dreadlocks plays the red piano;
people dance his madness,
eyes ready for the next escape.
Next to the pea and thimble trickster
sits a man, his upper body bare
so we can see the awful scarring
where his arms used to be.

Sagrada Familia takes our breath away.
Gaudi's temple flows,
lines almost finish then emerge
as fractals of trees growing tall to fill the nave.
We see the birth of Christ,
wise men on their knees, animals emerging from the rock.
On the façade of the Passion, the columns mimic bones.
Sacrifice is hard and ugly work.
Peter weeps.
Christ is crucified,
limbs are lost and Pilate turns away.

On Las Ramblas at dusk Dracula rises from his coffin
to bite the necks of passing girls
for half a euro.
A coal miner shows the way.
The pretty little sunflower
stretches up towards the light
though it is nearly dark.
The man with no arms is there again
with a singlet on.
It is cooler now
and a long sleeved shirt would be of little use.

—Jorie Manefield Ryan

Talking to Auntie

Something is on your back doorstep
and you don't realise how big it is.

With her cataracts removed
her grey slacks have turned blue

and her stories become slanted
when my mother walks in the room.

Plunger Pat, Shine Ryan, Birregurra Bill
She slips into a church that smells of onions

a man who dined with his mother
instead of his wife each night.

Like hot tea filled to the brim
I've inherited a world

that doesn't guarantee the present.
In a kitchen bathed with light

she offers me dry biscuits
another blind auntie smiling beneath her cataracts.

I feel like I'm cutting my throat
if I don't eat some potatoes each day.

I ask for stories and she gives me facts
so strange, they must be fiction.

Everything she owns is moored to memory
passed around to the music of footy commentary.

Do you want another cup of tea?
No, well you're not a tea drinker then.

I was thirteen when she gave me a cigar
behind the Hummocks at Killarney Beach.

Her skin is wrinkled
as a farm in Tyrendarra

his enlistment at lunch
a soldier settlement in Tarrone

a brick veneer in Koroit.
Like entries in a farmer's diary

her stories shadow Aboriginal history.
She lives between the friends who have died

and cards each fortnight. Making do
collapsing after two beers on a hot afternoon.

—Brendan Ryan

Jan Forrester

Peace correspondents: The new reporters

Conventional journalism portrays war as a zero sum game, a series of violent exchanges between contending parties. 'War reporting' requires clear winners and losers, and the media interprets the events contributing to conflict accordingly.

A SMALL NUMBER OF journalists are experimenting with a different approach. 'Peace-building journalism' reframes conflict into more complex patterns of interlocking fears, inequalities and resentments, which need equally complex solutions. Rather than seeking someone to blame, reporters examine the underlying political, economic and cultural causes of violence, factors that must be addressed before a conflict can be brought to an end.

Today, as ever, journalists reporting from conflict zones are subjected to military and political propaganda. 'Peace-building' reporters have taken on the challenge of covering the complex reality of conflicts—and their possible solutions.

Rahmad Nasution has worked for the official Antara news agency in Jakarta for over a decade, reporting on some of Indonesia's major internal conflicts. Unfortunately, he hasn't been short of material. Since the fall of President Suharto's New Order regime in 1998, brutal fighting and bloodshed has blighted many Indonesian provinces, including Maluku, where Nasution reported on the communal violence that raged among Christians and Muslims between 1999 and 2001. It is estimated that some 5,000 to 10,000 people died and 500,000 to 750,000 were displaced. Western-style objectivity does not appeal to Rahmad Nasution. The stakes are far too high for detachment.

'Following the fall of the Suharto regime, media workers in Indonesia again enjoy freedom of the press,' says Nasution, 'but many of them fail to exercise that freedom wisely. In reporting conflicts on Ambon and Maluku, Christian and Muslim journalists split along sectarian lines. They therefore failed to dig out the root causes of instability in those areas.'

Others failed too. In January 2000, the *Time-Asia* website reported that 'Religious differences have turned the Moluccas [Maluku] into a battlefield, filled with hate and the prospect of more violence'. This is the 'tinderbox' theory, familiar from analyses of conflict in Africa and the former Yugoslavia—the idea that deep antagonisms between ethnic groups smoulder continuously, ready to erupt into violence at any time.

In reporting the conflict in northern Maluku, Nasution chose to analyse growing economic rivalries between long-term residents, mainly Christians, and migrating newcomers who were primarily Muslims. 'Conflict in Maluku found expression through religion, which was used by elites engaged in power struggles in Jakarta and Maluku to fuel chaos. However, its causes are not religious but lie in socio-economic and political factors which needed addressing', says Nasution.

'The presence of internally displaced people with physical and psychological problems is one of the crucial matters in any conflict [ridden] area. I prefer telling stories about the other side of their lives, those who still work hard to feed their families or those—especially women and children who are the main victims of any conflict—who have released themselves from the grip of revenge and bitterness. This is part of my strategy to help cut the circle of violence. I will not conceal the bitterness of the conflict or the death toll and information on local fighting, but the way I write the background information may be different from those who apply "war journalism".'

Peace-building journalism has gained a tenuous hold amongst journalists in Indonesia, including those working for leading media outlets, as well as carving out a small niche among Western journalists reporting from conflict zones across the world. Jake Lynch is an international TV and press reporter and co-director of the UK-based journalism think tank, Reporting the World. He lectures at the annual Peace-Building Media Summer School at Sydney University, which has attracted journalists, NGO and mediation workers since its inception three years ago.

'Peace-building journalism focuses on process as well as events,' Lynch says. Peace-building journalism transcends the bipolar dynamic which merely asks 'Who will win, who will lose?'

'The task of journalists is also to pursue other visions of possible outcomes that are held in a community and find out who is working for peace and how', he says. 'In peace building a journalist is not a detached commentator but an involved communicator who believes their audience has a role in solving problems.'

It is the role of journalist as peace seeker, if not peace maker, which galls opponents of peace building media.

It is the role of journalist as peace seeker, if not peace maker, which galls opponents of peace building media. In a celebrated outburst which appears on the Reporting for Peace website (www.reportingtheworld.org.uk), BBC Reporter David Loyn dismissed the idea of journalists' involvement in conflict resolution. 'That is not for us,' he writes. 'It is the work of a monk. And if you want to resolve conflict and make peace then join the United Nations. I will be outside the gates reporting on your efforts, if they turn out to be a story ... Our job as reporters is only to be witnesses to the truth ... Once we step away from pursuing the truth, then we are lost in an area of moral relativism which threatens the whole business of reporting.' Christopher

Kremmer, Australian foreign affairs journalist and author of *The Carpet Wars: A Journey Across the Islamic Heartlands*, sees peace-building journalism as a legitimate extension of existing journalistic practice, encouraging a diversity of views. 'If we can have war correspondents reporting conflict, why not have peace correspondents exploring solutions?' he says. However, Kremmer argues that there should be limits to a journalist's role in any conflict: 'Peace journalists should be aware that they, like all journalists, are susceptible to manipulation by political and economic interests. While retaining their own beliefs they should continue to respect journalistic conventions of accurate, penetrating and fair reporting, rather than

> trying to manage outcomes. Truth may sometimes be more important than peace.'

In the Indonesian province of Aceh, where the locals are wedged between the separatist Free Aceh movement, Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM), and military occupation, Aya Muchtar has tried a lateral approach to peace building. She was a community mediation worker involved in peace-building strategies with community and religious leaders in several of Indonesia's conflict zones. Speaking from the United States' mid-west, where she is now a postgraduate media student, Muchtar describes how she tried to tailor strategies to the local situation, making use of local media. In Aceh, local radio stations had resorted to music-only programming to avoid trouble with the authorities. Muchtar trained community and religious leaders in basic radio techniques and pushed them to approach the radio stations to present talk programs.

'We encouraged them to introduce 'educational' discussions. One topic was corruption, which is an issue in Aceh. Rather than a frontal attack on the local administration we produced a short 'soapie' and called for community discussion on how to prevent corruption and what it does to the local community. We hoped to encourage an Acehnese belief that this radio station belonged to them, because if it was seen to be the voice of the people neither the military nor GAM would attack it.' Muchtar is pragmatic and acknowledges building community in an active conflict zone is a long and difficult process.

According to Jake Lynch, peace-building media resists defining groups of people in a conflict as either worthy or unworthy. 'Kosovo is the greatest example I can think of where the term "the Serbs" became a portmanteau of abuse, so that the Serbian population of Kosovo were seen as guilty by association with the Serbian paramilitary gangs.'

Christopher Kremmer acknowledges that the situation in Afghanistan prior to 2001 predisposed many journalists to choose sides. 'In Afghanistan, all journalists have had to confront the temptation to choose sides among the factions. Only a minority resisted completely. Many journalists saw things through the Tajik commander Ahmed Shah Massoud's eyes. For most, he was a charismatic figure and, relatively speaking, a decent human being compared with other key figures waging the military struggles', Kremmer says. 'The Taliban, because of their intolerance, faced a gathering consensus against them by journalists, but this was not initially shared by NGOs, who needed to continue working with local Afghans. A journalist's primary responsibility however [is] to the audience back home, and so naturally, the dysfunctional tyranny of the Taliban encouraged a tendency to demonise them, which intensified greatly post-September 11.'

The push for bigger audiences also influences reporting styles. Aya Muchtar remembers a long line of overseas journalism trainers who have gone to Indonesia armed with the values of independence, objectivity and truth in reporting. 'Since I have come to the US to do media studies I have noticed that, to reach the market they want, journalists here can be just as subjective in their reporting as back home.' ■

Jan Forrester is a media consultant and freelance writer. Rahmad Nasution will spend 2004 in Australia as a media studies postgraduate student.

David Holdcroft

Common thread

WHILE MANY OF US in Australia in late January were lamenting the end of our summer holidays, considering Lleyton Hewitt's prospects in the Open or reflecting on Steve Waugh's contribution to Australian cricket, in India a tide of humanity was on the move. In their saris, salwar kameez, kurtas, t-shirts, trousers, lunghis and banians, people from Assam to Kerala, from Gujarat to Jharkhand, along with others from around the world, were gathering in Mumbai for the World Social Forum (WSF).

The crowd was a kaleidoscope of colour and sound, reflecting the variety of languages and cultures of the participants. Every group had its coterie of pounding drums and bells: everywhere there was dance and movement. Few conforming corporate suits and ties here: this was a march of the Dalits (the lowest of the major caste groups), the Adivasis and Nagas (two of India's principle indigenous groups), the farmers, fishers and rickshaw pullers, transvestites and peace activists, the marginalised from India and the world, drawn to five days of debate, discussion, and cultural performance by the Forum's slogan 'Another World is Possible'.

Conceived around a kitchen table in Paris four years ago, the WSF was envisaged as an international forum for people in civil society who share a desire and commitment to shaping a world centred upon the human person. It aims to counter-balance the World Economic Forum held in Switzerland each January and opposes the domination of neo-liberalist values, the flow of capital as the determining factor in international relations, as well as any form of imperialism. The WSF styles itself as a 'non-organisation', neither a neat political platform nor a process in which the participants are required to come to agreement or adopt common positions. There are no conference declarations thrashed out around the committee table. Rather, the idea is to create a space for open ended discussion of social and economic alternatives to capital-driven globalisation, for sharing experiences and creating networks, for creating friendships and alliances.

The founders, Francisco Whitaker, from the Brazilian Bishops' Justice and Peace Commission and Bernard Cassen, the president of ATTAC in France (an international movement for democratic control of financial markets and their institutions), took just six months to bring the idea to reality. The first Forum, held in January 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, attracted 20,000 people. Its success guaranteed a world stage for the politics of transformation. The original organisers drafted a Charter of Principles and set up an International Committee consisting of more than a hundred delegates from NGOs, associations and movements around the world, including representatives from Caritas Internationalis, Oxfam, Greenpeace and Corporate Watch. The Forum process now includes regional meetings as well as an annual world gathering. The meeting in Mumbai was the fourth such gathering, and the first to be held outside Brazil. Its scale was enormous: over the five days, 100,000 people took part in some 12 conferences, 36 panel debates, 1060 seminars and workshops in rooms and halls seating anywhere from 50 to 4000. Each night a plenary session at the main open air stage attracted tens of thousands. Scheduled and unscheduled cultural performances continued day and night on the ten stages set up throughout the centre.

IN THE MIDST OF THESE events recurring themes emerged: the central place of women as agents of global change, the debilitating infection of patriarchy in religion and culture, the profound consequences of the war in Iraq for future world relations, the need for effective accountability mechanisms to monitor international movements of capital, and the role of poverty in undermining human rights. The quality of debate

Adivasis perform at the indigeous people's seminar.

The Tamil Nadil Antique Percussionists Union march as part of the SAPI demonstration.

was high, yet the overwhelming impression was one of ordinary people taking the opportunity to share their experiences. An evening seminar heard the moving testimony of a young Bhutanese refugee growing up in a camp in Nepal. Similarly, a young Dalit women spoke of repeated and systematic rapes in her village at the hands of upper-caste men, who justify their actions as a manifestation of the divine will. These stories, simply put, weighed as powerfully as any intellectual discourse. Other testimonies of dance and music conveyed the importance of performers' cultures and values, forging a new unity among the outcast and marginalised.

