EUREKA STREET

A MAGAZINE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, THE ARTS AND THEOLOGY
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Too young to love

As a teacher and parent, while I appreciate the willingness of Frs Gleeson and Hamilton (*Eureka Street*, March 2004) to address thorny issues in Australian education, I suggest respectfully that the views of both writers are a little Panglossian.

The recent 'SHine SA' (sic) sex education program, (anything but lustrous!), introduced for 'trial' in some state schools, is self purportedly 'values neutral', an ideological stance proudly espoused by many of its 1970s-bound proponents. This program contains an undiscerned Petronian array of activities and attitudes that assume the very relativism and subjectivism rightly repudiated in Fr Gleeson's citing of Max Charlesworth and is at odds with his own firm affirmation of objective moral values.

Moreover, Fr Hamilton would know that adolescents, despite appearances to the contrary, seek—indeed, often demand—the setting of clear, strong limits. As an experienced Indian Jesuit educator often remarked: 'Even in the Garden of Eden, there was an angel with a flaming sword', and as Dante recognised: 'The strongest guard is placed at the gateway to nothing'.

There is a very real parental and pedagogical time and place for a 'humble language' of 'prohibition'. Conversation, of course, should not end there, but a Spockian denial of a role for various, apt forms of nay-saying would deprive 'ordinary people', especially parents and teachers, of a necessary means of relating to the young in their care. It would also paint an unhelpfully roseate picture of adolescents, and worse, expect of our young a self-direction and 'wisdom' beyond most of them, especially in what might aptly be regarded as a hyper-sexualised and commercialised culture.

John Kelly
Tranmere, SA

Hidden casualties

In 'Encountering the Homeless' (*Eureka Street*, March 2004), your correspondent neatly highlights the service delivery and policy challenges of this difficult area.

The proffered solution, however, to urge government to adopt more innovative policies, is short on content and excludes any personal encounter. It is precisely the nature of homelessness that makes political responses so difficult. Such suggestions are in danger of returning discussion of homelessness to a purely economic forum, to simply equate it with a lack of housing fixable by strategies such as rent assistance.

There are some positive policy approaches such as the formation of Housing Associations enabling capital to be directed into housing for people on low incomes. Such initiatives are a long awaited response to the continuing decline in public housing. Proposals to change Centrelink's rules for identifying people also have the potential to assist homeless people who often do not carry sufficient identification.

Such measures require the commitment of dedicated people prepared to show some leadership and get on with it. But the increasing presence of young people (46 per cent of homeless people are now under 24) should provoke a deeper critique of the values by which we choose to live. Make no mistake: our society's emphasis and spending on security and border protection issues, backed by free market ideologies, has more effect on the provision of money to public housing than a hundred letters or articles to any magazine. This is an electorally popular strategy and Mark Latham has yet to offer a significantly different policy with respect to Community Services.

In the meantime the more prepared we are to listen to the stories of homeless people, as told by them, the more likely we are to reassess our priorities as a community and nation.

David Holdcroft SJ
Parkville, VIC

Priorities please

Which is more important—a new history of philosophy in Australia (James Franklin's) or the reissue of a 22-year-old biography of Archbishop Mannix (Michael Gilchrist's)? I'd vote for philosophy in this test but obviously the Editor and I disagree on that—she gives her choice about six times as much space as mine. She determines priorities, of course; that's what editors do. What they should also do is make quality of the writing a criterion for publication, too.

On that basis, I find that Stephen Holt ('The Irish Legacy', *Eureka Street*, May 2004) hardly deserved that generous space, his review being so dispiritingly lightweight. While acknowledging that he is dealing with a 'revised and expanded edition', he gives no clue about the extent or significance of that expansion. Even more puzzling, he makes no mention of the other books on Mannix which have been published, curiously not even mentioning Santamaria's, though he certainly deals with Santamaria himself, as a friend and confidant of the archbishop.

It is deeply troubling that Holt can urbanely write, 'Mannix's countless media "grabs" form his [i.e. Gilchrist's] principal source': I doubt that many other historians would be so uncritical, especially after James Griffin has argued that there is a good deal of important material which has, so far, been only poorly exploited. And that raises the greatest—and the most serious—lacuna in Holt's review. How can anyone consider Mannix without referring to Griffin's superb entry on him in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Volume 10)? In his review of that volume in the *Bulletin*, Edmund Campion characterised it as 'revisionist history' and with good reason: it probed, it challenged and it enlightened. Holt, seeming to lack those capacities, should reflect upon their importance, and so should the Editor of *Eureka Street*.

John Carmody
Roseville, NSW

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Andrew Hamilton

Talking about community

If politicians speak of the church and politics, they usually stir the dogs of war. Lindsay Tanner and Tony Abbott recently gave more thoughtful speeches about the place of the churches in public life, which merit a reflective response.

Tanner developed the argument set out in his book, *Open Australia* (Pluto Press, 1999). He believes that in Australia, such phenomena as a high suicide rate, loneliness, endemic poverty, chronic unemployment, drug taking and alcoholism disclose a disturbing level of alienation. This breakdown of trust affects the quality of a society and eventually affects economic growth.

Tanner argues that the cause of alienation is the individualism that has accompanied economic growth and social liberation since the 1960s. When we conceive that our identity is constructed by the exercise of individual choice, communal enterprises and unselfish commitments appear quixotic. So, since the 1960s, movements and institutions that appeal to shared meaning have been in decline. At the same time, people who cannot find the happiness promised them suffer from alienation.

Tanner believes that the way forward is to maintain the freedoms that have recently been gained, while encouraging communal values. The government's role is to facilitate participation in society. It should also encourage communal organisations, which provide access to participation.

This is the background to Tanner's reflection on the social role of churches. Like other community institutions, churches have been weakened by contemporary individualism. Dogmatism and social activism alike have failed to stem their decline. But they have a bright future if they encourage altruistic relationships and communities in which people can participate in society. He counsels them not to allow dogma or prejudice to lure them into opposition to particular kinds of relationships: they should rather look only to the quality of relationships. He regards this emphasis as in keeping with the core beliefs of Christian churches.

Tanner's argument that churches are caught in the great conflict between individualist and communal constructions of the world is persuasive. His call for a politics that encourages participation in society and supports communities is also welcome. His argument, however, poses two questions to churches. The first is whether churches can accept the inclusive focus on the quality of relationships that Tanner suggests. The second and deeper question is whether the bargain which he proposes to churches is sustainable: by accepting the gains in individual freedom that individualism has brought, and complementing them with communitarian values, will churches find an assured social position?

Although the offer is attractive, the nature of churches makes me sceptical. People belong to Christian churches because they accept a story about God's relationship to the world through Jesus Christ. That story contains a distinctive view of what is important in human life, of why human beings matter, and of what human society should be like. The story and its implied view of humanity cannot be reduced to a few general principles, like the love of one's neighbour. Nor can the commitments of churches to society be discharged by a generalised commitment to create community. They must embody in their communities the distinctive view of human relationships that flows out of their story, and commends them to the broader society. So, although the Christian story suggests that any community should be based on respect and acceptance of people with different moral perspectives, questions about sexuality and respect for life will be resolved in conversation

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with the Christian tradition, and not only with the surrounding culture.

Tanner's proposed pact between churches and society also assumes that the individualism in our culture will be content with the liberties already won, and that churches can simply accept the present range of individual freedom as a done deal. This assumption is unlikely.

If our culture endorses expanding the area of individual decision, we would expect to find constant pressure at the boundaries of freedom. Pressure to make traffic laws optional, to abolish restrictive labour laws, to increase freedom for genetic experimentation, to legalise euthanasia and partial birth abortion are only some of the causes we might expect to find supported. It is also natural for those who advocate such causes to dismiss those who oppose them as authoritarian, and to try to marginalise them. If, as I would argue, the desire of governments to act in ways that deny the human dignity of those affected, like asylum seekers and the people of Iraq, flows from the same cult of free and untrammelled decision, we would also expect them to try to marginalise their critics.

Morality then becomes a matter of choice: depending on their political tastes, people choose between rafts of individual and social values.

If churches and other groups believe that some areas of individual freedom are bought at the expense of a humane society, they may press to limit them. In turn, they will be criticised as authoritarian and out of touch with their individual members. For this reason, no matter what accommodations and qualifications are made on particular issues, a sunny relationship between an individualist culture and a communitarian church is unlikely.

Tony Abbott assumes that there will be conflict between the vision of humanity implicit in the Christian story and the reality of Australian society. His perspective is that of the Christian politician, the member of a government that has to deal with a situation which he personally deplores. He offers as an example the widespread practise of abortion. After making distinctions and allowances, he claims that the high number of abortions in Australia betrays a disturbing lack of responsibility in society. Like Tanner, he sees in society an emphasis on individual choice with no consideration of consequences and a disregard for relationships. He argues, however, that governments cannot act to limit choice unless there is public support based on a strong view of humanity and society.

A change in public attitudes requires education and advocacy. Abbott therefore asks why, in the face of a public crisis as significant as that of Aboriginal life expectancy, Christians press him regularly about asylum seekers, but never about abortion.

The response to Abbott's speech was instructive. Those opposed to any limitation of individual freedom to terminate pregnancy dismissed his views and tried to marginalise him as a man intruding in women's lives, as a Catholic in public debate, as an individual in a tolerant government. The reaction was what you might predict whenever a public person or community group argues for any restriction on the freedom of choice.

The response, however, sharpens the question Abbott addresses to churches. Why are Christians so hesitant to engage in public education and advocacy about the clear social ills involved in abortion, while being so ready to take public positions on the less morally clear issue of asylum seekers? The imputation is that silence betrays a cowardly compromise with culture.

It would be possible to respond defensively by arguing that the attitudes of churches to abortion are well known. Furthermore, members of Christian churches are actively involved in pressing for legislation that enacts respect for life in all its processes.

One might also reflect more deeply on the comparison between attitudes to the issues of abortion and of asylum seekers. This kind of comparison is often used as a wedge to divide members of churches in their opposition to government policy, and so to marginalise church advocacy for asylum seekers. But there are good reasons why politicians face particularly insistent pressure about the treatment of asylum seekers. However one weighs the relative moral gravity of abortion and the abuse of asylum seekers, the moral responsibility of current Australian politicians for the treatment of refugees is more grave and pressing than it is for tolerating abortion. For they have passed legislation and countenanced regulations that manifestly destroy the lives and the mental health of asylum seekers. For this they have a direct responsibility. In the case of abortion, their responsibility is less direct. They have only failed to legislate to change an existing state of affairs.