I attended the Forum as part of a large delegation convened by two Indian Jesuits, Joe Xavier and Louis Prakash. The group—the South Asian Peoples' Initiative (SAPI)—enabled some 1650 of the poorest and most marginalised people in India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to take part in the meeting. They hosted 17 seminars on topics as far ranging as indigenous rights in the Asia-Pacific to housing for tea-plantation workers in Sri Lanka.

Billeted in schools and institutions across Mumbai, the delegation met each day at breakfast before moving to the forum proper. At the end of the day we returned for a more leisurely (but still chaotic) dinner, afterwards chatting in smaller groups about the day's events.

Such an initiative raises a number of questions concerning the role of religious groups in a multi–faith and pluralist world. SAPI grew from the desire of the Jesuits in India to faithfully represent the poor and marginalised people with whom they work. Because of the diverse nature of the group, however, SAPI could not associate itself with any one particular religious, cultural or ethnic group. It was the creation of a secular organisation that best enabled the Jesuits to carry out this aspect of their mission to the poor and marginalised.

At a meeting of SAPI delegates at the end of the week it was agreed that, by ourselves, we could do little in the way of changing the world, whereas united anything is possible. One Dalit performer spoke of his joy not only to have performed in front of the world but also to have felt for the first time a closeness between Adivasi and Dalit. A young Jesuit recalled the Pope's call for global solidarity and the importance of creating new metaphors, narratives and symbols capable of energising societies for a more humane world. Having spoken of the power of the symbolic, however, he then stressed the importance of action; 'It is one thing to talk about solidarity and quite another to live it. We have not only lived a typical discourse on solidarity, we have seen it in practice'.

I left the WSF with similar thoughts. What is it that brought this huge and diverse group of people together so forcefully? Was it just the dream for a better world? Or perhaps the ambition for otherwise unattainable political clout? While there were certainly political demonstrations and manifestos presented, most delegates simply wished to tell their stories—in words, dance or theatre, or through their presence—and to have those stories heard and acknowledged. The global narrative has no room for these people, whose values are superfluous to the quest for economic growth.

The violence of war, rape and forced eviction comes only at the end of a long process of cultural and social disenfranchisement. Ordinary people do not have inherent disagreements with corporate elites, but resent the stripping of meaning from their lives. A glimpse of freedom unleashes questions and powerful energies.

A delegate from Canada felt that his country had become anaesthetised by the dominant ideological discourse and dumbed down meaningful public debate. He described people in his country as tired. One cannot help wondering whether the same has happened in Australia. In an atmosphere where the divide between rich and poor gets wider, where the ideology of practical reconciliation overrides the rights and hopes of indigenous people, and where we persist with an inhumane, complacent and costly treatment of asylum seekers, one wonders whether there is space for the powerless to give voice, and value, to their experience. The World Social Forum represented a significant victory for civil society over political partisanship, left or right. We could do well to become more invested in it. ■

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Delegates at the SAPI opening briefing.

The SAPI delegates gather.

David Glanz

United they stand

CYNICS TRY TO dismiss the movement against corporate globalisation as an indulgence, a game enjoyed by activists in Europe and Latin America. The fourth World Social Forum (WSF), held for the first time in the Indian city of Mumbai (Bombay) in January, proved them wrong. Asia embraced the movement and the movement embraced Asia.

The WSF is further evidence that the phenomenon which exploded onto the streets of Seattle at the World Economic Forum in 1999—where tens of thousands demanded the end of Third World debt and the abolition of sweatshops—is continuing to develop and grow. In 2003, 80,000 attended the WSF in Porto Alegre, Brazil. This year, 120,000 descended on Goregaon, in the poor northern suburbs of Mumbai.

The site was a huge, empty industrial complex—machines removed and jobs lost because of corporate globalisation. For ten hours each day for four days, roads through the site were choked with a river of protesters. Union members, Dalits (untouchables), Bhutanese refugees, South Korean revolutionary socialists, HIV/AIDS activists, anti-privatisation groups, women's organisations, Indian farmers campaigning against debt and many more paraded, danced and sang their way through the dust.

Filled with the spirit of tens of thousands of South Asian activists, the WSF became a festival of the oppressed.

Choo Chon Kai from Malaysia was impressed by the marches and the chanting on the street. 'We hardly ever see that in Malaysia', he said. Jagan Devara from Bangalore in India said the WSF was a 'great formation of what we have all been doing. It is great to see so many people working in the same direction'. Many Indian activists said that this had been the first time they had gained a sense of the size and diversity of the movement in their own country—an enormous boost to their confidence.

Each day there were more than 220 seminars and workshops, the largest drawing up to 5000 people. The seminar on water and food security, for example, attracted 4000 to hear speakers from India, Latin America, and south-east Asia describe a global water crisis. Corporations like Coca Cola were stealing communities' water by drilling the bedrock and mining it, while every eight seconds a child died from drinking dirty water. The World Trade Organisation had recently targeted water as a commodity to be bought and sold on the market. Only the rich would be able to drink clean water. Speakers demanded that access to water be recognised as a basic human right.

THERE WERE MANY other forums dealing with important social problems, but in the wake of the US–led invasion of Iraq, war dominated the debate. The tone was set by Indian author Arundhati Roy at the opening ceremony when she declared, 'We must not only support the resistance in Iraq. We must be the resistance in Iraq ... we must focus our collective wisdom on one project—the new American century.' The movement had to fight imperialism, she said, whether it came in the form of cruise missiles or World Bank chequebooks. To cheers, she concluded: 'We must consider ourselves at war.'

Demonstrators protest landmine use.

Left to right: Alfredo Zepeda SJ from Mexico; Vaillant Paulo Sergio SJ from Brazil; Cristina Manzanedo from Entreculturas, Spain; Ricardo Falla SJ, an anthropologist from Guatemala; Suresh Chitrapu from Mangalor, India.

At one seminar, a Kia car worker from South Korea explained how he had built anti-war action at work. He and a handful of others had campaigned around the factory with a petition. Not only did nearly everyone sign, but 300 workers bought t-shirts proclaiming their opposition to the war and others gave money for an anti–war advert to be published in a local paper.

Ruth Russell from Australia, who was a human shield in Iraq last year, told delegates: 'Syria, Iran—wherever they attack next—come with me, as I'll be there if the Australian government is involved.'

Indian Marxist Achin Vanaik reminded people that over the long run, no anti-colonial war had ever been lost. British Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn declared, 'You can build weapons that kill or you can build a better world—but you can't do both.'

Protest for disabled children.

ALONGSIDE SOLIDARITY WITH the Iraqi people, many raised the call for solidarity with Palestine. Israeli activist Michael Warshawsky said, 'Palestine is today the symbol in the anti–war and anti–globalisation movement because it is a symbol of resistance as well as of oppression. People are raising the Palestinian flag as the older generation raised the Vietnamese flag.'

The call to global resistance was reinforced by speakers from poor countries who argued that no government could be trusted. Ji Ungpakorn, from the Thai group Workers' Democracy, said that Vietnam had criticised the war, but continued to impose harsh neo-liberal policies on its people. China had banned anti-war rallies.

An activist from the new union movement in the Indian state of West Bengal attacked the Communist Party (Marxist) state government which mouthed anti-imperialist slogans but which had pushed massive user-pays programs and used the police to attack striking workers. 'We call the chief minister the Blair of Bengal.'

Throughout the Forum, momentum gathered for a global day of action. An open meeting of hundreds of activists agreed on a date, 20 March, and about 45 radical left parties—with representatives from every continent—issued a statement calling for the biggest possible turnout. As the WSF's own daily paper put it: 'After three days of high octane political debate and demonstrations, it appears that the WSF has evolved into a dress rehearsal of the anti-Bush and anti-war energy that is set to burst on the streets of the world's towns.' At a final rally of 30,000 people in central Mumbai, Chris Nineham, from the British anti-capitalist group Globalise Resistance, reinforced the point with a call to action on 20 March.

Last year, the WSF was the catalyst for the global anti-war protests that brought more than ten million on to the streets. This year, tens of thousands of activists headed home from Mumbai determined to show that the world still says no to war. ■

David Glanz is a Melbourne writer.

Cuban rhythms

STEPPING INTO CUBA is like stepping back in time. It is testament to what the world looked like before skyscrapers and suburbia, concrete and city lights.

Cuba is the kind of place where it doesn't matter what you do, just being there is enough. Don't see it through the eyes of a guide book. Leave your hotel room and go out and discover the real Cuba.

Walk the streets until you find a café with a band. The music is so rich and heavy it seeps through doors and windows out onto the streets. It drowns you: vibrant, passionate, and melancholic. Find a seat in the shade and drink it in. The cocktails are good. Ernest Hemingway favoured mojitos and daiquiris.

The vibrant colours, music and street scenes, while mesmerising, belie a darker reality. Cuba is dying. Facades literally crumble before your eyes. Cars lie abandoned. The locals can't afford the food served to tourists, and survive on food rationing.

Despite this the Cuban spirit is alive—friendly, vibrant, loud, cheeky, smiling—in every sense of the word. ■

Jacqueline Dalmau is undertaking a Masters in Journalism at Bond University, Queensland.

Cuba

summer quiz results

—Lucille Hughes

Congratulations!

Congratulations to our two Summer Quiz Masters, M. Hastings, Watsons Bay, NSW and L. Bittinger, Mill Park, VIC. They each receive a copy of Gideon Haigh's *Uncyclopedia*, courtesy of Text Publishing. For those tortured souls still scouring the net, the answers are reprinted here.

1. Ambane-Lai was a half-crazed shaman and freemason, the hero of a play entitled *The Shaman of Siberia* which was written by Catherine the Great of Russia.
2. (i) *Villette* by Charlotte Brontë; (ii) *Of a Boy* by Sonya Hartnett; (iii) *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* by Laurence Sterne; (iv) *How To Be Good* by Nick Hornby.
3. John Newton (1725–1807), a slave ship captain who was converted and became a Methodist minister. He also wrote *Amazing Grace*.
4. There are different estimates. Based on 100 billion stars, it would take you 3000 years. With 200 billion stars, 6000 years, and 12,000 years if there are 400 billion stars in the Milky Way.
5. Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968). Associated with the Dada, Surrealist and conceptual art movements.
6. Both are English writers born in 1839.
7. The Female Operatives Hall.
8. (i) David D'Alessandro, president of John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance.

(ii) Simon Crean, former Leader of the Opposition, on 2 December 2003.

(iii) Plato (c. 429–347 BC), *Republic*, pt. Iv, bk. Viii. 562. Cornford's translation.

9. Michael Wendon (100 and 200 metres freestyle).
10. Between 1820 and 1920, 35,000,000 immigrants entered the United States of America.
11. A transaction designed to avoid tax—a term commonly used in Indian English.
12. (i) a structure which induces an electrical current to run over its external 'skin', leaving the interior free of electrical charge.

(ii) Sets of curves produced by a procedure of repeated sub-division.

(iii) Part of the connective structure of the brain associated with the optic thalamus.

13. Underground truffle-like fungi which are common around the roots of grasses and shrubs in ridge-top sclerophyll forests of south-eastern Victoria.
14. Bobby Kennedy.
15. (i) David Hardaker and Deb Masters; (ii) 'Lucien Leech-Larkin and the Jesuit Conversion'.
16. John Howard's announcement before his 64th birthday that he would not be retiring as Prime Minister before the next election.
17. Peter Costello by Mark Latham.
18. The dark yeasty spread was developed as a by-product of the beer brewing process during the first half of the 20th century. Prohibition, which banned the production of alcoholic beverages in the US, deprived the American public of the chance to acquire this taste.
19. (i) Bella Guerin, 1883, Melbourne University; (ii) Janine Haines, The Australian Democrats; (iii) Nora Heysen.
20. Fort Macquarie was demolished on Bennelong Point in 1902 to make way for a tram depot which was demolished to make way for ... you guessed it.
21. A square manhole cover can be turned and dropped down the diagonal of the manhole. A round manhole cover cannot be dropped down the manhole.
22. The dialect of Friesland.
23. Australia: Shannon Noll; UK: Gareth Gates; US: Clay Aiken.
24. (i) Chip Goodyear; (ii) Malcolm Broomhead; (iii) Andrew Michelmore.
25. At Eton. An Oppidan is a student who is not a King's scholar and a half is the Eton word for term.
26. (i) 'truly nucleated cells'; (ii) pre-nucleated cells; (iii) creative definition wins bonus points.
27. (i) creationism is the theory claiming that God created all matter and life about 6000 years ago; (ii) Sums where you are not supposed to spot the deliberate mistakes; (iii) creation myth is a story about the origin of things; see (i).
28. (i) ILO: International Labour Organisation; (ii) ELO: Electric Light Orchestra, a brilliant '70s band.
29. Maud.
30. They are all aliases of the great Australian bass-baritone Peter Dawson.

Peter Hamilton

Evolving Guatemala

I CAME TO GUATEMALA with my son, Jay, who is nearly 17. His mediocre Spanish grades drew me to Antigua's reputation for excellent and inexpensive courses in 'living' Spanish. Leaving the Guatemala City airport, we squeezed into a dilapidated 'chicken bus' and hurtled through that city's cinder block outskirts. Soon we crossed a high mountain pass and dropped into a compact valley. Antigua's fantastic volcanic setting and its skyline of monumental ruins instantly created that magical feeling that we had just passed through the looking glass.

We learned that the highland Maya were routed in the 1520s by the murderous conquistador Don Pedro de Alvarado. For more than 200 years, the city known as Santiago de Guatemala served the Spanish crown as the seat of a vast province. The conquered Mayan population were available to labour on monumental works. The city founders laid out their capital after the grid plan of Seville, itself borrowed from Rome, though they expanded the scale. I heard it said that if Caesar himself walked into a restored Antigueno home today, he could comfortably find his way to the bathroom without noticing much out of place.

THE SPANISH BUILT grand palaces, cloistered monasteries, churches, hospitals and universities, in a unique Moorish style dubbed 'earthquake Baroque'. It is characterised by low rooflines, squat walls and thick, sculpted columns. Antigua lies right on top of a notorious, hair-trigger seismic fault. The most recent disaster was a huge 39-second tremor on 4 February 1976, that killed nearly 30,000 Guatemalans and left more than a million homeless.

After substantially rebuilding their city in 1565, 1586, 1607, 1651, 1689, 1717 and 1751, a damaging 'swarm' of quakes in 1773—leading up to a cataclysmic shock on 29 July—pitched the Spanish authorities over the edge. In a series of increasingly harsh edicts, the Crown forced the capital's reluctant residents to gut their homes and institutions down to the doorknobs. Mules hauled this salvage over the mountain pass to the nearby valley of la Ermita, and a new capital slowly took shape. It became known as 'Guatemala' while the abandoned city became simply 'la Antigua', or 'The Old'.

Most of la Antigua's great public buildings fell into ruin, serving as squatters' camps and quarries. The Maya returned to build their traditional thatch-roofed huts inside the courtyards of wrecked homes and even in the naves of tumbled down churches. Most of the surviving homes were subdivided into ever-smaller fragments, and the whole city fabric fell deeper into ruin with each generation's human pillage and monster quakes.

Our own mission to learn conversational Spanish coincides with the most decisive factor in Antigua's recent comeback. Intensive Spanish instruction has become the town's principal industry. Nearly 100 schools pay rents that maintain buildings, employ thousands of teachers, support services such as internet cafés, and create opportunities for local families to supplement their income by boarding students. My Spanish teacher said that her bookkeeper husband works for 12 hours a day, seven days a week, and has not been granted a single day off in 12 years. His salary is less than $500 a month.

Through the babble of an unfamiliar language, we continually overheard the name Rios Montt.

General Efrain Rios Montt is a figure who evokes for me the combined dark shadows of Slobodan Milosevic, Ariel Sharon and Augusto Pinochet. He is an army officer who seized power in the early '80s on a platform of 'more executions and less reconciliation', and who mercilessly waged the latest phase of Don Pedro de Alvarado's war of conquest by a European 'criollo' oligarchy against Guatemala's six million Maya.

Rios Montt renounced his Catholicism because of the meddling opposition by its priests, and in 1978 he became an ordained minister in the California-based Church of the Word. He personifies the very troubling national schism between insurgent gospel hall 'cultos' and a Catholicism that tends to recognise social justice concerns while tolerating ancient Mayan ritual. Rios Montt's crusade was actively supported by the hard men in Washington, and on a visit to Guatemala in 1982 President Reagan called him a 'man of great personal integrity and commitment' who had been 'getting a bum rap'.

Until a ceasefire was negotiated in the late '90s, his army racked up nearly 200,000 civilian victims, earning Rios Montt the nickname of the 'Central American Saddam' and a place among the most murderous of the last century's political leaders. His regime later morphed into the kleptocracy that ruled Guatemala with impunity.

OUR CONGENIAL DAYS in Guatemala were often suddenly disturbed by the skeletons of Rios Montt's scorched earth—or 'scorched communist'—campaign as he prefers to call it. A homestay family told us their elder sons had been in a university rock band. Ten years later, a right-wing cultural warrior discovered that the lyrics of the band's most popular song included the phrase 'I want to be free'. Their names were added to a death list. One brother disappeared and the next week the other was shot dead on the family's doorstep. When we visited the village of Santiago, our amble around the church interior stopped cold when we read on a plaque that in 1981, its Oklahoma-born parish priest Stan Rother was gunned down in his study. His crime was that he offered the church as a sanctuary to villagers who were fleeing the nightly raids of local paramilitaries. At least 500 Santiago villagers disappeared, and on its outskirts there is a memorial to 11 villagers shot to death for daring to protest the drunken harassment of locals by soldiers.

In July 2003, Rios Montt defied a national ceasefire agreement and began running for Guatemala's presidency on a law and order platform. His roadside billboards show an elderly man proclaiming 'Soy Guatemala' or 'I am Guatemala'. In August, knots of tourists and locals sat in Antigua's park reading in the newspapers that busloads of Montt's political flunkeys, disguised as masked campesinos and carrying machetes, went on a prime-time rampage through the capital. Their message—only 'I' have the power to make or break the peace in Guatemala.

VIOLENCE FEELS CLOSE to the surface in a country where even the soft drink delivery trucks carry guards armed with shotguns. A Spanish teacher told us that last October she and a neighbour, a young mother like herself, received phone calls demanding a ransom or they would die. The teacher borrowed, begged, paid and lived. Her neighbour refused and she disappeared. Rios Montt was booed and jeered when he arrived to cast his vote at the November 2003 elections. With voter turn-out exceeding 80 per cent, Rios Montt was resoundingly defeated at the polls.

For centuries, Guatemala's storyline has read something like 'sublime shattered by catastrophe'. In Antigua, we tasted the sublime. But the determination of a ruthless old order to throw aside a decade of national reconciliation left us anxious that the next great tremor may be past due. ■

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All images courtesy of Contours Travel, Melbourne.

Lucille Hughes

Love's Brother

and the state of Australian filmmaking

For Tait Brady, managing director of Palace Films, the question of whether there is something wrong with Australian films is clearly an incendiary one: 'It's just a disgraceful beat-up by journalists who should know better.' A certain frustration is not surprising: Palace Films is notable for its commitment to movies, including Australian ones, that don't fit the Hollywood blockbuster template, and its list is full of such critical and commercial successes as *Chopper* and *Japanese Story*.

We were discussing one of the latest Australian films distributed by Brady's group, *Love's Brother*, due for release in April. He was explaining the crucial role played by a distributor, not only in the screening of a film, but in getting it even made at all. To qualify for a subsidy from Film Finance Corporation Australia (FFC), *Love's Brother*, when still a screenplay, had first to demonstrate a commitment from a distributor, a producer and an international sales agent. It has negotiated innumerable hurdles since then, and must soon face the final one: the critics who will largely determine its fate. If there is any justice it should do well. It is a well-crafted, curiously magical and romantic story of Italian settlement in Australia depicted with humour and restraint A major coup for its screenwriter and director Jan Sardi (screenwriter for *Shine*) was the casting of Giovanni Ribisi who gives a brilliant performance as the tortured Angelo, the brother of the title. It has the potential to appeal to an audience which has enjoyed films such as *Chocolat* and yet one senses that any new Australian title has now to face a certain home-grown prejudice.

Brady concedes that over the last couple of years a few duds have landed on our screens, mainly lowbrow comedies like *The Wannabes* and *Takeaway*, courtesy of a joint finance project between the Macquarie Bank and Channel Nine and obligingly distributed through Hoyts. Some were good, some partly good and some bombed. Brady points out that 'Most countries, Germany in particular, turn out many similar comedies solely for domestic consumption. They usually don't travel well as they are built around locally popular TV personalities and comedians and depend on that familiarity for their drawing power'.

Not a hanging matter then, surely, if some of ours miss, considering the silliness and tedium of many of the American comedies that are released here year after year. But, says Brady, 'Journalists went into a feeding frenzy and wrote a lot of bad news stories about the quality of Australian films. Unfortunately there were a few good movies during this time which undeservedly got lumped in with it'.

Jan Sardi on the set of *Love's Brother*.

Getting Square and *The Rage in Placid Lake* were among those that missed out on the reviews and audiences they merited. A climate in which Australian movies struggled to get an audience or a fair hearing has naturally had a ripple effect through the whole industry—with confidence in, and commitment to, home-grown projects suffering a setback. It will take time to recover from being so ruthlessly talked down.

In the context of the recently signed Free Trade Agreement negotiations with America, a local press relentlessly bagging its own film industry takes on a more sinister aspect. At last year's AFI awards, presenters and prize-winners alike were clearly alarmed at the effect that locking our government subsidies into a standstill to please the US would have on the future of screen culture in this country. They used the opportunity of the awards to say so. Alas, our best histrionic talent failed to soften some journos' flinty hearts. A backlash led by pro-FTA columnists such as Fairfax's Gerard Henderson and News Limited's Terry McCrann in classic attack-dog style tended to confuse issues rather than genuinely discuss them. With the Gallipoli and Ned Kelly stories already made into respectable movies, the implication was that there was now little justification for any further subsidies for Australian filmmaking. Nicole Kidman and Rupert Murdoch were held up as the main examples of Australian stories worth the telling, even though they were now American tales with matching accents.

Why subsidies should be shameful is puzzling: even Henderson reminded us that some US film companies have been known to call themselves manufacturers in order to qualify for huge tax breaks.

Projects such as *Love's Brother* make it to the screen because of the confidence demonstrated at every stage of development by writers, actors, producers and distributors, even investors, fascinated by Australian stories and authentic ways of telling them. We're going to need them. ■

Lucille Hughes is a freelance writer and graphic artist.

in print

Ethics v. politics

The Ethical State? Social Liberalism in Australia, Marian Sawer.
Melbourne University Press, 2003. ISBN 0 522 85082 0, RRP $29.95

ETHICS IS USUALLY limited to the scope of individuals—describing when and how we should act. Marian Sawer has broadened this notion to apply to the role of the state. She describes the history, impact and legacy of social liberalism—a philosophy that the state should adopt an interventionist role to achieve ethical outcomes.

The Ethical State! is an enthralling narrative of the history and philosophy of ethics and its political application in England, New Zealand and Australia, from the transformation of Mill and Locke's negative conception of liberty (ie. freedom from interference) to the work of Oxford scholar T.H. Green who pioneered social liberalism.

Green is the 'hero' of this tale, a compassionate man, who saw the suffering of late 19th century England, and advocated a philosophy of positive liberalism to guide state action. He went further than Bentham's utilitarian principle that the state exists to provide material happiness for the greatest number of its citizens, and argued that the state's role was to provide equal opportunity for all citizens to achieve their potential development.

This book, adapted from Sawer's articles and essays, is a work of non-fiction that reads like a compelling character drama. The various chapters concentrate on of the idea of an ethical state, and how these notions were received in the Australian colonies as they pressed towards federation. Later chapters on the struggle of the ALP to fully apply the social liberal agenda to all citizens—not just the 'working man', and the Liberal party's rejection of social liberalism and its embrace of economic rationalism (neo-liberalism), make for fascinating political analysis. The tale of how several social liberalist Liberals crossed the floor in the late 1980s to support the ALP's equal opportunity legislation is engaging, and the names of those involved, including current ministers, is eye-opening.

Drawing upon her interest in women's involvement in politics, the book also examines the rise of social liberalism in Australia and New Zealand which led to the early adoption of female suffrage and the old age pension, though female employment and equal pay had to wait for a second wave of social liberalism.

At a time when the ethical state is derided as the 'nanny state', and the masculine values of neo-liberalism (rugged independence, unhindered competition, autonomy and formal equality) are ascendant, Sawer's book should be read by any Australian with an interest in politics, the role of the state, and history in general.

This book is more than a philosophical analysis of social liberalism. It is a gripping yarn about one of the forces that has shaped the political conscience of our nation. ■

David Ferris is a graduate of commerce and law at Melbourne University.

Gabriel Smith

Belonging: One fan's Tugga Waugh

In the middle of January I had some photographs developed. They were of the fourth cricket Test against India, January 2004. Steve Waugh in his striped jacket, walking with Sourav Ganguly to the pitch for the toss. The guard of honour his team formed when he stepped onto the field of play at the start of the first session. The crowd's standing ovation when he walked off with his bat for the last time in a Test match. Waugh below my stand, chaired on the shoulders of his teammates, and in front of me spectators waving red handkerchiefs.

Two summers ago I switched on the TV and flicked through the channels, and instead of moving past the cricket I figured I'd watch it for a few minutes. The last time I had watched cricket was 1983. Since then a lot of different things have happened to me. 'Waugh' was a name I'd come across here and there, because even if you're not a cricket-follower some player's names are in the news all the time.

It was during that summer of 2002, sometime around Australia Day, that I spotted Steve Waugh fielding. he was nibbling on his fingernails. I don't know why that hooked me, but it did—so much so, that I borrowed some of Waugh's books from the local library. Not long after Tugga was sacked from the one-day side—the St Valentine's Day massacre.

SBS' *World Sports* program showed the press conference; Waugh looking as if it was him against the world. He was out of one-day international cricket, and I remember feeling rather peculiar about it all. By then Waugh had already made me glad he was around.

When I came to this country as a small child it wasn't good to be different. In the early 1970s I couldn't go into the school playground or walk home after school without a white Australian giving me stick about having brown skin. 'Blackie', 'abo', 'go back to where you came from'. Children and adults would walk past me in the street and let me know they thought I was dirt. Such attitudes started to fade away at the end of the 1970s, but in the following decades there were still some idiots who assumed that if you were a darkie you talked funny and didn't understand English.