These arguments, however, do not explain why

members of churches are silent about abortion. Some critics suppose that churches are infected by the same individualism that they oppose. Morality then becomes a matter of choice: depending on their political tastes, people choose between rafts of individual and social values. This kind of selectivity would be disturbing, because it politicises churches, and fatally weakens commitment to the Christian story. Although there can be argument about many aspects of what respect for life entails, the argument within churches is properly conducted within a shared vision and tradition.

PUBLIC SILENCE ON PARTICULAR issues, however, need not reveal a selective adherence to principle. It may be strategic. There are many reasons why people will remain silent on issues about which they feel strongly. Leaders of churches, for example, may be reluctant to advocate restrictive legislation because they are seen to represent authoritarian institutions. To see men leading movements to limit women's freedom, too, is a little distasteful.

Other reasons for public silence reflect the fragmentation of moral vision in society. Those who work with asylum seekers, for example, make alliances and friendships with good people who share a common ethical vision about the humanity of refugees, but who may well differ passionately about the proper respect for the processes of life. Effective advocacy for a shared cause may suffer when partners engage publicly on opposed sides of a bitter public debate.

Finally, silence may also mark the recognition that it is a serious matter to limit human freedom. Australian policy towards asylum seekers shows how serious its effects can be. Furthermore, those affected by such measures are normally the poor and resourceless. The wealthy can circumvent them. If we believe that we shall create a better Australian society by restricting women's freedom to abortion, it will be essential to address the aspects of society that make abortion seem a necessary choice. To do this will involve changes in family policy, industrial relationships, and the support of community groups that will be costly and far-reaching. But without them, pressure for legislative change will be ineffective. It will be an exercise in blame that neither benefits society nor represents a Christian vision.

Tony Abbott's reflections complement those of Lindsay Tanner on the role of churches in an individualist culture. His example of abortion shows that the relationship between churches and culture will necessarily include conflict. Tanner's inclusive vision reminds churches that they must represent a comprehensive vision of society, and not be confined to negative positions on single issues. ■

Andrew Hamilton SJ is *Eureka Street*'s publisher.

Greg Barns

Righting wrongs

The High Court's judgment on 29 April that the Family Court did not have the authority to release children from the Baxter detention centre provides a compelling reason for Australia to revisit the question of a Bill of Rights. If a fully fledged Bill of Rights—one that could not be eroded by the Parliament or the courts—were in existence today, no child would ever be in detention as a result of government migration policy.

If Australia had a Bill of Rights, lawyers would not have to seek the court's protection from the possibility that Immigration Minister, Amanda Vanstone, could consider returning vulnerable children to detention because the High Court has allowed her to do so.

Constitutional scholar Professor George Williams, speaking on the ABC's PM program on the day of the High Court's decision, pointed out that the issue of the rights of children to be protected from detention was unclear, even after the High Court decision.

'The High Court in those cases will not be looking at it so much from the angle of the general welfare of children, which is what the Family Court had wanted to do, but it will be asking whether the Constitution enables children to be held in these circumstances, and that will be a hard argument to win because you have to actually justify that the Constitution says that the current Act is unconstitutional and that's something that is unlikely to occur given the High Court's earlier decisions', Professor Williams noted. In other words, the Australian Constitution cannot be, and was not intended to be, an extensive protector of rights and freedoms.

In an excellent paper on the issue of a Bill of Rights for Australia published in a 1998 edition of Murdoch University's Law Journal, the Chief Justice of Western Australia, David Malcolm, set out the inadequacy of the current system in Australia in a case by case determination of rights and freedoms.

Western Australia's chief judge quoted his colleague, the Chief Justice of South Australia, John Doyle, who argued in 1992 that while the common law is able to adapt to changes in society, it cannot adequately protect rights and freedoms because the Parliament 'may legislate to alter, restrict or negate any protection created by the common law'.

Malcolm added that 'while the courts are increasingly responding to society's attitude to human rights, the capacity of the common law is limited to the extent that it is opportunistic. No general statement of relevant rights can be developed in response to the individual case. The Court is restricted to a declaration of rights as between the parties before it'. And as he rightly noted, courts have to follow previous decisions when adjudicating cases. If a right to freedom has been denied in a particular case by the High Court, then all other courts have to follow that ruling, regardless of the circumstances of the case before them.

Politicians are always reluctant to give up their supreme law making power and, given the failure of the Hawke Government's 1988 referendum on a Bill of Rights for Australia, it seems there is a reluctance to revisit the issue.

And even if a Bill of Rights were on the agenda, the temptation might be to follow the New Zealand model of a Bill of Rights legislation that does not give the courts the right to invalidate legislation. If such a Bill were adopted in Australia, changes to anti-terrorism and migration laws that infringe on basic rights and freedoms would be enforceable despite a Bill of Rights.

What Australia should do is adopt a Canadian-style Charter of Rights and Freedoms that keeps governments in check by striking down laws that impinge on the rights of vulnerable groups in the community like children, gay women and men and indigenous people.

Even the politicians in Canada—some of whom resented the curtailing of their decision-making power when the Charter was introduced in 1982—now take account of the Charter whenever laws are considered. As former Ontario Premier Bob Rae has said, 'The charter infuses everything. There hasn't been a single piece of law that has been passed that doesn't take the charter into account'.

As the April 29 High Court decision on children in detention demonstrated, people living in Australia are not particularly well protected from government attacks on their freedoms and rights. Only a strong Bill of Rights will ensure that vulnerable individuals and groups receive the protection that a genuine democracy should accord them. ■

Greg Barns is is a Hobart based writer and lawyer. He is a former senior adviser to the Howard government and is now a member of the Australian Democrats.

capital letter

Lost in the wilderness

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS HAS moved a long way since John Howard won office in 1996, though whether forwards or backwards is arguable. Who would have thought that the abolition of the major structure of Aboriginal involvement and participation in decision making would occur without fuss or controversy, least of all from the Labor Party? Indeed, that Labor would actually anticipate the policy? And who would have expected that its replacement—'mainstreaming' and a whole of government approach—would be determined without any mechanisms for establishing accountability either to Aborigines or the wider community?

Aborigines have, for too long, been portrayed as the victims of government policies, tossed like corks in the ocean of a wider politic. Yes, politicians will do whatever they can get away with. But the fate of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and 30 years of Aboriginal affairs policies is equally a result of the words, actions and omissions of Aboriginal leaders. That many people, including Aborigines, see as much opportunity as risk in the new arrangements reflects both a failure within Aboriginal politics, and stupidity outside it.

The failure is not simply that those at the top chose unsuitable men to lead, or became so lost in the thicket of minding their own positions that they ignored the plight of Aboriginal communities. Nor is it just ATSIC's failure to become a viable forum, to plan for Aboriginal development, or to wield the necessary resources. ATSIC as a polity never developed an idea beyond a slogan, nor were the slogans new. At a regional level it devised some systems for sharing resources, and some partnership role in setting priorities, but this capacity emanated from agendas written by others or by history. ATSIC was never able to compel governments to provide services taken for granted by the wider community. John Howard was responsible for progress in this area, without prompting from ATSIC.

The leaders of ATSIC failed to be articulate spokesmen and women, whether to governments, the wider population, or, perhaps most damningly, to Aborigines themselves.

This sealed the fate of ATSIC, even if there was a mood in some quarters that the organisation was so tame (and pre-occupied by its own shenanigans) that Aboriginal affairs had ceased to be a political problem. Yet even the Howard Government is impatient with the lack of results in Aboriginal affairs.

It is frustrated that much of the 'action' has been about secondary issues. There has been little attention to entrenched disadvantage, the quality of services in communities, the capacity of agencies to make much difference or the tendency of representatives to luxuriate in the disadvantage rather than change it. The big issues concern the active involvement of Aboriginal people themselves; getting kids to go to school, addressing community violence, taking charge of structures, and becoming agents for their own health. Rhetoric and symbolism—manifest in the stolen children debates, native title disillusions, or the flowery end of the reconciliation debate—are not enough. It was not the government that first encountered frustration at the grandstanding of ATSIC members. It had long been experienced by Aborigines themselves—one reason why they have been generally unmoved by ATSIC's fate.

Seemingly it is Liberals rather than Labor members, who care about improving Aboriginal conditions. What Michael Wooldridge did in Aboriginal health will likely stand as the only thing for which he deserves credit. Brendan Nelson has visited more Aboriginal communities than anyone in Labor apart from Warren Snowdon—the only man who thinks that saying something positive about Aborigines won't lose votes. David Kemp, generally thought a Liberal hard man, is woefully wet on Aboriginal affairs (and multiculturalism). Tony Abbott cares. Even John Howard recognises that while there are no votes in it, the state of affairs calls urgently for new approaches.

HOWARD HAS BEEN URGING the Council of Australian Governments to adopt joint initiatives on Aboriginal issues. Basic service provision in Aboriginal communities—water, sewerage, municipal services, housing, education, health care and freedom from violence—are primarily matters for state and local government. It is not the Commonwealth's primary duty to provide such schemes because other levels of government have failed to do so. Beyond this, Commonwealth departments have rarely had their acts together where the policy of one agency often runs contrary to others. The Commonwealth has established pilot schemes around Australia, each under the charge of a different Secretary, to promote planning, programs and action. Secretaries have been told that their bonuses depend on success.

The shift has been lightning fast. Cabinet decided national ATSIC had to go. The federal minister, Amanda Vanstone (no leader in any field of government thinking) came to Cabinet with minimalist proposals to put this into action. Virtually all of Cabinet rejected it quickly and emotionally. But there was no fallback, or more extensive proposal. Cabinet decided instead on some new principles, without the faintest idea of how they might be carried out. The politicians and bureaucrats are looking for constructive ideas. What is not clear is how these may be evaluated or how Aboriginal opinion is included in decision making. No one will be thinking much about it pending the election, and it's unlikely that Labor will think it politically advantageous to raise the issue. ■

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

snapshot

Budging language

As the major Feast Days in the cult of Mammon, budgets have their own rituals and archaic language. Why, for example, are budgets brought down? The answer may lie in the origins of the word. Budget comes from *bougette*, an old French word for the little leather bag that later became a purse or wallet. So, in the 18th century they spoke of the annual budget being opened. Later on, as politics become more personalised, all eyes were drawn to the Chancellor's entry to Parliament with his battered case. He brought down the budget with him.