In the 1980s I became an Australian citizen in order to get work. My identity as an Australian was only on paper; in my mind I didn't consider myself Australian as I didn't want to be the same as those morons who gave me a hard time because of my brown skin. For years the last country I'd support was Australia. Australians didn't seem to like me being here, so I didn't see why I should be on its side.

That's the way it was until January 2002, when I watched some cricket for the first time in years and saw Steve Waugh biting his nails.

From Tugga's cricket diaries, I got the idea he was an all-round nice guy, a softie who got on with everyone and liked a laugh. Yet there were many people saying he was hard, mean and unflinching, a sledger and the toughest SOB ever to walk onto a cricket ground. He was the iceman. Some even said he shouldn't be captain. He had dropped Warne and Slater from the team, and on the field he subjected opponents to 'mental disintegration'. When South African Herschelle Gibbs dropped a crucial catch in a World Cup game in 1999, Waugh is said to have asked him how it felt to have dropped the World Cup. Waugh seized the trophy in the next game when Australia beat South Africa and became world champions. Sometimes it was as if the Captain of Australia was not one person but two. In contrast to the on-field ruthlessness, Waugh sponsored a girls' orphanage in India—a school for the children of Lepers. He loved his wife and kids and missed them when he was away. He stood by the blokes he believed in. He was proud of his baggy green cap and playing for his country. He was a scrapper who got through the hard times and didn't back down. For the first time in my life I found myself proud of being Australian, though I can't explain how it was that Waugh made this happen.

So, in January, I was there at the SCG for his last Test. During that time every waking minute was about the Test—either I was getting ready to set off to the SCG, at the SCG, returning from the SCG, or thinking over what had happened at the SCG. Every moment of those five days was magic, even when on day three I sat next to a middle-aged white woman who gave me a dirty look and was loud in her dislike of India and their big first-innings score. Even on day five when another middle-aged white woman asked if I was 'going over there to join my friends'. When I asked her what she meant she nodded across at the flag-waving group of Indians on the hill. I think she was a bit surprised when, in my Pommie/Irish/Canadian/Swiss accent, I told her 'I'm an Aussie who supports Australia.'

Being at the SCG was about saying farewell to Steve Waugh. Many have thanked him for what he's done for Test cricket between 1985-2004. My thanks are for the past two years; he's made a huge difference to the way I think about this country and my life here.

I'll never forget that February evening where I heard the sports news report that he was out of the one-day international team. Or when he made his century at the SCG on 3 January 2004. Or when he was chaired around the SCG on 6 January 2004 and I waved and cheered along with thousands of others. Or when I arrived home that night and realised it was all over, but as Waugh said, 'There was some sadness there, but only a little bit. There were that many smiling faces in the crowd, I could only be happy about it.' ■

Gabriel Smith lives in Sydney. She has attempted a number of stories and novels and now thinks she is grown-up enough to attempt non-fiction.

Andrew Coorey

The great novel

In celebrating their fortieth anniversary in 2003, the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) listed the 40 favourite Australian books of its members. The most revered book was Tim Winton's *Cloudstreet*. The silver medal went to Christina Stead's *The Man Who Loved Children* and the bronze to Henry Handel Richardson's *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*.

Lining up books like so many racehorses and trying to find the best in the field is of course ridiculous, and indeed tricky enough with horses. The merit of such lists lies in the ensuing discussion and the light shed on works that contemporary readers might otherwise neglect.

That said, the examination of this and other such lists has confirmed the general oversight of what might be considered, if not a great Australian novel, then certainly a great novel by a writer who was more or less Australian. The writer in question is Frederic Manning and the novel is *The Middle Parts of Fortune*. Ernest Hemingway was prepared to call it 'the finest and noblest book of men in war that I have ever read'. It was this quote from the author of *A Farewell to Arms* (published in the same year) which forced the book off the shelf and into my hands. Hemingway went on to add, 'I read it over once each year to remember how things really were so that I will never lie to myself or anyone else about them.' Further acclamation flowed from E. M. Forster who called it 'the best of our war novels', and from T. E. Lawrence who wrote 'no praise could be too sheer for this book'

The Middle Parts of Fortune is in the tradition of Robert Graves' *Goodbye to All That*, and in spirit it resembles Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Manning's novel, however, has its own distinct voice.

Frederic Manning left Australia at the age of 21, returning to visit his family only a few times, yet much of his novel's originality and greatness can be attributed to his Australian sensibility. While the novel's central character, Private Bourne, is conscious of the class system, especially in the military context, the book remains essentially classless. Unlike British works on the same theme, events are not recorded from the perspective of the officer class. At the same time, there is no clichéd soldierly contempt for officers, or saccharine glorification of the ranks. It is a very Australian perspective.

Manning does not shy away from the plain language of ordinary soldiers, and indeed he has an ear for it that few English writers of his day possessed:

> [Bourne] heard Pritchard talking to little Martlow on the other side of the tent.
> '... both 'is legs 'ad bin blown off, pore bugger; an' 'e were dyin' so quick you could see it. But 'e tried to stand up on 'is feet. "elp me up," 'e sez, "elp me up"—"You lie still chum", I sez to 'im, "you'll be all right presently". An 'e jes give me one look, like 'e were puzzled, an' 'e died ...'.
> 'Well, anyway,' said Martlow, desperately comforting; ' 'e couldn't 'ave felt much, could 'e, if 'e said that'.
> 'I don't know what 'e felt,' said Pritchard, with slowly filling bitterness, 'I know what I felt'.

A further distinguishing characteristic of the novel is a tone of stoic resignation to the appalling realities of the Western Front in 1916. As a soldier in the trenches Manning had accepted the cards dealt to him—a form of 'she'll be right' fatalism. That so few mutinies occurred in this carnage is hard to fathom, but Manning conveys like no other this widespread acceptance of the unacceptable.

Intolerable boredom interspersed with moments of terror is how many veterans described their life in the trenches. The boredom could be so profound that against every instinct of self-preservation some soldiers began to crave the relief of battle. Manning conveys the deadening boredom without ever allowing the book itself to become boring, carrying the reader along with the beauty of his language, Bourne's reflections and the barely perceptible descent of gloom as the soldiers move inevitably towards another 'show'.

Frederic Manning was born in Sydney to a newly wealthy family of Irish Catholics. His father, William, was Mayor of Sydney for some years, an unusual achievement for a Catholic. Manning's brothers were Jesuit-educated at Riverview, and one of the brothers, Jack, was at one time the Wallaby rugby captain. Manning himself was considered too ill to attend classes, so apart from some months at Sydney Grammar School he was

privately tutored at the various Manning family homes: initially at Elizabeth Bay House, in what is now the seediest section of Bayswater Road, and later Tusculum, in Manning Street, Potts Point, now the headquarters of the Australian Institute of Architects.

GIVEN HIS PHYSICAL frailty and an early fondness for drink, Manning's involvement in the war was extraordinary. His survival was a minor miracle.

Manning had shown his literary ability before the war, producing poetry and a collection of classically themed vignettes, *Scenes and Portraits*. Plot was never his forte, however, and he doubted his ability to write a 'normal' novel. It was only through the coercion of a publisher, Peter Davies (whose childhood was the model for J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*), that Manning wrote *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, living under a kind of creative house arrest. Manning dedicated the novel to Davies, 'who made me write it'.

Only 520 copies of the book were printed when it first appeared in 1929 under the pseudonym 'Private 19022'. Many of the novel's first readers considered its dialogue too frank. Consider the way a private expresses his disgust when the binoculars he loots from a dead German end up around the neck of a superior:

> 'Wouldn't you've thought the cunt would 'a' give me vingt frong for 'em anyway?'
> 'Your language is deplorable, Martlow,' said Bourne in ironical reproof; 'quite apart from the fact that you are speaking of your commanding officer. Did you learn all these choice phrases in the army?'
> 'Not much' said little Martlow derisively; 'all I learnt in the army was me drill an' care 'o bloody arms. I knew all the fuckin' patter before I joined'.

This is not the language of Graves or Remarque, yet it most certainly reflects the speech of working men under constant threat of death. Subsequent editions of the novel were bowdlerised, and it was not until 1977 that the novel reappeared in its original form.

Two Manning biographies exist, more than we might expect for a writer of relatively modest output: three books of poetry, his *Scenes and Portraits*, a biography commissioned by an industrialist and *The Middle Parts of Fortune*. One of the biographies, subtitled *An unfinished life*, is by an American, Jonathan Marwil. It shows a great understanding of the various Australian institutions with which the Manning family were involved, and is driven by the curiosity of its author, who travelled from Michigan to Oxfordshire, to Point Piper and Cootamundra, to learn what he could from Manning's intimates and their descendents. The second biography, *The Last Exquisite* by Verna Coleman, shows a deep understanding of the literary circles and traditions which informed Manning's career, and his qualified acceptance into British social and literary society. The biographies are complementary, and anyone moved by Manning's masterpiece will enjoy the insights of both books.

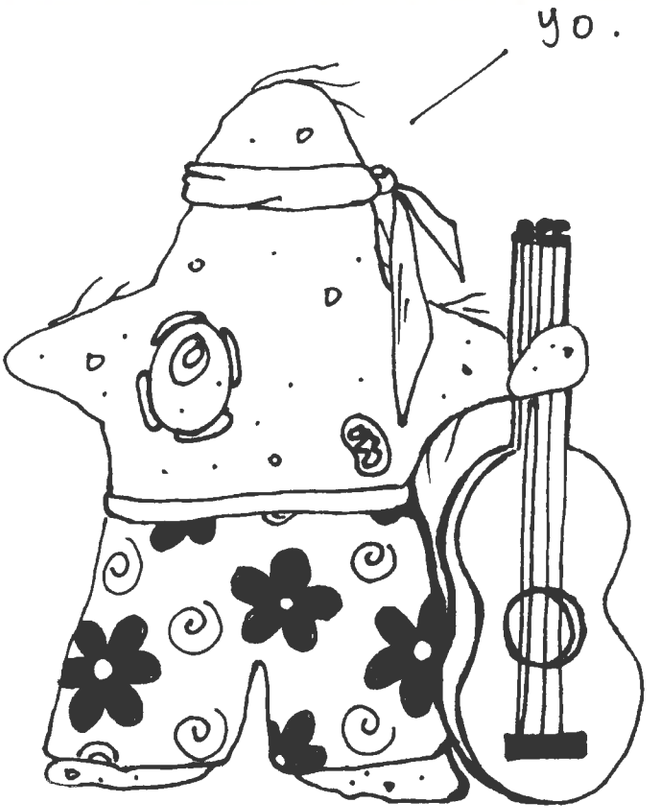
So is *The Middle Parts of Fortune* an Australian book? The character Bourne expresses a grudging respect for things Australian, though the source of his knowledge is not revealed. While Bourne is clearly better educated than his fellow privates, he does not seek the formal superiority of rank. The national characteristic that Manning chooses to celebrate is itself a rather Australian choice:

> "You're learnin' a lot o' bad words from us'ns," said Martlow, grinning.
> "Oh, you swear like so many Eton boys," replied Bourne indifferently. "Have you ever heard an Aussie swear?"

Ultimately, like all great books, *The Middle Parts of Fortune* is not national but universal. Its publication brought acclaim from both sides of the Atlantic and indeed the Pacific. Yet the book remains unfamiliar to most Australian readers, who know the work of other veterans such as Sassoon, Graves and Remarque, and of contemporary writers like Sebastian Faulks and Pat Barker, who have mined (or perhaps undermined) this massive resource.

The neglect of Manning seems a shame. *The Middle Parts of Fortune* deserves its place in any list of great novels. ■

Andrew Coorey is a broadcaster and writer for radio. He is also the writer–director of *The Birthplace: Stories from Australia's First Rugby Club*, a documentary on the history of the Sydney University Football Club.



Retrovirus by Katherine Brazenor.

Jane Mayo Carolan

Encountering the homeless

ARMED WITH SURFBOARDS, fishing tackle, Christmas cake and the detritus of the ham and turkey we set off for the annual family pilgrimage to Point Lonsdale, there to enjoy carefree days in the sun. My first mission was a walk to my Mecca–the ocean beach. Roaming the dunes I happened upon two huddled bodies. A hasty look revealed two dishevelled old men. Distracted by the magic of the ocean I quickly forgot them. Later while visiting the main street these men approached me for money. Warily. I emptied my pockets. At home the family were watching horrific images of the earthquake at the World Heritage Site, Arg-e-Bam, Iran. Initially the Iranian Government estimated that 15,000 residents had been killed, in reality the figure exceeded 41,000.

At first we spoke of how powerful nature can be and how often our little problems are a distraction. Family discussions turned to the paucity of Australian government aid. Umbrage was taken at one emergency expert who asked why rescuers still travel to earthquakes, when local planning would be far more effective. Another said that irrational fears of epidemics were adding to survivors' trauma and wasting resources. Yet another claimed that the bombing of Iraq had caused the earthquake. Equally unpopular was the viewpoint that relief responses were merely a tool for Western diplomacy.

What really stirred the family were the figures. It was not just the knowledge that two city hospitals had collapsed crushing staff and patients but that 70 per cent of the houses in Bam had been destroyed. There were scenes of intense grief with people weeping next to the deceased. They were in a city without telephones, electricity or water supplies, with night temperatures below freezing. In contrast, we were between two houses, with warm beds, food in each fridge and convivial companionship.

Recounting my meeting with the men in the sand dunes led to similar recollections. During the pre-Christmas shopping rush my daughter and I had been amazed at the number of beggars who approached us. Her response is to march those willing to the local McDonald's to buy them a meal or to the supermarket for supplies. Few accept. Are their needs genuine? For many of us this is an uneasy issue, best ignored.

There is no particular stereotype of a homeless person, although the government's policy of 'de-institutionalising' those with mental illnesses would appear to be a contributing factor. The 1998 *The Down and Out In Sydney* report found that 75 per cent of homeless people have at least one mental disorder: 49 per cent of men and 15 per cent of women have an alcohol use disorder: 36 per cent have a drug use disorder: 33 per cent have a mood disorder and 93 per cent reported at least one experience of extreme trauma in their lives. In an affluent country like Australia it is tempting to think that there is no *real* poverty and that Professor R. F. Henderson's poverty reports of the 70s are a thing of the past. In truth there are thousands of homeless in our midst. Thousands more live in sub-standard accommodation and two million live below the poverty line.

IN 1999 A LANDMARK report by Chris Chamberlain for the Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Counting the Homeless: Implications for Policy Development,*

estimated that on census night 1996 there were 20,579 people in impoverished dwellings or sleeping out in Australia. When he added these figures to those in boarding houses (23,299), those in Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (12,926) and those staying with friends and relatives (48,500) a total of 105,304 people were estimated to be homeless on that one night. Seventy per cent of these had been without secure accommodation for six months, including many who had been homeless for more than a year. Are there more? What of those who do not engage with the welfare system, who live on the streets, in parks or on the beach? Is our system able to count the hidden homeless?

In May 2000 the Commonwealth Government launched a National Homelessness Strategy aimed at providing a 'holistic and strategic approach'. In November 2003, Mark Colvin for ABC's *PM* reported: 'Here in the lucky country there are still too many Australians with no luck at all. Figures released by the ABS show that on the night of the 2001 Census 100,000 people had no home. That was a mere 5,000 lower than the previous census.'

Welfare agencies assisted 2.4 million people in 2002, a 12 per cent increase on the previous two years. The Burdekin Report estimated that 70,000 children and young people were homeless in 1989. Yet Justin Healey, editor of *The Homeless, Issues in Society* (2002) suggests that every year across the country over 100,000 young people experience homelessness. He also suggests that there are 250,000 people aged 60 and over who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with war veterans accounting for some 10 per cent of this group.

In *The Enabling State, People before Democracy* (2001), Mark Latham stated, 'We are now living in an era of relentless insecurity. Few parts of society can claim that the welfare state has given them peace of mind. They are looking for new ways to manage economic uncertainty. At the same time some parts of society are being left behind. This is the great paradox of globalisation; while the economy operates globally, the problems of poverty have become concentrated locally.'

Could this be equally true in Kew as in Collingwood? In Point Lonsdale as in Altona? After returning to Melbourne in January I walked past three people sleeping rough on the pavement in upmarket Carlton.

Latham feels that welfare policy is the modern equivalent of the state-aid debate. 'It has become a sacred cow—full of warm rhetoric, good intention and noble tradition. The only problem is that it is not getting results.'

In this election year we should ask all political parties to spell out practical solutions to homelessness, both here and abroad. Internationally we could look to Medicins Sans Frontieres as a model for structuring overseas aid. We could extend Australia's involvement in Habitat for Humanity, the world's largest not-for-profit home builder. At home we need equally innovative policies. In this country we have no excuses for the problem of homelessness. ■

Jane Mayo Carolan is a Melbourne historian.

Summer Chess Quiz Solution

For those still puzzling the means by which Mrs Bruce outfoxed her husband and teacher, her clever moves are outlined below.

22.	Qxh7+	Nxh7
23.	Nxf7+	Kg8
24.	Ne5+	Re6
25.	Bxe6+	Kh8
26.	Nxg6++	

Black's moves are forced right from the beginning. The Knight has to take the Queen because otherwise the Black King would be moving into Check. White's 24th move opens up Black to a discovered check from the bishop. Black cannot play 24 ... Kf8 because of the white Rook on F1 (hence the Queen sacrifice to take away the Black Knight which was attacking the Bishop and blocking the Rook), and if Black plays 24 .... Kh8 then White mates him a move early with 25 Nxg6.

Matthew Klugman is a Melbourne writer.

Beth Doherty

A common prayer

'Should I shake someone's hand or will it offend?' 'Should I have my head covered?' 'Will they think I'm really thick if I ask why they do that?'. These were some of the common concerns for the 30 young people involved in a multi-faith experiment in late January.

The Journey of Promise program was a collaborative event designed to unite those of diverse faiths and to celebrate difference. Journey of Promise is part of the Federal Government's Living in Harmony initiative which is supported by the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and celebrates cultural, racial, and social diversity. It culminates in Harmony Day on March 21, coinciding with the United Nations Day for the Elimination of Racial Vilification.

The Journey of Promise signature program involved 30 young Christians, Muslims and Jews aged between 18 and 35 who spent a week living together in order to promote understanding between the three major monotheistic faiths. The diverse program included visits to churches, mosques, synagogues, and other religious centres. There were opportunities to encounter a wide range of people in business, media, and community projects and also some exposure to Aboriginal spirituality.

The program was designed to counteract some of the undue fears that have arisen through national security concerns, refugee issues and terrorism. World events have contributed to a culture of fear in Australia, where mosques, synagogues and churches (particularly those outside the anglo-celtic tradition) have been under attack in recent years.

This prejudice has worked its way into business, politics, and the Australian psyche. The objective of this collaboration between the Christian, Jewish and Islamic communities is to bring these issues to the forefront and for young people to take an active part in the dialogue.

Convenor of the program Reverend Jon Inkpin, who works for the National Council of Churches in Australia, says that the program promised to be a unifying event.

'I think above all we've got a very interesting program, and very good people. Basically, it's about the building of relationships, enabling people to meet one another and spend time together. In doing so it is a chance to hear one another's stories and move beyond the labels and preconceptions that we often have about one another,' he says.

The project is a result of collaboration between the National Council of Churches in Australia, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

'Participants encounter practices that are quite different to their own. There are different conceptions of God, and those things are also valuable and sometimes they enrich us. I think we've actually ended up with a deeper understanding of what we ourselves believe through what others believe.

'You discover that you have an awful lot in common, but also discover the differences which are sometimes significant, but not in fundamental terms. Right at the heart of them is a commitment to peace and compassion for everyone.' Reverend Jon says that ultimately, the three Abrahamic faiths involved are united by the concept of journey and pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage is an important part of Christianity, Islam and Judaism, and the gathering coincided with the Hajj—the annual pilgrimage to Mecca for Muslims.

'The title, Journey of Promise, is used deliberately so that participants from each of the three faiths all look towards their common inheritance. It's an Abrahamic faith that we come from, and we all understand faith as a journey,' he says.

'We're on a common journey and what we are looking to do is respond to the promise that has been given to us through our faith traditions by God. We're not there to argue about who's got this or that right, but to be able to share our understanding of God .

Journey of Promise image courtesy of NCCA.

'My feeling is that dialogue between faiths isn't about finding the lowest common denominators, but enriching above all, relationships we have with others.'

Reverend Jon says that it is important that tangible outcomes are reached through such programs so that results can be seen in the community.

'We hope to offer a model of how Christians, Muslims and Jews can work together to overcome some of those problems. To respect one another, and value one another even where you disagree.'

One of the visits made by the young people was to the Islamic Women's Welfare Association to hear first hand from Muslim women their experience and to foster understanding.

Some believe that when ignorance is mended with understanding, unity can be achieved. This is what the Journey of Promise seeks to do and if nothing else, it will pave the way for similar future endeavours.

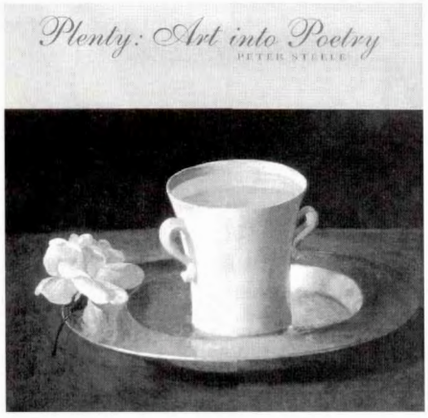
Beth Doherty is the assistant editor of *Eureka Street*.

Kirsty Sangster

Words and images

Plenty: Art into Poetry. Peter Steele SJ. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. ISBN 1 876832 97 5, RRP $77.00

IN THIS, HIS LATEST book of poetry, Peter Steele shows us through the art gallery of his mind's eye. In a beautifully produced folio–sized edition, each of his poems is like a written meditation on a particular work of art, and is accompanied by a coloured plate of the painting, drawing or shard of pottery that is its source. Thus, for example, a late medieval painting of the expulsion of Adam and Eve depicts God pointing at a globe, which Steele then transforms for us into a poem entitled *Beginnings*: *To the high Lord fledged with angels, Earth/ nests in a roundel propped at the butts/ of nothing at all. He taps it gently for soundness*. As readers we are then startled into looking again at the painting and seeing in it a God who is indeed tapping the world as if it were an egg hanging in the middle of nowhere.



The poet David White describes The Society of Jesus as having 'its own brand of fire'. In the Jesuit poet and academic Peter Steele, this fire is burning bright. His is the kind of intense visionary poetry where sacred groves filled with tigers will appear in dreams and transfigurations can occur on street corners or down at the local pub. He sees things which most of us cannot see. He draws out the fire. ■

Kirsty Sangster is a poet. Her first book *Midden Places* is soon to be published.

Congratulations!

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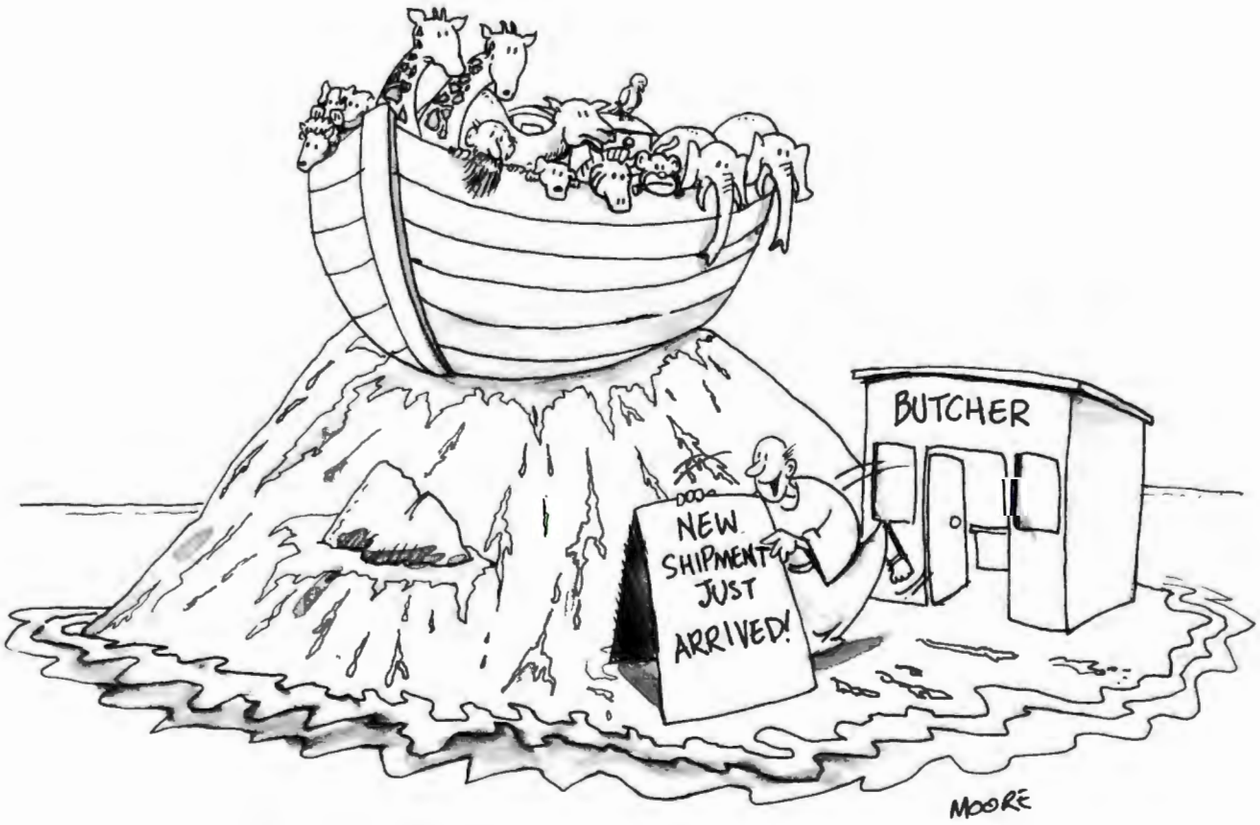
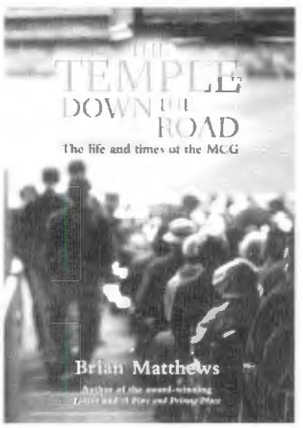


Ralph Carolan

Holy ground

The Temple Down the Road: The Life and Times of the MCG,
Brian Matthews. Viking, 2003. ISBN 067091178X, RRP $39.95

BRIAN MATTHEWS' reflection on the Melbourne Cricket Ground is published at a time when the ground itself is at a crossroads, a fact immediately perceptible to anyone who has laid eyes on it in recent months. On the third day of the Boxing Day Test, I sat in the modestly named Great Southern Stand and looked across at the old Members Pavilion as it stood half-demolished, teetering on the edge of collapse. With the construction site visually inescapable, the thought of the eclectic collection of stands from several generations giving way to a new monolithic structure was mirrored by the thought of Steve Waugh playing in his last Boxing Day Test.