The *bougette* itself had a circular journey, from the Latin *bulga* which itself was imported from Gaul to denote the soldier's knapsack. Ominously for later Treasurers, it appears that rubbery figures and inflation are not a budgetary aberration, but are embedded into the structure of language: from *bulga* also comes the English word, *bulge*. Some lexicographers have more adventurously also seen the colloquial phrase, *silver budgie*, as cognate with *budget*, referring, as the phrase does, to the fortunate condition of one who has the best treasurer in the world. Conservative lexicographers, it must be said, consider this derivation fanciful.

A rich legacy

The death of Fr Bill Dalton SJ in May merits notice for the loss both of a genial teacher and scholar, and of a significant bridge between the earlier and the contemporary Catholic Church. Bill, who studied Scripture and began teaching in the late 1950s, was one of a generation of teachers who studied overseas. Through their efforts, theology in Australia changed from a seminary activity undertaken selflessly but with limited resources, into a professional discipline.

He was also good at crossing boundaries. He initiated ecumenical conversations with scholars in other churches, and brought Jesuit theological studies from a semi-rural setting to the very different living conditions and study environment of Melbourne. His friendship with his fellow Scripture scholar, Dr Davis McCaughey, then Master of Ormond College and later Governor of Victoria, was vital for the ecumenical character of the United Faculty of Theology. Bill later was Superior of the Biblical College in Rome and the Biblical Institute in Jerusalem. In personality, he represented the best of the early days of Vatican II—he was expansive, confident and convivial. He left a large legacy for his successors to spend generously.

Congratulations!

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Taxi cab tales

Cab cultures, not to mention the cabbies themselves, vary widely around the world. The Australian habit of hopping into the front seat with the hack and exchanging a cheery word is not generally welcome in Paris, for example, where frigid silence and glacial waves of disapproval are likely to follow such imprudence. In any case, Parisian cabbies often pre-empt that manoeuvre by having their front passenger seat occupied by paperwork, folders, or, in one admittedly unusual case, a toothy little poodle stropping its paws on the upholstery.

So when I had to get a cab in the nearby provincial town to take me back to my mountain village, I wasn't sure how best to behave. For a start, I couldn't see any cabs on the streets and I couldn't see anything that resembled a taxi rank. Resigned to asking directions, I was suddenly almost run over by a cab as I hesitated at the curb. With great patience and gentleness, the driver helped a very old lady out of the back seat and then waited while she sorted through what appeared to be every euro cent coin ever minted to put together his fare and a tip. Hovering respectfully, I managed at last to communicate, as he farewelled the old woman.

Yes, he could take me to 'my' village—he knew it well because his daughter often worked in a restaurant there; no, it wasn't too far and it would cost 'à peu près vingt trois, vingt quatre euros ... ' (About 24 euros at the most). So, before you can say, 'Oop-la' or 'Zut alors' I'm sitting beside him, having first established that protocol would allow for this matey Australian custom.

We rip round the fountain in the centre of town, head for the open country and soon we're barrelling along those narrow, tree-lined French roads so familiar in photograph and painting. Designed—or more accurately evolved—for the slow, medieval plod of horses and carts, these *anciens chemins* have been forcibly adapted to the high speed needs of Renaults, Citroëns, Peugeots and, increasingly, four-wheel drives as wide and as high as the armoured tanks that once fought over these undulating fields. There are, without doubt, some cautious and sedate Gallic drivers. It's just that you don't often come across them in your part of the country, and cabbies, regardless of geography, are not among them.

So Monsieur Marc Lagrange, my cab driver, and I chat amicably and get to know each other as we hurtle round the bends and over the narrow bridges and past any trucks inconsiderate enough to be lumbering in our path along the 30 kilometre journey. Roadside trees and stone walls drop behind us with a flick-flick-flick of momentary, blurred visibility and Monsieur Lagrange's protruding rear-vision mirror, lance-like, seems eager to joust with its counterparts on every passing car, but misses all of them by a distance that would make a hair look thick and is not measurable by modern physics. Soon, the village appears in the distance, a turreted, walled outline on top of its high hill. And on our left Mont Ventoux looms suddenly into view, its snow-covered summit only slightly whiter than my knuckles.

Monsieur Lagrange has been a cabbie in his provincial home town for the past 25 years. He is a lively, witty bloke and—despite my need to keep an eye on the road ahead, not to mention the deep ditch that seems to be yawning at my right elbow—I enjoy his spirited run of conversation. We range over rugby, the effect of last year's heat on the vintage, the beauty of the countryside, immigration, Le Pen, kangaroos, Australian red wines, and Paris, which he loves, and where he is going with his wife at the end of the week for a few days off. To make some points more forcibly, he finds it necessary to take both hands off the wheel, achieving an emphasis so impressive that I doubt if I will ever forget his arguments.

He is a *pied noir*—an Algerian-born Frenchman—and is interesting and liberal in his views on immigration. He has followed Australia's story since *l'affaire Tampa*, which he refers to with a kind of guarded, respectful contempt. When he realises I share his disgust, his relief is palpable and moves him to abandon the steering wheel again in an extravagant gesture of fellow feeling.

We navigate the hairpin bends up to the village and roll through the tight, one-car-wide alleyways with the same insouciant panache that had distinguished our cannonading ride through the vine-patterned plains. In the Place de l'Horloge he pulls up with a stylish swoop under the clock tower and says, 'Voilà.' The meter says €22.50. He says 20 will do, but I add a handsome tip—it has been a marvellous, rollicking ride even if rather demanding physically, emotionally and conversationally.

I farewell him, just a little sad to think that we almost certainly won't meet again. But I'm wrong there, as it turns out. Good luck and some wild coincidence—the sort no one will believe when you tell them later on—will see our paths cross again and often, to our great mutual pleasure, not to mention the furtherance of my *éducation culturelle* from that most quixotic of all teachers—the career cabby. ■

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

the month's traffic

Good morning, Vietnam

[redacted]

In this corner of Vietnam, the open bay, just a curve on the coastline is lined with coconut palms. The beach is shockingly littered. In the water mysterious things underfoot could be slugs (seen stranded at the water's edge) or squelchy plastic bags of discarded stuff. They could be nimble, nipping crabs or half-buried beer cans. And things that brush your leg or arm could be strange weed, stranger jellyfish, or fishing nets.

One afternoon the water was warm and a million, trillion green spores were released, like tiny leaves of maidenhair fern. I was nervous at first to swim in such spotty water, but there were no stings, just a broth of new life, with me for exotic flavour.

The fishing boats here are small round bowls woven from coconut palm. They hold one person, standing, who with a paddle at the front wiggles the boat forward with one hand, playing out (or hauling in) a long trailing net with the other. There is much mending of nets in the daytime and evidence that fishing is a slow, often disappointing labour.

Meanwhile, a minute boy with a whippy stick exercised authority over a herd of bony brown cows, marching them along the beach, cutting short their investigation of my things on the sand. He reminded me of *Heidi*'s Peter, a tough little so and so, with his work sometimes made harder by marauding kids roaring out of the fishermen's shacks to scatter the herd just for fun.

At night I went to sit on the sand, under the stars, looking at the fireflies on the horizon which meant the fishing fleet was out. Large crabs cut through my peace, their forays magnified by shadow, clattering, scuttling zigzags of startling swiftness.

—Marg Honner

The new Spain

VIEWS FROM A [redacted]

In the bar of the railway station, the only people present are silent old men wearing berets and playing dominoes.

Two soldiers, armed as if ready for Iraq, wander in and order a coke. With each movement, their machine guns swing without malice, covering the room. It is Wednesday afternoon and a storm is brewing. Great leaden clouds sweep in from the west. The clatter of dominoes is the only sound until the rain rattles against the roof.

On this afternoon in Sigüenza, a medieval town in north-western Castilla La Mancha in central Spain, the soldiers are the only reminder of the town's turbulent history. In the Spanish Civil War, Sigüenza stood on the front line of battles between Nationalist and Republican forces. On 15 October 1936, Republican soldiers took shelter in Sigüenza's cathedral, which was shelled into partial ruins by Nationalist guns. The cathedral was built almost nine centuries before in 1130, a few years after Christian armies reclaimed the town from Muslims during the *Reconquista* of Spain. It has always been thus in Sigüenza: a town which has never been a centre of power, but which has always stood in the path of warring armies. Men with guns are of no consequence in this town.

When the train to Madrid arrives the two soldiers patrol the platform, eyeing all passengers who regard them nervously as a sign of reassurance. The attacks of 11 March have placed the country on high alert and soldiers in full combat gear have become as ubiquitous as memorials to the dead in train stations. It is hard to imagine that anyone would want to attack Sigüenza, but then no-one imagined the attack on Madrid before it happened.

Two days later, Friday. Another train, another spring storm of cinematic beauty. We have left behind León where the 13th-century cathedral rises from the centre of town, an astonishing Gothic masterpiece which is home to some of the finest stained-glass windows in Europe. Through the window, we see pilgrims, one or two at a time, marching, stick in hand, backpacks on their backs, towards Santiago de Compostela.

One of Europe's last great pilgrimages, the Camino de Santiago was born in the legend of the apostle Santiago (St James), the son of Zebedee. Thought by many church scholars to have preached in Spain, Santiago was executed by Herod Agrippa upon his return to Jerusalem. His followers spirited his body away and their boat washed up on the shores of Galicia in what would become north-western Spain. The bearers of Santiago's body were imprisoned but then escaped, assisted, it is said, by an angel. The local queen was so impressed that she converted to Christianity and authorised the construction of a small mausoleum.