And this is precisely what Matthews' text so vividly brings to light: the critical importance of the present, tempered by the knowledge that it will fade into the past. Sport at the MCG plots the seasonal life of Melbourne, as the winter to summer progression of football to cricket is punctuated by the events which mark the unique nature of each season: the memorable matches, moments and characters, and the special events, such as the Olympic Games and concerts.

However, Matthews does not offer a history that can be easily defined and categorised. It is not a standard textual analysis of a site in the way that a jaded reader of high school history may expect, nor does it offer the daily drama that a reader may expect from a text which proclaims itself a 'life and times' document. It does not offer a chronological explication of events, either of the ground's formation and construction, or of the sporting and other fixtures it has housed. Nor is it a standard sporting history. It does not provide tables of statistics, or detailed listings of great achievements, high scores or career totals. Nor is it simply a series of autobiographical experiences, though of course these play an important role.

A reader expecting such a text may be, at first, sadly disappointed, but then, perhaps, charmed by the unusual and unexpected mode of presentation. The first clue that such an innovative approach has been taken is the sparse yet striking black and white illustrative photos. Rather than plundering newspaper archives for shots of famous faces and events, Matthews has chosen a series of shots depicting crowds, stands and curators. Particularly striking are the photos by Megan Ponsford, which comprise around half of the collection. Megan has an intimate relationship with the ground: she is the granddaughter of Bill Ponsford (Australian cricketing legend of the 1920s and 30s after whom the now demolished Ponsford stand was named) and has recently released a photographic journal of a year in the life of the MCG, entitled *Home Ground*.

The text itself mixes the fictional and fantastic with the factual history of the MCG. After briefly relating how he first became familiar with the ground, Matthews evokes the ghost of Tom Wills, the man who, while being a successful cricketer with the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC) and Victoria, is better known as one of the founding fathers of Australian Rules Football, the game which occupies the 'G several times a weekend for the winter half of the year. Matthews has imagined Wills as a witness to the history of the ground, who, with the wave of a baton, brings to life its defining moments. The figure of Wills is complemented by Matthews' effortlessly shifting voices; at one point a suitably loutish and syntax shattering homage to the Mexican Wave segues into a lovingly detailed history of the infamous Bay 13 (now Bay 20). Matthews would be intrigued to note that at the recent Test match, the pavilion was still booed when the wave went past, despite being completely deserted.

MATTHEWS' COMMAND of narrative voice enables a detailed yet affectionate history of the ground to emerge, a necessarily polyvocal account of a place which proclaims itself 'The People's Ground'. The order of events recounted at first appears haphazard. However, as the narrative unfolds, the text begins to relate the resonance of the ground's ability to engage with so many of the myths which form the foundation of individual and collective identity in Australia. Many of these are overtly masculine, such as mateship, hard work and determination, and stoicism under adverse conditions. However, Matthews is able to convey a deeper level of human connection, one which is ephemeral and yet solidified in time and place. The narrative style is both personal and authoritative, able to move from a humorous account of the Puritan origin of queues, to the recognition of the use of the ground in wartime, including a passing reference to Billy Hughes' use of the ground as a soapbox to address a crowd of 75,000 on the issue of conscription.

As a landmark—perhaps Melbourne's most famous and recognisable—the MCG is a perennial visible presence in the city. But it is also much more than a sporting venue. With the ghost of Wills showing the way, Matthews presents memory as quite literally a spiritual affair, and as a temple, the MCG provides a site in which the faithful may worship a live religion which is continually producing its scriptures.

Ralph Carolan recently completed a Bachelor of Arts at Melbourne University, with honours in English Literature.

Kevin Summers

Ars artis gratia

Several years ago, actor and essayist John Flaus gave a keynote speech at an Actors Equity day of welcome to drama school graduates at Melbourne's Chapel Off Chapel. He could have told them the brutal facts: the 90 per cent unemployment, the short, dispiriting visits to casting agents, the often shoddy treatment. He told them a better story.

He spoke of the restorers and cleaners who were lifted by cranes into the arched ceilings of Chartres Cathedral only to discover scores of sculptures to match the work which adorns the exterior of the great structure. But why? These thirteenth century craftsmen could hardly have dreamt that their beautiful creations would ever be seen. Why bother with all this work?

'Ah', said Flaus, 'because of the thrill of the creative act; it was a personal celebration of their craft. It could have been nothing else that drove them.

'So', he continued, 'as you study and strive at your craft, there will be times when your work will go unnoticed, when you will play before empty houses, when the road ahead seems unbearably difficult. That is the time to remember the Chartres artisans and exult in your creativity and belief in your work.'

I recalled Flaus' warm and wise speech as I joined other members of the cast of *Silencia* for a quiet beer or two, to toast the end of our one week season. It was time to put one's priorities in order. *Silencia* had attracted no media interest, no critics attended, and an audience of twenty seems barely adequate, even in the confined spaces of that Melbourne institution, La Mama theatre. Why had we bothered?

The five performers did it because having read the script, they had to. Each recognised a small gem, a play based on interviews with folk who spend most of their lives in boarding houses in the inner suburbs of our major cities; those who inhabit a bubble of isolation and alcohol and substance abuse but who are now being forced onto the streets as the bulldozers of the developers rumble through the streets.

Mic Smith, who wrote and directed *Silencia* (the title refers to what the characters do not say), made no claims to theatrical experience. He had a vision and that was enough. Here was a man who knew this hidden culture, who knew and understood the characters to the extent that they were prepared to do what is so hard for them; to talk frankly about their lives.

As a voice for those who are seldom heard, Mic Smith is an Antipodean Studs Terkel, the great American oral historian who prefers to record his nation's story 'from the bottom up.' With his own background of hard knocks, easy going character and disdain of materialism, Smith is uniquely positioned to tell the stories of the anonymous.

His play was rough and tough, as it needed to be, with the sweat and breath and smell (in my case, my appalling trackshoes) of the actors falling over the audience. There were no smooth scene changes and no fancy lighting. The characters swore, fornicated, drank, smoked, fought and talked over each other. They were also magnificently human and a thrill to play.

Silencia has come and gone, as other productions come and go. But the performers in those plays must not lose sight of those craftsmen high in Chartres Cathedral. No one may see the fruits of your labour but you know what you have done. And that is reward enough. ■

Kevin Summers is an actor, playwright and freelance journalist.

Picture of Mic Smith courtesy of La Mama theatre

Fine friends

The Melbourne Theatre Company opened its 2004 season with a new production of Christopher Hampton's theatrical adaptation of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, the famous novel by Choderlos de Laclos which tells the story of two former lovers, Marquise de Merteuil (Josephine Byrne) and Le Viscomte de Valmont (Marcus Graham), who scheme to ruin the virtue of two piously devout women, the Présidente de Tourvel (Asher Keddie) and Cécile Volanges (Jessica Gower).

Les Liaisons Dangereuses was first published in 1782, seven years before the fall of the ancien regime and against the background of a stirring civil conflict now known as the French Revolution. Written so close to a time of war, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* is itself particularly concerned with warfare and military strategy, and the never-ending quest for power even if it is only in the realm of romance and personal relationships. Even now, after the society and context in which the story takes place has long since disappeared, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* offers a timely commentary on the nature of conflict, corruption and immorality.

Directed by MTC's artistic director, Simon Phillips, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* is a stylish and entertaining production. Often funny, elegantly fashioned lines bristle with malicious wit. The characters of Merteuil and Valmont both fascinate and repel as they engage in psychological combat, striving to out-do the other in capturing and destroying the souls. With impudence they wave their conquests in front of the other like spoils of war. But while the onstage jousting is absorbing as it is entertaining, the production does much more than just follow the boudoir antics and parlour skirmishes of the decadent upper class.

Les Liaisons Dangereuses' irresistible appeal lies in the shocking contrast between the intense, disturbing sense of societal and individual moral decay, and the beautiful, polished exterior of civilised elegance. The set sparkles with a stark purity and acts as a reminder of these contradictions. Incandescent white costumes and props and sweet-faced cherubs aloft fluffy white clouds contrast with the evil games of conquest and revenge happening on stage.

Les Liaisons Dangereuses is ultimately a moral tale, behind the tale of lust and betrayal lurks the question of the capacity of human beings to treat each other with respect, and the rightfulness of doing so. It is often said that there are no winners in war and the battles raged in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* offer no exception. In the end, and hopefully not giving too much away, the Présidente de Tourvel dies of grief and shame, Cecile, full of regret for her adultery with Valmont seeks salvation in a convent with the intention of becoming a nun, and Valmont gets his just deserts, slain in duel by Cecile's intended. In the MTC production, it is only the fate of the Marquise de Merteuil that is left in doubt. Audience members who had not read the book or seen the film would be left wondering whether she receives her comeuppance. The play does conclude, however, hinting at the impending downfall of the aristocracy—that itself suggestive that a life lived in selfish excess, thoughtless to needs of others, is, ultimately, folly. ■

Kirsty Grant is the advertising and marketing manager at Jesuit Publications

Peter Craven

Shimmering darkness

August Strindberg's *Dance of Death* is one of the nightmare glories of the theatre. It is almost fathomlessly black, a tragic melodrama that ripples with laughter. John Matthias' production at the Sydney Festival is one of those rare productions that is touched with a genius that matches that of the dramatist.

Dance of Death represents, neat, the kind of vision Albee mixed with soda in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, a play on which Strindberg's is a palpable influence. It is the story of a couple who experience a deep loathing for each other which nonetheless constitutes the greatest bond they have. It takes on much that could as easily be called love.

They snipe at and betray each other, they cheat, lie and snarl and in the midst of it all, crawling towards death or oblivion, there they are, chained to each other.

It is also extraordinarily funny because the way in which both Edgar (Ian McKellen) and Alice (Frances de la Tour) distract themselves from their pain is by banter, wit, self-mockery and by mocking the other person.

The play is a tour-de-force of light and dark, empowered by the adaptation of the American playwright Richard Greenburg which is at every point idiomatic, lithe and full of spunk and slime.

The production is full of movement and it helps that Robert Jones has created a cavernous space with a steel staircase that gives the drama a vertical reach and also functions as an abstract emblem of the emotional contortion and towering madness that characterise this vision.

Ian McKellen is superb in the way he creates a kind of unremitting savagery and cruelty while investing Edgar with great feeling. And, beyond this, with a human reality that the actor wears like a skin.

It is not a hammy performance, nor does McKellen milk what he is doing. It looks at first like a quiet performance that begins in character acting then hits the heroic without any phase of self-glamorisation. The performance has absolute credibility and truth.

Frances de la Tour rises to meet him in a tremendous performance as Alice. Where McKellen is crusty she is vinegar or sugar, where he staggers like a bull or lunges like a viper, she is slatternly, seductive, full of outraged passion or sniping her way to perdition. She also penetrates to some bedrock of emotional authenticity that takes away the breath. This too is a performance to die for.

Owen Teale plays the friend who is a fall guy for each of these monsters in turn. Teale sustains this less glittering role with integrity and sureness of touch.

This is a great production of a play shimmering with light and shrouded in shadow, representing what the modern theatre can do with one of its greatest plays. ■

Peter Craven is editor of *Quarterly Essay* and *Best Australian Essays*.

Ruth Lovell

Sumptuous feast

Tiepolo's Cleopatra, Jaynie Anderson. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. ISBN 1 876 832 44 4, RRP $99

The *Banquet of Cleopatra and Antony* painted by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770) in 1743–44 has long been a showpiece of the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV). It has recently undergone conservation and cleaning in time for its generously spaced rehanging in a striking position in the recently reopened St Kilda Road premises.

The painting is grand in both scale (249x346 cm) and imagery, and depicts the sumptuous feast where Cleopatra outclassed her lover Marc Antony in their wager of excess. Challenging each other to spend the most on a single banquet, Cleopatra became the winner by dissolving a precious pearl in vinegar and drinking it. Tiepolo shows an extravagantly-clothed blonde-haired Cleopatra seated opposite Lucius Plancus, keeper of the bet, dressed in a luxurious Eastern styled outfit trimmed with furs. Antony, in Roman military splendour, is seated with his back to the viewer, his profile turned to Cleopatra who holds aloft the pearl. The position of the various figures, together with the grid-patterned floor, draw the viewer's eye to this pivotal point.