Over centuries, the mausoleum fell into disrepair and was forgotten altogether until the 9th century when it was rediscovered by a hermit, his path guided by a heavenly light. At the time, Spain was in Muslim hands, and Christian soldiers wrote of Santiago's spirit joining them in battle, spurring them on to famous victories. As Christian forces launched the *Reconquista* of Spain, the Order of Santiago was founded by Castillian knights who were at the forefront of battles against the Muslims. By the 11th century, the last resting place of Santiago had become famous throughout Europe and pilgrims were already crossing the Pyrenees on their way to Santiago de Compostela. They have been doing so ever since.

In Astorga, a town which has survived largely through the proceeds of passing pilgrim traffic, the fairytale turrets of the Episcopal Palace—conceived in the fantastical imagination of Antoni Gaudí—stare out across a square at the grim sobriety of the town's 15th-century cathedral. In the heart of old Astorga, the stone benches of the colonnaded Plaza Mayor are occupied by the old men of the town wearing berets and chewing sunflower seeds. There are no soldiers present but they are not far away, probably patrolling the platforms of the train station, trying to be discreet despite their attire. The pilgrims mill around the square, their faces red with the exertion of arrival. Some seem self-conscious of their pilgrim status, perhaps aware that theirs is a re-enactment of an age-old ritual across a country driven by a rush into the future, across a country in which everything seems to have changed. Yet, in places like Astorga and Sigüenza, it is easy to believe that everything remains the same, regardless

of how many times the violent upheavals of history pass this way.

—Anthony Ham

(In)security Kenyan style

PLACE AT A PRICE

In Nairobi, security is a commodity purchased to deal with 'security threats'.

Security concerns are a part of daily life here. As elsewhere, crime soars as employment prospects dip. The most common crime is car-jacking: many of the 20–70 estimated incidents each week are fatal. The police are believed to be involved in about 20 per cent of these violations. In this respect, Nairobi holds the dubious honour of outstripping Johannesburg. Added to this are the frequent muggings and breaking and entering.

But the greatest fear is terrorism. In Kenya, this is not theoretical. In August 1998, the United States Embassy in downtown Nairobi was bombed, in a strike against American interests. In 2001 terrorists struck again at Mombassa on the Kenyan coast, targeting Israeli interests. On both occasions the victims were almost exclusively locals. After renewed warnings about attacks against US and United Nations interests, and given the proximity of the main UN compound to the US Embassy, the flurry of intelligence reports circulating in the expatriate world of Nairobi is hardly surprising.

In Nairobi, the expatriate community has tacitly decided that all that can be done must be done to ensure personal security. The result is that protective services now form a massive industry. The typical compounds in which people spend their lives are high-walled and guarded day and night by security people. At just over AUD$100 per month, a permanent security presence is readily affordable.

Nairobi is not an expansive city, and from the suburbs in which expatriates live—Gigiri or the aptly named Westlands—the drive to work is usually short. People enter their cars in the driveway of their homes, often driven by security agents that double as chauffeurs. The car pulls up inside the work compound, which is also high walled and heavily guarded. People stay here until their

summa theologiae

Being the devil's advocate

Former South African Supreme Court Judge, Justice Laurie Ackermann, was recently in Australia. During his visit he spoke quite personally about how he struggled with his judicial role under apartheid. Justice Ackermann reflected on his fundamental vision of human beings as equal, and as irreducible to any price or value, and each quality a function of being created in the image of God. This theological instinct was further sharpened for him by Kant's 'categorical imperatives'—those moral duties which transcend the outcome of an action—especially as they relate to the essential dignity of every, and non-instrumental use of any, human being.

His comments brought to mind a number of conversations I'd been having over Mel Gibson's *Passion*. My difficulty concerns the particular atonement theology it preaches. In the opening Gethsemane scene, the devil appears to Jesus and contends that no one can die for the sins of the whole world: it is too costly. The much-discussed explicit violence in the film could be seen as a direct response to this diabolical challenge: yes, it sure was costly, but not too costly.

Around the time of the film's release, an article by Anglican Archbishop, Peter Jensen, was posted on the Sydney Anglican Media website: 'The Good News of God's Wrath.' Archbishop Jensen discusses three 'great words' which, he argues, help us understand Christ's Passion in terms coherent with a biblical trajectory of sacrifice: 'substitution' (Jesus stands in for those justly condemned by God on account of sin), 'punishment' (Jesus bears sin by experiencing its consequences), and 'propitiation' (Jesus turns aside God's righteous anger). Their combined significance is summed up at the end of his text by two lines from an old hymn: 'In my place, condemned he stood,/ Sealed my pardon with his blood! Alleluia!' I suspect from watching as much of his film as I could stomach, that Gibson would have no quarrel with this, but I would be his own devil's advocate here.

Did Jesus suffer more than any black South Africans before Justice Ackermann's bench, or more than any number of political prisoners being tortured as we read and write? Does the nature and extent of Jesus' suffering even matter? Only if we believe that it is to be interpreted in the space pegged out by those three 'great words.' If Jesus' suffering is indeed in my place, and yours, and everyone else's, then—as Gibson's devil suggests—there would need to be an awful lot of it: more even than Gibson manages to squeeze into his film! But Justice Ackermann's reading of Genesis via Kant highlights just two of many problems with such a view. First, what are we to make of such an instrumental use of the human being Jesus of Nazareth within a divine economy so construed? Second, what if we are in fact 'priceless', without denotable value, by virtue of being created in the image of God? If so, the celluloid devil is quite right: redemption understood in such transactional terms is necessarily too costly.

That Jesus suffered and died must be at the heart of any Christian doctrine of redemption, because it speaks of the solidarity of God-in-Christ with and in our flesh, where suffering and death simply come with the territory. When the costliness of redemption is associated primarily with the incarnation rather than the crucifixion, then we are not so much 'bought back by' Jesus-as-Scapegoat as 'brought back with' Jesus-the-Prodigal, who spent everything ... but not to buy us. If we cannot avoid economic metaphors then I would prefer to sing the Thomas Troeger hymn which begins 'A spend-thrift lover is the Lord'. ■

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archimedes

The health of the whole

Recently Archimedes attended the 18th World Conference on Health Promotion and Health Education, a major meeting of minds in an area about which most of us have little knowledge. In one of the most interesting papers, Tunisian human rights activist and University of Paris XIII Associate Professor of Public Health, Moncef Marzouki argued there are three approaches to health.

The first he calls the bio-technological model, which is at the heart of Western medicine. Health problems are the result of a malfunction in the body which must be hunted down and rooted out. The social model is favoured by those involved in preventive medicine. The emphasis moves from the individual to the community, investigating ecological, cultural, socio-economic and political factors. The third model Marzouki calls 'human rights'. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifies a right to health, including adequate food, clothing, housing and medical care. It also contains related rights such as rights to life, physical safety, work, leisure and culture. 'These are the basis of the ... most important field of intervention,' he said, 'that of health promotion.'

Health promotion transcends immediate boundaries—its use as a tool for peace in Israel, for instance. Then there are issues such as the health of the world's 200 million indigenous people, and the impact of dominant cultures. What about the social problems caused by HIV? How are we to counter obesity, the world's biggest growing problem even in non-industrialised nations?

Archimedes was interested in the link between mental health and migrants. In an analysis of lover 150 studies of schizophrenia, Dr John McGrath of the University of Queensland found that, immigrants were five times more likely to suffer from the condition. There were several pointed papers on the problem of migrant mental health, giving pause to those, like Archimedes, who are opposed to the present Federal policy of indefinite detention of asylum seekers.

Australian environmentalist and science commentator, Professor Ian Lowe, raised the question of whether resources for health promotion have been hijacked by 'the war on terror'. As a health risk, he argues, terrorism is almost negligible.

'The Bali bombing shocked us because about 100 Australians, most of them young people, were killed and hundreds more injured. But every three weeks about 100 Australians, most of them young people, are killed and hundreds more injured on our roads. This is so depressingly predictable we call it "the road toll", as if it were the inevitable price of using roads. About every two days, 100 Australians die from the effects of smoking tobacco. The industry still shamelessly targets the young to replace older smokers as they die or quit.

'No amount of military spending will provide protection from terrorism if we ignore its causes ... More than a billion people don't have clean drinking water, about 2.4 billion don't have sanitation. Several billion live on less than the public subsidy of each European cow. Mortality rates for children under five have actually increased in the last decade for several countries in sub-Saharan Africa.'

Recent experiences with SARS and bird flu have illustrated the need for nations to work together. In our tightly-linked world, any group suffering from a communicable disease could trigger a worldwide problem. In such a world, health promotion plays an increasingly important role. Any increase in the health of our neighbour, is an increase in our own health. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

return journey home. At the few shopping centres to which the expatriate community gravitates, like the Sarit Centre and the Village Market, the security presence is again overwhelming. The foreigners' world is enclosed. Around-the-clock security guards form the roof.

When you buy massive protection, you also buy the consequences. The inner side of the security industry is the paranoia industry. The detached witness in Nairobi cannot help being reminded ironically of Roosevelt's famous words, 'there is nothing to fear but fear itself'. When one has protection against everything, there is everything to fear and so every reason to seek further protection against it, whatever the unnameable 'it' may be!

The larger consequence of buying personal security is that the violence within society is masked. Expatriates who work in the regional headquarters of embassies and NGOs go from one secured location to another. Meanwhile the vast majority of the victims of violent crime fall silent and unnoticed. From behind high walled fences it is hard to see the real victims of Nairobi's criminal industry.

Personal security concerns of this magnitude are not a problem unique to Nairobi or Kenya. Nor is the security industry confined to the big end of town. In South Africa every car space is manned by a 'Car Guard'. These informal workers, working for tips from car owners, monitor a small area of the roadside which, by custom, is known to be theirs. In Uganda, the measures are more extreme. One can barely walk ten metres without coming across a private security guard with an immense machine gun lazily resting between his or her knees. It is dramatic, but effective. Kampala is known to be one of the safest cities on the continent.

Meanwhile, in Kenya, those who can afford security pay for it, while those most in need cannot and suffer the consequences. Until the balance is corrected by the new Kibaki government this will continue to be the rule.

—Matthew Albert

This month's contributers:
Marg Honner is a teacher in Vietnam; **Anthony Ham** is a freelance writer living in Madrid; **Matthew Albert** is *Eureka Street*'s Kenyan correspondent.

Francis Sullivan

A budget for the ages

ELECTIONS STALL REFORM. Two years ago Treasurer Peter Costello released the Intergenerational Report outlining the costs of an ageing Australia and calling for a funding shift away from the public purse. This year he delivered an aged care budget focused on the bread and butter costs of delivering services through public subsidies. Almost as an aside the government published the findings of a $7 million inquiry into the pricing of residential aged care services. In a far reaching analysis it calls for greater deregulation, stronger market forces and increased user charges. Such mixed signals lead one to wonder whether the Commonwealth is pulling back from shouldering its share of the cost of aged care.

The Federal Budget response to the aged care crisis was driven primarily by the proximity of the election. It became imperative for the Howard Government to fund its way back into the hearts of older Australians. With a departure from its previous 'slow drip' formula, the government delivered a funding package of $2.2 billion over five years. It concentrated on the two hot political issues—the construction and running costs of aged care homes. In both instances public investment is substantial and the politics savvy.

The government went into this year's budget preparation hounded by all quarters over the erosion of its care funding subsidy, its lack of action on capital funding and the declining prospects of the aged care workforce. Research indicated that the running costs of homes outstripped the subsidy by around $250 million a year. The homes protested that they lacked an ongoing capital funding stream. Nurses complained of inadequate wages and strained working conditions. In all a recipe for a crisis and fertile ground on which the Opposition could capitalise. The pressure to invest more public money was overwhelming.

With one eye to its future outlays, the government spent to alleviate the short term angst whilst safeguarding any exposure to long term entitlements. The upshot is an immediate capital injection of $636 million for the next two years. This should stimulate investment and kick start stalled construction. It does not, however, provide an ongoing adequate capital stream for the medium term. By implication the government retains the option of extending user fees and lump sum payments to cover accommodation costs.

This uncertainty will need deft political management. The aged care industry is serious business. Significant commercial risk is borne across the sector. Church and corporate organisations alike cautiously view investment decisions. Their tolerance for policy uncertainty is almost tested. Whichever major political party can explicitly outline the medium term financing and viability strategies for the industry will go a long way towards winning confidence and probably compliance.

On the more contentious issue of running costs, the Budget adds a further $877 million over four years to supplement its inadequate daily care subsidies. This brings the funding close to the real costs of care but only releases the majority of the funds by 2006. The government must reallocate this funding for the homes to meet increases in nurses' wages, the costs of workers compensation and retain trained staff. Again it is vital that the government construct a more appropriate indexation of its subsidies to accurately reflect industry based costs otherwise future budgets will need to make up the shortfall.

ALREADY THE AGED care program is a combination of public subsidies and individual contributions. Consumers pay up to 30 per cent of the cost of care. Most residents in aged care homes are pensioners. Over half are aged 85 or over. Of these 90 per cent have no other assets apart from their home. However, by 2042 the proportion of the population over 85 years will triple to 4.3 per cent. It is estimated that costs will grow from the present $7.8 billion to $107 billion. Obviously the Commonwealth will endeavour to shift more of the cost burden onto individuals. But the political decision to secure the family home as a major financing asset seems too fraught for either major party to embrace. Consequently future governments will probably attempt to raise user fees and encourage innovative loan and insurance schemes to fund user contributions. But this Budget failed to instigate any specific savings vehicle that will enable future aged care users to save now if higher fees are to follow.

For some time commentators have called for a dedicated savings plan to meet the rising costs of health and aged care. Many have noted that superannuation alone will not suffice. If it is inevitable that user charges will further creep into essential services, prudent savings schemes are crucial.

If nothing else the 2004 Federal Budget demonstrates that communities can draw governments back to the fold or send them packing! At such times governments lose the zeal for reform and rediscover the passion of listening. ■

Francis Sullivan is the CEO of Catholic Health Australia.

Virginia Bourke

The great divide

Virginia Bourke examines the assumptions that underlie equality in parenting and work.

'Equality of parenting is the greatest remaining barrier to equality between the sexes' claimed Pru Goward in *The Age* (11 August 2003). Having recently read *The End of Equality*—Anne Summers' lament to the deplorable level of progress made towards equality between women and men in Australia—I still see an astounding number of obstacles in the way. The list makes for depressing reading: unequal rates of pay; social policy skewed against working mothers; increasing rates of domestic violence; an inadequate child care system; the vast under-representation of women at executive and board level of almost every major company and the largely ineffective representation of women by women in federal and state parliaments.

In the face of these many issues, equality of parenting has received little media attention. It is as if there is no further progress to be made in the movement—started in the 1970s—towards the greater involvement of fathers in the care of children. Certainly huge inroads were made into the remarkably durable belief that only a mother could properly care for young children. In 1979 the Family Court cast aside the assumption in favour of the biological mother which had operated in custody cases finding, with a somewhat ill-founded optimism, that 'there has come a radical change in the division of responsibilities between parents' (Gronow v. Gronow). As commentators noted at the time (and many more have pointed out since) the real picture was that despite the 'new' paradigm of fatherhood, women maintain responsibility for the majority of household tasks including the care of children, even when employed outside the home.

Nonetheless the profile of the father had shifted—the role of fathers in the care of children had increased in importance. The reality of the situation was that while many men subscribed to the new archetype of fatherhood, most continued in their role as provider. As Goward noted in her article, the work of raising children falls heavily, and in many cases solely, upon women. *Mr Mom*, or even a modified part-time version of him, is most certainly the exception not the rule.

Many barriers have remained in the way of a truly shared parenting role, not the least of which is the structure of the workplace and current social policy. Frank Castles (*Eureka Street*, April 2004) notes that Australian social and public policy is anachronistically and unfairly geared towards a family comprised of a male breadwinner and female homemaker. Goward also suggests other obstacles in the issue of mothers gatekeeping their roles, positioning themselves as all-knowing repositories of parenting knowledge and in the reluctance of many men, within the confines of the present workplace structure, to take up 'family friendly' work options.

Underpinning these policies and ideas are some deeply rooted cultural assumptions about the roles of mothers and fathers. The most powerful of these has been the belief that men and women have biologically predetermined, gender specific roles as parents. This belief found a 'scientific' basis in the work of British psychiatrist and psychoanalyst John Bowlby during the 1950s and 1960s. Bowlby took an evolutionary approach to the behaviour of the (non-human) primates he studied, finding that the dominating aggressive behaviour of males and the caring and nurturing behaviour of certain females were biological imperatives. In attributing the behaviour of certain species of monkey to humans, Bowlby established the 'fact' that to deprive a child, particularly an infant, of his

or her mother's presence endangers a child's physical, emotional and intellectual development. This finding profoundly influenced maternal attachment theories in psychology and has as its concomitant the relegation of the father to a secondary role in terms of his inherent capacity to parent. How can a father compete with the truly primal and exclusive bond between mother and child?

Modern sociobiologists have skittled much of Bowlby's theory. Aside from the issue of whether monkey behaviour can be directly attributed to humans, researchers have found less than benevolent maternal instincts in some primate species and other species of monkey where the father undertakes all caregiving activities for the infant other than feeding. In her enlightening book *Fatherhood Reclaimed: The Making of the Modern Father* (1997, Random House), Adrienne Burgess describes the more recent studies establishing the wide variation in parenting behaviours amongst males: they are 'far from fixed ... they do not so much vary in response to biological imperatives as to changing circumstances.' Attachment theory has also had its challenges. Recent bonding literature producing evidence of the capacity of human infants to form strong attachments with five or even more caregivers, where one attachment does not undermine the strength of, or potential for another.

One could be forgiven for thinking that Bowlby's theories had never been debunked. Despite the real, if slow, progress made since the 1970s towards the greater participation of men as parents, the idea that the father's capacity to parent is inherently inferior to, and different from, that of the mother is deeply entrenched in Western culture. It surfaces frequently in advertising, in government family policy, in family law cases (despite the introduction of gender-neutral terminology) and in everyday conversation. More broadly, it is reinforced and perpetuated in popular culture each time the differences, rather than similarities, between men and women are presented as immutable. If men and women are to equally share in the parenting of children, it is time to abandon a mindset which embraces *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. It is surely time to focus upon Burgess's refreshing conclusion that 'in terms of biology the difference between men and women is shatteringly small'.

True equality of parenting requires a radical refiguring of these gendered ideas of parenting: it calls for a rethinking of motherhood and fatherhood not as biologically predetermined roles, but as roles requiring the real work of caring for and nurturing a child. We may be born with some protective instincts towards our children but we are not born with the inherent skill to parent. It is an art born of the hard work of raising children. It is learnt in the time spent soothing a cranky baby, in mulling over a child's behaviour, in mediating between siblings, in juggling competing demands. It calls for patience (knock-knock jokes), judgment (when to let go of the bike), energy (AFL Auskick football drills for sadly unskilled parents) and self-sacrifice (*Rugrats in Paris* versus *Taggart*). Parenting is not about *being* the mother or *being* the father, but about *doing* the work of nurturing a child.

Mothers do not inherently and automatically understand their child's needs. The Australian sociologists, Lupton and Barclay note that differences in caregiving capacities between mothers and fathers may be a consequence of the more limited opportunities fathers have to be the principal caregiver for their child: 'It may be because mothers generally engage as the primary carer from the start that this is how they come to "know" what the child "needs"'. Mothers become skilled through the sheer constancy and intensity of the work of anticipating and attending to the demands of a child. There is then no reason why fathers might not, with the same opportunity to spend time with the child, attain the same skill.

All of this points to the need to restructure the workplace in such a way as to foster opportunities for fathers to equally engage in parenting. It raises the need to address the relatively few opportunities for men to work part-time and the reluctance of men to avail themselves of such opportunities for fear of being perceived as not truly committed to their jobs.

In discussions of work and family the issue of equality of parenting should be no barbecue stopper. Most mothers would welcome an easing of the load. For policy makers obsessed with a solution to the 'fertility crisis' in Australia, equality of parenting deserves serious consideration. Women, especially those who wish to work, are far more likely to consider having children if they are not alone and unsupported in the real work of parenting. Social policy aimed almost entirely at women remaining in the home while their children are young, serves to economically disempower women and to deprive men of the opportunity to share in the invaluable experience of parenting their children. ■

Virginia Bourke is a lawyer.

foreign correspondence

The pilgrim's way

Anthony Ham follows the historical footsteps toward Mecca

THE ANNUAL MUSLIM Hajj pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca has its origin in one of the most enduring epics of human history. The Prophet Mohammed was born in 570 AD in Mecca, a staging post along ancient trade routes carrying frankincense from the southern Arabian Peninsula. It was a city in which a multiplicity of gods were worshipped and, by the time of Mohammed's birth, a city gripped with an insecurity born out of declining trade and endemic tribal warfare.