The painting was acquired by the NGV in 1933 through the Felton Bequest and was an expensive purchase at the time at $25,000. A favourable article appeared in *Art in Australia* in 1933, which included a full-page colour reproduction and an extensive citation from Pliny's *Natural Historie of the World* relating the depicted episode and outlining the 'romantic history' of the painting which was once owned by Augustus III (1696–1763), Elector of Saxony and King of Poland.

The article, perhaps written to persuade the public that it was money well spent, quotes from a similarly motivated letter from the King's ambassador, Algarotti, written from Venice in 1744, to Count Bruhl, 'a powerful minister of the king and an ardent art collector saying that he had persuaded M. Tiepolo to finish the picture for his Majesty and described it as the "most beautiful, noblest and richest that the modern schools can produce"'.

Those wishing to discover more about this impressive painting will be delighted by *Tiepolo's Cleopatra*. This new book written by Jaynie Anderson (Herald Chair of Fine Arts and Head of the School of Fine Arts, Classical Studies and Archaeology, Melbourne University) takes the reader on a detailed exploration of the painting. The book is an impressive publication; a large format hardback with glossy pages, numerous full colour illustrations and a full list of illustrations, bibliography and index. It is indeed a luxury for such a book

to be produced about a single painting. The text is divided into four clear sections on different themes. The division into sections allows the reader to either focus, or merely dip into those areas of interest.

The first section looks at the story of Cleopatra, citing examples in literature and art over time including works that may have been of influence to Tiepolo. This section also gives great attention to the episode of the banquet itself, including other versions by Tiepolo and other artists, and examines Tiepolo's various renderings of Cleopatra throughout his career.

The second section draws attention to the historical context of the painting, relating how the work came to be commissioned and painted, and outlining the role of Algarotti. This section also details a number of Tiepolo's drawings and sketches, examining their relation to the NGV's *Cleopatra's Banquet*. Anderson also looks at other banquet paintings by Tiepolo and other artists who have been influenced by him. Among the latter are the wonderful Cecil Beaton photographs of an extravagant ball, inspired by Tiepolo's fresco paintings of Cleopatra and Antony in an Italian palazzo.

The third section investigates the intriguing history of the actual painting, its owners, and how it came to Melbourne in 1933, purchased from the Soviet government.

The fourth section is written by John Payne and Carl Villis, conservators at the NGV who worked on the recent restoration of the painting.

The text reveals thorough research, going into great detail in each of the various aspects, and is supported with many reference notes. However, it remains agreeably written in an accessible style.

A highlight of the publication is the many illustrations, sourced from paintings and drawings around the world, and featuring a generous number of details of the NGV painting. This intimate focus allows a greater appreciation of the painting and encourages a desire to gaze at length at the painting itself.

Tiepolo's Banquet is an engaging read that will appeal to many beyond those with an interest in art history while the generous number of illustrations will appeal to the coffee table book buyer. The balance of the scholarly, yet accessible style and the abundance of quality images makes this book a rich feast for any reader.

Ruth Lovell is at Lauraine Diggins Fine Art, Melbourne.

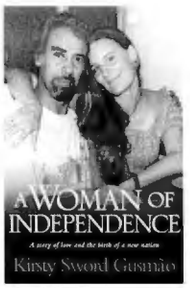
Orwell's Australia: From Cold War to Culture Wars, Dennis Glover. Scribe, 2003. ISBN 0 908 01156 3, RRP $19.95

I confess, I grew up jealous of those living in the inner suburbs. Year after year, we would make the voyage from the outer east to see my cousins in Richmond. I would return home to my suburban life, dreaming of living in a terrace home with brilliant yellow walls and arty, intellectual people drifting in and out.

Dennis Glover has got me thinking about the suburbs a lot more, and a little differently. You see, people who live 'out there' on the fringes of Australia's cities vote. Not only do they vote, but their constituency has been the contested ground upon which the last two federal elections were fought. According to Glover, the centre–left needs to search for the truth about these fringe dwellers. They need to take the trip from Richmond to Fountain Gate, and Leichhardt to Penrith, and immerse themselves in the life of people who reside there. This is what Orwell would have done.

Glover's knowledge of Orwell the man is used to great effect throughout the book. I was left wanting to find out more about this person who relinquished the niceties of a middle-class existence to live amongst the real battlers of his time. Australia's centre–left needs to use Orwell's example to seek the truth about suburbanites and their aspirations. The truth is out there.

—Emily Millane



A Woman of Independence, Kirsty Sword Gusmão. Macmillan, 2003. ISBN 0 732 91197 4, RRP $30

Kirsty Sword Gusmão's book begins with an endearing scene at the dawn of a new nation.

'Shouldn't you at least put on a tie?' she says to her husband as he leaves to greet the first on a list of foreign dignitaries arriving to mark the birth of East Timor. 'It's in my pocket!' says Xanana Gusmão as he climbs into the back seat of the car which would take him to Dili—15 hours before he is to be sworn in as president.

A degree in Indonesian and Italian from the University of Melbourne is the catalyst that propelled Kirsty Sword Gusmão to become the first lady of Asia's poorest country.

The candid, journalistic writing of Sword Gusmão makes her book *A Woman of Independence* a compelling read.

The autobiography follows her journey from a typical Australian upbringing which she left to work as an English teacher and underground human rights activist in Jakarta. Here, she encounters East Timorese freedom fighter Xanana Gusmão with whom she begins a relationship while he is held in Cipinang prison.

Her strong willed commitment and steadfast motivation to the cause is evident on each page—unwavering even in the most confusing and challenging times. Her story reveals throughout a woman of independence who is destined for greatness.

The book is lightened by her tumultuous romance with the future leader of East Timor, and flavoured with the exotic and exhausting tales of her work for the independence struggle of the East Timorese.

—Beth Doherty

How Simone de Beauvoir Died in Australia, Sylvia Lawson. UNSW Press, 2001. ISBN 0 868 40577 9, RRP $37.95

The best moment in Sylvia Lawson's *How Simone de Beauvoir Died in Australia* is when, as an aside in her collection of essays and fiction analysing Australian culture, she mentions that the only recognition in Australia to follow the death of Michel Foucault was a small headline in a daily newspaper that read 'Sex historian dies'.

Such an observation, wryly noted, captures what is behind the finest moments in this book: Lawson's sharp writing, the ability to apply her knowledge of what is evidently a vast amount of reading and research, and to tie seemingly unconnected threads together. That said, however, its weakness is that the prose is sometimes dense, tripping over its own worthiness, and there are not as many moments of illumination as one would hope.

Yet, the last and title essay is an exception to this rule. Here, Lawsons's analysis of Simone de Beauvoir as a feminist, and of feminism in Australia, allows for a vibrant exchange of ideas. Similarly her writings permit ambiguity without slipping into vagueness. It is Lawson writing at her best, allowing a reader to forgive the slower passages that precede it.

—Chloe Wilson

The Man Who Knew Too Much, The Strange and Inventive Life of Robert Hooke 1635–1703, Stephen Inwood. Pan Macmillan, 2003. ISBN 0 330 48829 5, RRP $66

Stephen Inwood's *The Man Who Knew Too Much* is an interesting account of the complex Robert Hooke, a 17th century scientist, architect, painter, inventor and mechanic. Inwood revives Hooke from the forgotten pages of history to portray a brilliant and versatile but very flawed man.

One of Inwood's strengths in this work is that he manages to vividly recreate Hooke's world of 17th century London. On the other hand Inwood does go into immense detail of Hooke's inventions, to the crosshairs on quadrant lenses, punch clocks and the springs and gears in pocket watches, so it would help to have a technical mind to fully appreciate *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. To be fair to Inwood though, so much of Hooke's life work was tied up in the inventing and refining of gadgets like the air pump and microscopes, that technical detail would be hard to avoid.

Nonetheless, without having a technical mind myself, I found *The Man Who Knew Too Much* quite enjoyable because Hooke is such a fascinating character. He probably inspired the now common archetype of the jealous scientific genius. Hooke was, to say the least, unconventional. He was a man who had a long-term incestuous relationship, yet many years before Charles Darwin even existed, proposed that fossils were the remains of creatures that had become extinct and not just 'nature's tricks'. In parts Inwood's book is also highly amusing. Particularly hilarious is Hooke's account of the results of personal experiments conducted using Indian hemp.

In short *The Man Who Knew Too Much* is a thorough, entertaining and eye-opening biography of Hooke, in which Inwood manages to rescue Hooke from the caricature of the ugly little man jealous of the great Sir Isaac Newton.

—Godfrey Moase

Cruising Samurai

The Last Samurai, dir. Edward Zwick. Is it enough to say that *The Last Samurai* is everything that cinema shouldn't be? That the filmmaker's vision of 'the way of the Samurai' makes *The Karate Kid* look like a masterpiece of classical Buddhist philosophy? That visually it offers little more than a series of computer-generated, statistically-averaged, test-screened and exit-polled post-cards? ('Look, a traditional Japanese village! Look, a noble Samurai! Look, a despicable cowardly businessman! Look, a clash between good traditional Japanese indigenous culture and bad modernising Western influences!) That it relies on the most hackneyed and clumsy expository devices to tell the audience the story that its manufactured images are unable to carry? That we don't just hear extracts from the central character's diary explaining what is going on, but we have to see him writing in it at the same time, in case it all gets too confusing?

That it manages to be a perfect Orientalist text (in Edward Said's sense of the term), all the while pretending to criticise the inimical influence of Western culture on traditional Japanese values? That it's a remake of *Dances With Wolves* set in Japan? That every word, image, movement, every hair on Tom Cruise's head is calculated within an inch of its life, so that not a single moment of spontaneity emerges to surprise the audience (or wake them up)?

That Cruise does not act so much as strike a series of tableaux—bitter Tom, noble Tom, drunkard Tom, heroic Tom, culturally sensitive Tom—as if to announce to the audience by semaphore, 'Tom Cruise is acting'? (No need for the marketing people to produce a Tom Cruise action figure—he already is his own action figure, with all the expressive range and subtlety of a fully poseable GI Joe). No, the one thing you really need to know to understand what this film is like is that its title really does refer to Tom Cruise's character.

—Allan James Thomas

One that got away

Big Fish, dir. Tim Burton. I want to love Tim Burton's films. They have such promise. Mad desires, strange un-doings, trembling visuals, but, when will I actually love one? Patiently I wait, figuring there must be one gurgling away in Burton's gut that will win me over. I thought *Big Fish* might be it! Sadly, my vigil continues.

There is no nut-shell plot for this film, at least not one worth retelling. It meanders around the life (real and fantastical) of Ed Bloom. Bloom, story-teller extraordinaire, weaves real life and fancy into tales that capture everyone's imagination—everyone that is, except his own son Will (Billy Crudup). Frustrated by the endless melding of fact and fiction, Will confronts his father on his death bed, in an attempt to find out the facts of his father's life. But surprise, surprise, Will discovers that the truth can be one hell of a slippery beast (don't forget we're talking 'big fish').

Big Fish certainly has an enviable cast. Albert Finney and Ewan McGregor (as senior and junior Ed Bloom respectively) give appropriately cock-eyed performances, but lack the common ground needed to pull off the double act. When Jessica Lang (playing Ed senior's wife) slips fully dressed into a bath with pyjama-clad Ed, I was intensely moved. She always seems slightly drunk to me, but damn, she can nail a poignant moment. Billy Crudup deserves real credit for maintaining Will's straight guy persona in a film full of decidedly fruity characters. There is a host of other big stars (Danny DeVito, Helena Bonham-Carter, Steve Buscemi) that give what can only be described as dazzling character turns.

But all that great acting wasn't enough to shorten my breath. Even with Burton's famously flamboyant visual flair, *Big Fish* just didn't have oomph. The script was soft when it needed to punch hard and was too tidy when it needed to sprawl. Burton needs tougher subject matter to play fairy tales with. If only The Brothers Grimm were still pushing the pen.

—Siobhan Jackson

Sleepers wake

Good bye Lenin!, dir. Wolfgang Becker. *Good bye Lenin!* is a 'small' film about 'big' things. No stars, no digital effects, no fancy hair-dos and no histrionic flourishes. With the summer holiday blockbusters screaming their budgets from the mountaintops, it is good to know that 'small' films are still out there.

Good bye Lenin! has a delightfully simple plot. Christiane (Katrin Saβ), a committed East German communist, falls into a coma just months before the wall falls. When she awakes East and West have re-unified. On doctor's orders, Christiane is not to be subjected to any minor let along major shocks. Concerned that the political enormity of re-unification may kill her, her son Alex (Daniel Brühl) decides to keep his mother in the dark. And so the farce begins.

The madness of Alex's scheme is plot enough, but *Good bye Lenin!* gives you a good deal more than that. It's not easy to portray East Germany in a gentle light, or to make its supporters profoundly sympathetic, but this film manages to do just that without pulling too many punches. Reminiscent of Britain's great anti-Thatcher films of the eighties (*My Beautiful Launderette*, *Letter to Brezhnev* etc), *Good bye Lenin!* tackles 'big' politics at the kitchen sink. It is not about the big figures of history but the people who nurse their own mothers, sport cheap hair-cuts, dictate letters while ironing and eat pickles out of the jar.

Good bye Lenin! has its short comings—it's neither quite funny enough nor satisfyingly tragic—but with a handsome eye for detail and a light directorial touch it deserves a good deal of its art-house hit status.

Juggling the freedoms

of the West with the convictions of the East was at times too politically complicated for what was essentially a light comedy—but there were whispers of a tough strangeness in *Good bye Lenin!* and for that I praise it.

And if, like me, you have always preferred the word cosmonaut to astronaut I suggest you moon-walk right on down to the next session of *Good bye Lenin!*. There are treats in store.

—Siobhan Jackson

Human conflict

Cold Mountain dir. Anthony Minghella. Charles Frazier's remarkable 1997 novel evokes Civil War-time North Carolina through the slightly formal drawl and godly—or ungodly—habits of its principal characters. It's a complex tale, both odyssey and psychological development novel, a mix the film's director and screenplay writer, Anthony Minghella, has absorbed and understood as comprehensively as he did Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*. What both films lack, necessarily, is the leisure of the original form. In *Cold Mountain* this matters more, because more is held in imaginative suspension in *Cold Mountain*. Movies, even the best of them, are not good at letting you linger, or wonder.

The would-be lovers of *Cold Mountain*, preacher's daughter Ada and Inman (Nicole Kidman and Jude Law) are separated by four years of war. They write letters, but minimal, repressed ones, revealing more between than in the lines. While you're still pondering their subtext, the film's action spirits you elsewhere, most forcefully to the carnage of the Civil War battlefields and their amoral aftermath—vigilante civil guards who use war as an excuse for sadism, whole families procuring and profiting like flies on the human carcase. Minghella does the episodic mayhem justice, aided by a skilled cast. With his central characters and their long-distance bond, he is less successful. Kidman and Law act their hearts out—you can see thespian effort in every one of Kidman's gestures—but they are both so implacably beautiful it's hard to believe in their suffering. (Someone should speak to Kidman's hair stylist.) As for Renee Zellweger, as Ruby, the practical drifter who comes to live with and 'learn' the over-educated Ada after the death of her father (Donald Sutherland, in a faultless cameo), well, she's just a bit too reflex backwoodsy for me. Caricature acting.

But all that said, it is an affecting film, perhaps because it is so intelligent about war, more profound, for example, than the celebrated *Saving Private Ryan*, because it gives war a broad human, not just an heroic, context. Minghella is, of course, not American, and he shot *Cold Mountain* mostly in Romania rather than North Carolina. His stars don't all have authentic Southern accents because most are not American, let alone from North Carolina (Kidman, it seems, is 'from the UK'). So you might, in these the post-Free Trade Agreement days, enjoy the Hollywood industrial campaign currently being conducted via email and internet, roundly condemning the film on all the aforesaid grounds. Tut tut.

—Morag Fraser

watching brief

Whodunnit

It's a year now since I got back from my little trip to England, where I visited rellies, was fed raw leek by a gorilla and slipped and slithered over frozen garbage in London.

And it's nearly 20 years since I was there before that, horrified in the middle of the miners' strike, in Thatcher's heyday. I returned here gladly in 1985 wondering what on earth was going to happen to my birthplace in the north of England, which was so clearly under attack. Now we know. London now rates 45th on a list of liveable cities that includes virtually all Australian capitals in the top ten.

Two ABC programs got me thinking about all this: of course the two-part Thatcher biography in February, and the recently started *Crime Team* (Thursdays, 9.30pm). Funny how some programs are better for company: I needed it in the Thatcher documentaries, because they made hard watching for anyone who remembers free education, a fair working week, real weekends and a health system that worked.

'Yes,' said my husband. 'I remember that time too. Before privatisation, outsourcing, anti-union legislation and gambling-led recoveries.'

'A time when redistribution of wealth was still a respectable topic, and taxing the incomes of the rich rather than the food of the poor was the way to get money for government,' I replied.

'A time when we were governed instead of ruled,' said my son, who was too young to remember, but could do the maths.

If economic rationalism has hit Australia hard, with the widening gap between rich and poor, the damage I've seen in my birth country has been far worse. That garbage in the streets, my relatives' harrowing stories of dreadful negligence under the NHS, the general air of truculent mistrust, where had it all come from? Whodunnit?

Well, using the tools available to me at the time, as in the excellent, even compulsively viewable *Crime Team*, I can say that I have no doubt at all that Maggie Thatcher, Milton Friedman's centrefold, dunnit. Blair, (whatever one thinks of him now) was hobbled from the start, trying to build a decent home out of the wreck she left behind her. Anyway, the documentary, careful and even-handed to the point of whitewash, was damning enough. She said enough to make you realise that it is always a mistake to vote for a successful psychopath. The sight of her weeping because she was no longer in power was curiously unaffecting: usually the sight of an elderly lady weeping will make a stone feel something. Unless of course the elderly lady is weeping because she isn't able to bully an entire country any more.

The big thing that England still labours under, no pun intended, and I speak as an anguished Pom, is that horrible, poisonous class system. You see it in *Maggie*, with her careful vowels tortured into a simulacrum of gentility, especially at the beginning when she had to slow her speech (your mother tongue always surfaces when you speak quickly). Eventually, from long use, she seemed at ease with her artificial voice, a forced-down contralto that rasped when she was angry, which was often.

In *Crime Team*, which you simply must watch, the accents tell their own story too. Britain is still class-ridden, with celebrity sleuths paired to make as much contrast as possible. The natural Essex warmth of crime novelist Martina Cole contrasted with the waspish fluting of art critic Brian Sewell, whose accent would not be snobbish if his words were not egregiously so. He attempts to patronise her and ends up chucking little tanties when she dares to disagree with him. Anne Widdecombe, ex minister for the Tories, was teamed in the first episode with lefty comic John O'Farrell. They did rather better together; it tends to work when both parties have good manners. But top of the rudeness league was Janet Street-Porter, the British journalist, who turns the team effort into investigating a 17th century murder into a childish me-first race.

The series' host, Jerome Lynch, is a real barrister who isn't shy of hectoring the teams for sloppy thinking. He reminds one team that a junior barrister would be sacked for neglecting to ask some glaring questions, and you don't doubt it. What raises this program above many others is its focus on the social conditions of the times it investigates. This is particularly harrowing when, in an upcoming episode dealing with the mysterious deaths of babies found floating in a river, Lynch tells us that in the 1890s, (when my grandparents were alive) 50 children a year were found dead in London streets. To a child brought up under Keynesian systems, that would be unthinkable. But what will the future bring?

On a lighter note or notes, SBS has a series called *Songs That Changed The World*, screening Wednesdays at 7.30pm. March 3's pick is 'Heartbreak Hotel', which is probably the sexiest song ever performed. How it changed the world is anyone's guess. If songs can change the world for the better, let me suggest something like 'Try A Little Tenderness'. It wouldn't hurt. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer.

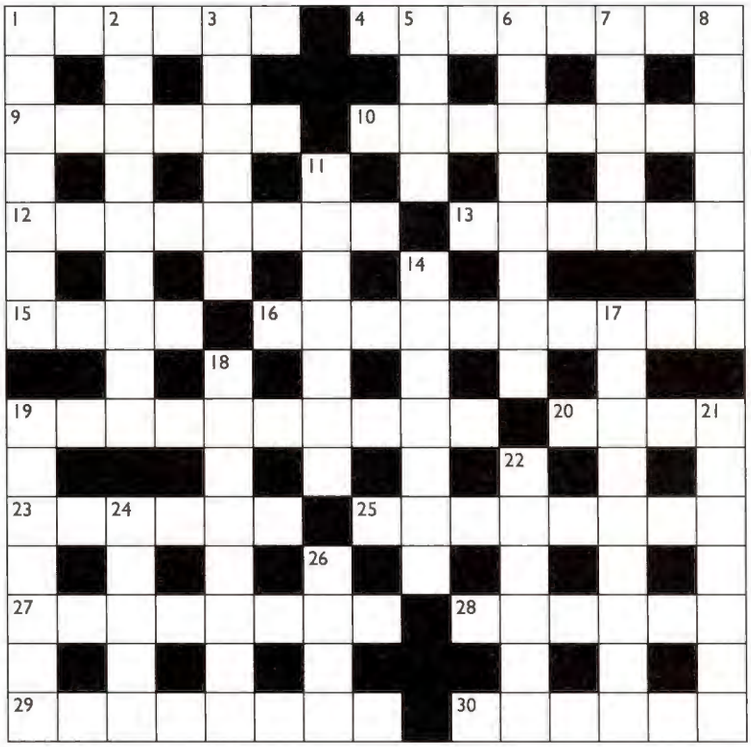
puzzled

Devised by
Joan Nowotny IBVM

Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 121, March 2004

ACROSS

1. Some author I gingerly quote as my source. (6)
4. For a change, he jots P.S. down, as a reminder of his special role with Mary. (2,6)
9. Fairly? Fairly, rather. (6)
10. Test public reaction with some aeronautics? (3,1,4)
12. After about an hour, a pie brings a feeling of elation. (8)
13. Woollen coat to take to the cleaners? (6)
15. A tricky ruse, for certain (4)
16. They have to be checked in for high carriage! (6,4)
19. Put out badly closed adit? (10)
20. The season when I provided money temporarily. (4)
23. Happen to live beside the cascade. (6)
25. Search for an elementary particle? That is the issue under discussion. (8)
27. Disregard position on horseback, perhaps! (8)
28. Some stratagem initiated for the twins? That's a sign. (6)
29. Bypass a subordinate activity by getting out of the way. (8)
30. In this we are in perfect harmony. (6)



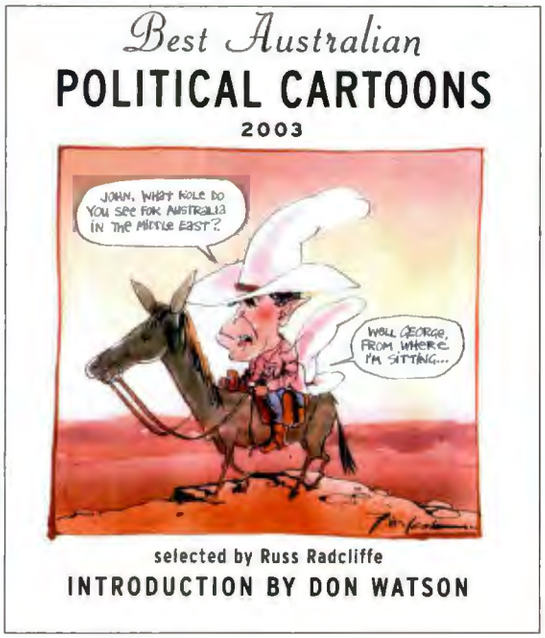
DOWN

1. Work on the print media can be burdensome (7)
2. Sweets and wines can be enjoyed at such activities as skating for example. (3,6)
3. Opening remarks in sort of order. (6)
5. Up to the time when one can cultivate the soil (4)
6. Where dinner might be prepared for ease of access (2,1,5)
7. Some parcel it early for the aristocracy. (5)
8. Possibly sheer leg, end nipped off by these stock managers? (7)
11. Mild lamb docked and stewed; it's a means of raising the water level to turn the wheel. (7)
14. O, Negus and I discuss a sort of rock, but not on the music program. (7)
17. So be it! I am on site possibly, in order to make use of the pleasant facilities. (9)
18. Were Wycliffe's followers all lords? Maybe. (8)
19. Alter the sound track to add debt reminders of questionable value. (7)
21. O tennis! I watched it with considerable strain (7)
22. Like sea-bird flying behind the ship. (6)
24. Catch the ball and hit the stumps, for instance. (5)
26. Move cautiously towards the boundary. (4)

Solution to Crossword no. 120, Jan-Feb 2004

■	S	U	M	M	E	R	H	O	L	I	D	A	Y	■
■	N	■	A	■	E	■	N	■	M	■	D	■	■	■
B	L	U	D	G	E	O	N	S	■	P	L	U	M	B
R	■	S	■	I	■	R	■	I	■	R	■	L	■	A
O	P	U	S	■	M	I	D	D	L	E	E	A	S	T
A	■	A	■	■	■	E	■	E	■	S	■	T	■	T
D	I	L	I	G	E	N	T	■	■	S	T	E	E	L
C	■	■	■	R	■	T	■	F	■	E	■	■	■	E
A	G	A	T	E	■	■	L	O	O	S	E	N	E	D
S	■	B	■	N	■	L	■	R	■	■	■	U	■	R
T	E	R	R	A	F	I	R	M	A	■	A	P	S	E
E	■	I	■	D	■	N	■	A	■	K	■	T	■	S
R	A	D	I	I	■	N	U	L	L	I	F	I	E	S
■	■	G	■	N	■	E	■	I	■	S	■	A	■	■
■	R	E	P	E	A	T	O	N	E	S	E	L	F	■

EUREKA STREET book offer



Best Australian Political Cartoons 2003

selected by Russ Radcliffe

Best Australian Political Cartoons 2003 features cartoons by Peter Nicholson, Michael Leunig, Cathy Wilcox, Geoff Pryor, Bill Leak and Sean Leahy. Russ Radcliffe has made his selection from the work of those who have tackled the big issues of 2003: the war on Iraq, refugees, cross-media ownership and the resignation of the Governor General. The irreverent satirical tone of the cartoons makes fascinating reading.

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ISSN 1036-1758 02

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