In the year 610, Mohammed ventured into the Arabian desert, where he heard the voice of the Archangel Gabriel imparting revelations from God which would give birth to Islam. After three years, the Prophet began to preach his message to the people of Mecca. The vested interests of local elites were deeply hostile to the revelations, seeing in them a threat to their positions of power, and they forced Mohammed and his followers from the city. Their escape or *hijra* (which literally means 'flight') north to the city of Medina and the date (622 AD) came to stand as markers of the new faith and the first year of the Islamic calendar, 1 AH (After Hijra).

By the time Mohammed returned to Mecca in 630 AD, his following had grown in number and power. Mecca soon became the centre of the new faith. Mohammed died in 632 AD, but Islam had already acquired an extraordinary momentum.

Uthman, the third successor to Mohammed as leader of the Islamic community (644-656 AD), drew together the sayings and story of Mohammed, using scribes and a panel of religious scholars to form the canon of suras (chapters) which make up the Qur'an. Emerging from this poetic and lyrical embodiment of faith were the five pillars of Islam—paramount to their worship of Allah. Shahada (the profession of faith, Islam's basic tenet, that 'There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is His Prophet'); Sala (prayer); Zakat (the giving of alms to the poor); Sawm (the fast for the duration of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and the month in which God's revelations were first revealed); and the Hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca which is incumbent upon all Muslims of able body and sufficient means).

By 710 AD, the conquering armies of Islam had reached Morocco, Al-Maghreb al-Aqsa, the Farthest Land of the Setting Sun, and deep into Persia and India in the east—an astonishing expansion for a religion born in a remote Arabian town seemingly destined for terminal decline. Carrying with them the Qur'an, and turning to face Mecca whenever at prayer along the way, these soldiers of Islam added geographical breadth to the scope and power of the new faith.

Egyptians drag a water buffalo to be sold for sacrifice in Cairo in preparation for end of hajj celebrations. AFP/AAP Mohammed Al-Sehiti.

In less than a century, Islam had become a world religion.

THE REACH AND ENDURING CALL of Islam to the faithful is evident as far away as the Sahara Desert of Mauritania. Chinguetti, Islam's seventh holiest city, is today less a city than a remote desert outpost of just 4000 people, a place where the streets have no name and there is no electricity. Its simple stone mosque and mud-brick houses are surrounded by desert which reaches from the shores of the Atlantic across Africa to the Red Sea. Standing in Chinguetti's sand-blown lanes amid the great emptiness all around, it is here that the original call of Islam is easiest to imagine, even more so than in the great Islamic citadels of Cairo and Baghdad. Perhaps Mecca was once like this—a small town where the great camel caravans of trade no longer called and which time seemed to have forgotten. It was at the Great Mosque of Chinguetti that pilgrimage caravans assembled to begin the year-long pilgrimage to Mecca, taking 52 days to reach Timbuktu.

It was from desert kingdoms such as these that the great empire of Mali ruled vast territories in Africa. In the 14th century, Mali's King Kankan Musa undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca accompanied by a royal court of more than 60,000 people and so much gold that gold prices in the East were devalued for more than a decade.

Once home to 12 mosques, more than 20 Qur'anic schools and some 20,000 people, Chinguetti's heritage is preserved by old men, the custodians of the keys to the great libraries of scholarship where fragments of sacred Islamic texts now fall apart if touched.

Far away to the north-east, Kairouan in Tunisia remains the fourth holiest city of Islam. Unlike Chinguetti, thousands still visit this city of almost 120,000 people. The inhabitants of Kairouan are renowned for their conservatism (at least by liberal Tunisian standards) and seem at once bewildered and overexcited by the daily influx of tourists from the beach resorts along Tunisia's coast. By sunset, the tourists have largely left, leaving behind a dimly-lit, maze-like medina decked out in blue and white and presided over by an austere 9th-century mosque.

Legend has it that Kairouan was chosen as the site for a town in 670 AD, when the horse belonging to the leader of the armies

of Islam, Uqba ibn Nafaa al-Fihri, tripped on a golden goblet. When the goblet was disturbed, water rose up from the earth. Enquiries revealed that the goblet had disappeared from Mecca years before. To this day, many Muslims believed that the well of Kairouan is connected to the sacred well of Zam-Zam in Mecca.

If Chinguetti is a place to imagine Islam's humble desert roots and visiting Kairouan is to understand the power of miracle, Damascus is the place to picture Islam's diverse cosmopolitanism, a crossroads for the peoples of a world united only by faith.

From Damascus, the caravans began the last leg of the journey, pushing south into the bleak, black and barren landscape of western Saudi Arabia. Non-Muslims who joined the caravans, among them the explorers Sir Richard Burton and Charles Doughty, spoke of the long weeks of hardship, of thirst and of hunger. The great, huddled caravans of pilgrims stretched for more than three miles and almost 10,000 people, all the while susceptible to the habitual raids of bandits and to illness; In 1865, the plague ravaged the returning Hajj caravan and killed some 50,000 people along the route.

Hajj pilgrims pray at dawn at the top of Gebel Rahmah. EPA/AAP Mike Nelson.

Western Saudi Arabia today is littered with evidence of the great mass of humanity who once crossed the desert by camel and on foot. Not far east of Mecca, in a desolate stretch of the Arabian desert, stand the stone cisterns of Birkat Al-Khurabah. They form part of a now largely abandoned chain of water points known as the Darb Zubaydah (Zubaydah Road) which once ran from the holy Shi'ite city of Najaf in Iraq to Mecca. Legend has it that in the 9th century, the wife of the Caliph Haroun Al-Rashid (the Islamic ruler in Baghdad at the heart of so many tales in *Thousand and One Nights*) undertook the pilgrimage and almost died from thirst en route. Promising that no pilgrim should suffer as she did, Queen Zubaydah built the water storage points to facilitate the safe passage of pilgrims from across the deserts to the east.

Almost 1000 years later, when Arabia and the holy cities were under the rule of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, the sultan's army built a railway from Damascus to Medina. The railway's purpose was to ease the journey for pilgrims to the holy cities, although T.E. Lawrence and the Arab Revolt, feeding on the hostility to foreign rule by local tribespeople, set about destroying the railway as a symbol of Ottoman power. Railway sleepers, garrison forts for Turkish troops and substations along the path of the Hejaz Railway, are now slowly disappearing under the sands, forlorn and abandoned by all but historians.

These stories of epic overland journeys are now largely a thing of the past: more than 80 per cent of the two million pilgrims who undertook the Hajj in 2004 arrived in Saudi Arabia by air.

Just prior to the Hajj, I arrived at Medina airport. Medina is the second holiest city in Islam but, unlike Mecca, only its centre is off-limits to non-Muslims. It was in Medina that Mohammed, in 623-4 AD (2 AH), received a revelation stating that all Muslims should pray in the direction of Mecca, not Jerusalem as was hitherto the practice. As we circled the city, the minarets of the Prophet's Mosque (the second holiest mosque to Muslims) were distantly visible, a tantalising reminder of a world which was not mine to enter. I could not but feel a longing for the roads that I would never travel, an irretrievable nostalgia for the impossible endpoint of a journey begun in remote outposts like Chinguetti and through great cities like Damascus.

But I soon discovered that the most powerful evocation of the Hajj, the goal of almost a billion of the world's people, lay not in the stones of former waystations, nor in the cities where pilgrims once gathered in readiness for the journey, nor even in a glimpse of sacred architecture. Rather, the story of the Hajj became real for me in the Saudi Arabian port city of Jeddah, the traditional gateway to Mecca some 75km away and as close as I, a non-Muslim, could travel.

In the old city of Jeddah, with its labyrinthine souqs twisting between houses made of Red Sea coral, limestone and wooden balconies, I encountered pilgrims swathed in simple white robes on their way to Mecca for the rites of the Hajj.

For fourteen centuries of human history, Muslims have been drawn to this point, appearing from all corners of the earth, having finally crossed the trackless wastes of Arabia. So close to Mecca, it is impossible not to be profoundly moved by this hard-won symbol of unity that has survived despite deep divisions which prevail in the Muslim World.

The pilgrims I encountered were as diverse as the world itself. They came from Africa, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and North America. They were proud of their piety and joy, spiritually aware that were standing on the verge of fulfilling a lifelong dream. It shall never be my journey, but their look of happiness was indeed a thing to behold. For the first time, I truly understood. ■

Anthony Ham is *Eureka Street*'s roving correspondent.

Nadja Breton

Something old, something new

European allegiances have been tested by the conflict in Iraq

NOT UNLIKE AN 18TH CENTURY novel, the story of the divide between 'old' and 'new' Europe over the Iraq war can be told through a series of letters.

The first letter, signed by eight member and prospective European Union states, appeared in late January 2003. It endorsed Operation Iraqi Freedom in the name of shared values, namely democracy, freedom, human rights and the Rule of Law. The second, signed by ten eastern European states and published soon afterwards, derived from an email penned by an American diplomat.

Both had an incendiary impact and forced a re-assessment of relations not only between the United States and Europe, but also within the borders of Europe itself. Media commentary has focused on diplomatic spats triggered by the two missives. Behind the scenes, however, a more philosophical drama is being played out that privileges a particularly eastern European mindset.

And, as in any drama originating in this part of the world, the best lines are reserved for the dissidents.

In the early 80s, Adam Michnik was repeatedly jailed because of his involvement in the radical trade union Solidarity and its opposition to the Polish regime. Two decades on, Michnik is now editor of Poland's most important newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*. He says his experience of persecution is the central motivating factor in his support for the US-led Coalition and its invasion of Iraq. 'I've always looked at this war from the point of view of a political prisoner in Baghdad', he told *Le Monde* last year.

In the *Le Monde* interview, he acknowledged the existence of dictatorships as pernicious as Saddam Hussein's (in Uzbekistan, for example) but said none of these required military intervention, as they did not directly threaten global peace. He then made two points that provide the basis for his pro-US position, while demonstrating just how much his worldview had been shaped by a lifetime spent in a country that has been used as the playground of the great powers.

'Inside the United Nations there are two forms of arrogance,' he said, 'That of the Americans and that of the anti-war Paris-Berlin axis'. Both equally, he said, were dangerous for the democratic world.

When asked if he had any concerns about what would fill the vacuum following the fall of the Ba'athist regime, Michnik returned to history. 'War is always a political defeat', he said. 'But the logic of those seeking peace as if it were an absolute value is the same as Munich, 1938.'

Intellectuals from eastern Europe often use history—with its litany of 20th-century betrayals and bloody debris—as a talisman when voicing their most strongly held positions. Others in western Europe and elsewhere also use historical examples, but there is a difference. Whether it is Adam Michnik, former Czech president Vaclav Havel, or Hungarian sociologist and writer Gyorgy Konrad, there is often a sense that for these thinkers whose words have a greater import *because* of their suffering.

GYORGY KONRAD, ONE of the major figures of the 1956 Hungarian uprising and later member of the democratic movement in the 1970s and 1980s, published a book called *Why I am for the War* in 2003. In it, he said he was unable to hide his disappointment about the newfound divide between the United States and Europe, in its current form, as it is dominated by the governments of Berlin and Paris. 'For those in central Europe, any kind of transatlantic divorce is a potentially risky situation,' he said.

'For us, the former dissidents, our central objective is to have fewer dictators on the earth.' But, of equal concern, he said was the mindless trashing of anything put forward by the Bush administration. 'If anti-Americanism has become the dominant stance worldwide for those on the left, it has its counterpart in the East in right-wing, anti-Semitic populism.' He also thought it 'racist' when people said it was impossible for an Islamic country, such as Iraq, to become democratic post-Saddam Hussein. Similar arguments, he said, were used in relation to the countries in central and eastern Europe before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Such bitterness is surprising when we remember how successful the transition to free-markets and free elections has been among most of the post-communist countries from the Eastern Bloc. It is also unexpected, perhaps, when we recall how these dissidents are based in countries eagerly waiting at the gate of the European Union.

Jacques Rupnik, the French eastern Europe specialist, says that the re-emergence of the dissidents now reflects changes within their own homelands and their loss of status abroad. In the 1980s, there was a convergence between Western intellectuals and those in the East over fundamental principles—human rights and the importance of a 'civil society'. Following the fall of the Wall, the importance of such dialogue faded, if not disappeared altogether.

As new elites emerged within the post-communist societies, Rupnik says, these former heroes lost some of their gloss. Here, too, we find the foundations for what Rupnik has described as the tendency among the former dissidents to use hyperbole when speaking of 'The West', as evidenced by Czech novelist, Milan Kundera's use of the phrase the 'kidnapped West'.

It would be highly inaccurate to suggest that all the contributions streaming forth from the former dissidents on the topic of the Iraq war are of such a serious vein.

The beginning of Adam Michnik's ironically titled essay, 'We, the traitors, In support of President Bush' has a distinctively wry, even playful, tone. He recounts, with his tongue in his cheek, how he read an article published in Ger-

man newspaper, *Die Tageszeitung*, in which the journalist claimed that Vaclav Havel, Adam Michnik and George Konrad—'Europe's longstanding moral authorities'—had become 'undiscriminating [sic] admirers of America'. Possibly indicating concerns over fading relevance referred to earlier, Michnik writes, 'I read that article with a twinge of nostalgia. Here we were, together again'.

WHAT UNITED THE THREE men then, as now, Michnik said, was a common dream of a 'world infused with tolerance, hope, respect for human dignity (alongside) a refusal of conformist silence in the face of evil.

'We were also united, by the specific wisdom of people familiar with "history unleashed", the experience of acute loneliness of people subject to the pressures of totalitarian despotism and doomed to the world's indifference.

'Every Hungarian citizen had retained the image of Budapest burning in November, 1956. Every citizen of Czechoslovakia was haunted by the sight of Soviet tanks on the streets of Prague in 1968', Michnik writes. 'Every Pole was to keep in the back of his mind, the memory of Warsaw in the fall of 1944, murdered by Hitler and deserted by the allies.'

In *The New Yorker*, David Remnick writes that on Vaclav Havel's last day as Czech president he did two things: he taped a farewell address to the nation and took a telephone call from US President George W. Bush.

Only a few months earlier, Havel had hosted a NATO summit at the Prague castle, with George W. Bush, US Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld and dozens of other generals and politicians. During the summit, Havel—the former playwright—personally arranged a series of theatrical performances.

'The NATO visitors watched an ersatz 18th-century dance (complete with powdered wigs and simulated copulation) that might have been considered obscene had it not been so amusing', Remnick writes. 'They listened to booming renditions of the "Ode to Joy", a souped-up "Marseillaise" and John Lennon's "Power to the People".' In a humourous aside, Remnick cites the Bush administration's chief strategist, Donald Rumsfeld as saying, 'I didn't understand anything, I'm from Chicago'.

When asked later about the significance of the performance, Havel said, 'The ballet was set in central Europe and featured Mozart's music, and it also included elements of the American grotesque, to underline the Euro-Atlantic character of the gathering'.

Then, in a comment that suggests more scepticism, or indeed a clearer view of the relationship between those supporting the war and those leading it, Havel said that his stage-managed performance 'may have been on the verge of what Mr Rumsfeld and certain others could tolerate'.

The Czech Republic was one of the eight, alongside Britain, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain, to sign a letter in early 2003 that called for the disarmament of Iraq—with, or without UN involvement. 'The Iraqi regime and its weapons of mass destruction represent a clear threat to world security', it said. 'Europe has no quarrel with the Iraqi people. Indeed, they are the first victims of Iraq's current brutal regime.' Rather the goal of the eight leaders was to 'safeguard world peace and security by ensuring that this regime gives up its weapons of mass destruction'. If it failed to act, the leaders warned, the credibility of the United Nations was also at stake.

When asked why he signed the letter, Havel, like his former anti-communist foe, Adam Michnik, used the example of history. 'The Czech experience with Munich, with appeasement, with yielding to evil, with demanding more and more evidence that Hitler was truly evil', had shaped his position. But, there were other factors, too.

'Civilisation has changed', he said. Whereas, at one stage, the world had been divided between two poles, that is the former Soviet Union and the United States, the current multi-polar world introduced newer, more random threats.

'It is a matter of the functioning of the world's immune system', Havel said, 'and whether the world can deal with a case of such extreme evil before it is too late'.

On the day the 'letter of eight' supporting the Iraq war was published, the *Financial Times* reports, ten more countries in east and central Europe received a text for a declaration of their own. Written by a US envoy Bruce Jackson, who worked for the Bush administration in a non-official capacity, its intention was to 'demonstrate solidarity' with the US just weeks before Congress was due to vote on accepting seven of the countries into NATO.

Bruce Jackson wrote the statement that, when signed, became known as the 'Vilinius Ten'. He emailed it to the Lithuanian Embassy, which emailed it to the other nine countries. The *Financial Times* report includes the comment that the text had the line: 'Take it, or leave it'.

When drafting both documents, none of the standard European Union procedures had been followed. Neither Greece, the state holding the rotating presidency, nor the Union's 'high representative' for foreign policy, Javier Solana had been informed beforehand.

THE MOTIVATION FOR THE first diplomatic Molotov cocktail, the original 'letter of eight' appears to have been French president, Jacques Chirac's comments during the 40th anniversary of the Elysée treaty. His paean to the unique Berlin-Paris relationship apparently infuriated the governments in both London and Madrid. During the celebrations, Chirac said, 'Experience shows that when Paris and Berlin agree, Europe can move forward; if there is a disagreement, Europe marks time'.

Only making the situation worse, in a now famous outburst upon hearing of the letter, Chirac scolded the EU candidate countries for their pledges of support to the US campaign. Using words that furthered accusations of French political arrogance, Chirac said, 'It is not well brought up behaviour', before adding, 'They missed a good opportunity to keep quiet'.

The French President then warned the EU candidate countries their stance could be 'dangerous' as the Union had not yet ratified its decision to accept the ten new members.

Both Romania and Bulgaria, Jacques Chirac said, could not have chosen a better way to spoil their chances. He said, 'When you are in the family, you have more rights than when you are asking to join and knocking on the door'. ■

Nadja Breton is a broadcast journalist, whose articles have been published in Australia and overseas.

Leanne McKay

Forgotten children

Leanne McKay sheds light on the reality of unaccompanied minors arriving in Australia

MANY CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD live in constant fear, as members of ethnic minorities subject to continued persecution. Children may be targeted for use on the front line of civil conflicts as shields or landmine detectors. Many ethnic minorities are denied passports, so they cannot flee. In a desperate bid to protect their children, some parents smuggle them out of the country. A small number arrive on Australian shores and are taken to detention centres.

There are almost 300 unaccompanied refugee minors currently living in Australia. These children, under the age of 18 years, arrived in Australia alone and have been recognised by the Australian government as refugees. Most arrived in Australia without valid travel documents. They have been granted Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and released into the community.

A TPV permits an unaccompanied refugee minor to live in the community, access social welfare services and attend school. A TPV does not provide a home and it does not provide the one thing most necessary for their development and well being—their family.

Of the legal, moral and social concerns raised by Australia's TPV regime, it is the denial of the right to apply for family reunification that is the most troubling in relation to unaccompanied refugee minors. These children are the most vulnerable refugees. The government is wary of them acting as 'anchor children'; children who are purposely sent ahead to another country in the hope that the rest of the family will be able to follow.

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) has identified a steady increase in the number of unaccompanied minors arriving in Australia over recent years. DIMIA justifies its refusal to allow unaccompanied refugee minors the right to apply for family reunification suggesting that this will serve 'as a deterrent to the exploitation of children as smuggled anchors'. The denial of family reunification rights for unaccompanied refugee minors cannot be characterised as either a reasonable or legitimate response to greater migration concerns.

Despite Australia's sovereign right to control its own borders, to view the issue of family reunification through an immigration lens ignores the fact that Australia's sovereignty has been voluntarily reduced in scope by its ratification of treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC). Under the CROC, states are obliged to ensure that unaccompanied refugee minors receive protection and humanitarian assistance. States must also deal with applications for family reunification in a positive, humane and expeditious manner. Yet the TPV regime precludes the possibility of an application for reunification altogether. The regime denies unaccompanied refugee children the right to a family life (rights upheld under the CROC). This is despite DIMIA's acknowledgment that unaccompanied refugee minors are unlikely to have had any choice in their circumstances of arrival in Australia, as they may have been abducted, orphaned or accidentally separated from their parents.

The denial of family reunification rights does nothing to address the political, social and economic realities that force people to abandon their homes and countries in search of safety and security. The introduction of TPVs in 1999 has not slowed the arrival of so-called illegal immigrants, of whom approximately 80 per cent are subsequently found to have legitimate refugee claims. Unless action is taken to remedy 'push' factors such as persecution, famine or war, the denial of 'pull' factors in Australia such as family reunification rights will fail to stop unaccompanied minors seeking protection in Australia.

THE ISSUE OF UNACCOMPANIED minors must be kept in context. Whilst numbers of unaccompanied minors may be increasing, such children still represent only three to five per cent of the world's refugee population and approximately three per cent of all refugees in Australia.

Under current migration legislation, unaccompanied refugee minors could be given the opportunity to locate their immediate families and apply to be reunited with them in Australia if Minister Vanstone exercises existing discretion. This may extend to allowing any holder of a TPV to access the permanent visa regime and the associated entitlements to family reunification.

It is within the public interest to ensure that Australia is seen to treat children with humanity, dignity and respect. To refuse to do so is to indicate that Australia not only disregards its obligations under international law but also ignores its moral obligations towards innocent children. It suggests that whilst Australia will care for its own, non-Australian children are somehow less than human and less deserving of their fundamental human rights.

It is imperative that Australia's migration legislation be amended to permit the application for family reunification as soon as an unaccompanied minor is identified as a refugee. Unaccompanied refugee minors need our support and our voices. Ultimately, they need our humanity. ■

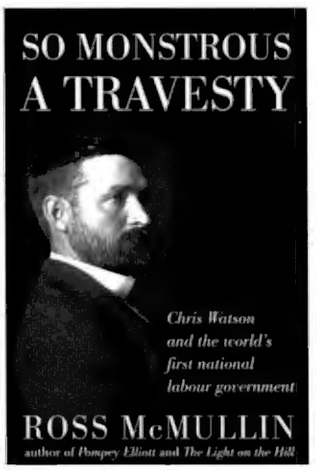
Leanne McKay is a research fellow at the University of Melbourne.

Loves Labor lost

So Monstrous a Travesty: Chris Watson and the world's first national labour government, Ross McMullin.
Scribe, 2004. ISBN 1 920 76912 9, RRP $29.95

CHRIS WATSON IS ONE of Australia's forgotten prime ministers. The forgotten prime ministers are virtually all of those, with the possible exceptions of Deakin and Hughes, who occupied the Lodge before Curtin. Not all of them occupied the Lodge, of course, especially those who served in the years before it was built. Watson was prime minister for a few months in 1904, achieving the distinction of becoming not only Australia's first Labor prime minister but the first Labor prime minister of any country anywhere. He took office at the age of 37, making him still the youngest alpha-male in our history.

Watson was also the only Australian prime minister not to have been born within the British Empire. People who spend their lives helping good causes at trivia nights will be aware that he was born in Chile: it is one of those evergreen questions which nobody is meant to be able to answer but everyone can because they attended the same worthy function last year. Watson's father vanished when Chris was young and the boy acquired the name of his stepfather.



It is shameful that such a significant character should have fallen from the national story. Virtually all that stands in his memory is a dour part of Canberra. It is one of the characteristics of Canberra that all the suburbs named after prime ministers are curiously out of keeping with the nature of those they honour: there are no pubs in Curtin, no trains in Chifley, no seances in Deakin, not much retail competition in Reid, no waterfrontage in Holt, no labour ward in Lyons and no art in Fadden. I'm sure, when it is built, that Keating will house the offices of Australians for the Restoration of the Monarchy, not to mention Australians for the Restoration of Victorian Terraces. Howard will be the site of a major public hospital. Watson, which already exists, is a scene of middle class comfort and relaxation. Chris Watson wanted, at the same time, both more and less for his people.

Ross McMullin's short biography works, like Watson himself, both unostentatiously and effectively to achieve results. It is not only a window on the first decade of federation, although McMullin's extensive use of newspaper extracts of the period from all over the country do move the reader into another era for long stretches.

AT ITS DEEPEST LEVEL, this book is a lament to a lost Labor Party; one which knew what it was supposed to be doing and whose members had a strong sense of identity. They relinquished government rather than compromise their principles of arbitration in workplace relations. Read this book for its account of Labor's first program of legislation, which included the preposterous idea that Aborigines should be allowed to deliver the mail. Read it also for its paean to early Labor figures, such as the Queenslander Andy Dawson who rose from poverty and sank into alcoholism but, in between, led the first Labor Government anywhere in the world.

This book briefly charts the rapid rise of parliamentary Labor from its formation in 1891 to being invited to form a minority federal government in 1904, a turn of events which caused consternation among those accustomed to rule. Today, only the formation of a green federal government would cause anything like the same reaction. The return of Labor under Latham would be dreary stuff by comparison and, reading between the lines, you wonder if McMullin, knows it. McMullin was Labor's official centenary historian. He is not the only true believer itchy for the frisson of the early days. Occasionally, he links Watson's time to our own, as when he comments on the negative tactics of the conservative leader, George Reid, which soon brought Watson's minority government unstuck:

> Conservative scare campaigns, covering a variety of bogeys ranging from communism to children overboard, have been a feature of federal politics in Australia.

There are many striking vignettes in this edifying tale. Soon after Watson was sworn in, for example, he had to attend a function in Melbourne's Exhibition Building. The man on the door would not let him in. In an era before radio and television, he had simply failed to recognise the Prime Minister. Watson meekly produced his entrée card. This is not just an insight into Watson's personality: he and his Cabinet all lived in a modest hotel in East Melbourne when Parliament was in session. On Friday afternoon, he joined the stampede to catch the train to Sydney for the weekend. The incident of the entrée card also serves as a reminder that Watson had no choice but to be known for the substance of what he said. It would be interesting if, these days, those standing for office were forbidden to be filmed or photographed and if no image of them were allowed to appear. But maybe this would make them feel even more like God. We have no footage of God. No image. This is why God has had no choice but to say and do stuff that matters. Sadly, God will not be standing this year. ■

Michael McGirr is the fiction editor of *Meanjin*. He notes that Canberra currently markets itself as the Bush capital of Australia.

Michele M. Gierck

Sustainable hope

Michele Gierck observes how education programs in Kenya are restoring hope for AIDS victims.

NJOKI SITS ON A wooden chair outside her family's adobe house, in the central highlands of Kenya. A thick brown cardigan drapes her shoulders, a bright orange scarf winds around her hair.

Like many Kikuyu in the central highlands of rural Kenya, Njoki's family are subsistence farmers. Plots of land in this part of the world are often small, as land is divided from one generation to the next. In this family allotment, maize, bananas and coffee grow right up to the edge of the house. A stream runs through the lower part of the property. While this year's crop looks like it will sustain the extended family, it may be one of the last seasons that Njoki sees.

Like an estimated 14 per cent of rural Kenyans, Njoki has contracted HIV/AIDS. Her weight and energy levels have plummeted, and although she is in the most productive years of her life, she depends on family to care for her. They will also have to take on the responsibility of raising her 7 year-old daughter when she dies.

The father of Njoki's daughter is long gone, and in rural Kenya where people with HIV/AIDS are stigmatised, how will Njoki be remembered? What can she leave her daughter?

The pain of her situation at times overwhelms this young mother. Njoki is only 24, but she does not have the luxury of much life ahead of her. She allows a tear to escape, then dabs at it with a handkerchief. There are other families in the district dealing with similar issues.

Alata, a mother with five dependent children, whose husband died last year from the disease, sits on the mat outside her house. She is gaunt. Her battle with the disease is almost over. Alata's sisters look after her, just as they will be called on to look after her children.

Perhaps it is because of her closeness to the finality of her earthly existence or her age—somewhere between 45 and 50—that Alata seems to have acquired a level of acceptance that eludes Njoki.

Alata a home based carer (at left), and family.

Florence and Maina.

'There are many responses to HIV/AIDS', explains Florence Nderitu, HIV/AIDS coordinator from the Good Samaritan clinic in the central highlands town of Nyeri, a two and a half hour drive from the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

Florence is a woman who understands the complexities that the HIV/AIDS pandemic has on individuals, on families and on the community. A trained public health nurse, Florence was recruited by the Anglican Church to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS in the diocese of Nyeri.

At that stage the disease was not perceived to be a major issue by most people in the central highlands. Yet data taken from the surveillance of pregnant women in the region showed that 17 per cent were HIV/AIDS positive. A community mobilisation campaign began, raising awareness of the issue by working with community leaders, church groups and schools. What became apparent, says Florence, who began the campaign, was the need for people to know their HIV/AIDS status.

Eventually the second stage of the project, a clinic to provide voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) was established with funds provided by the Australian High Commission in Nairobi and Anglicord in Australia.

Florence explains, 'If you can get people early, it is possible to keep them well for a long time. Then they keep their job and are productive and can sustain their family'.

She also believes that VCT is an empowering tool, 'If you are positive you can learn to live positively with it, and to protect others around you'.

At the clinic people see a counsellor first. They may discuss the risks they have been exposed to, why they have come for testing, and how they might respond if results are positive. The testing results remain confidential, although health data is passed on to regional and national health authorities. The test takes about 15 minutes, and results are given to patients through a counsellor. It can be exhausting work for the counsellors who often see between 7 to 10 people a day. They are the ones who advise people of their HIV/AIDS status. And for many people the news comes as a shock.

When I ask Florence about the incidence of discordant couples, that is, partners in which one partner is positive and the

other negative, she estimates of those coming to the clinic, the rate is around 30 to 40 per cent. It's not difficult to imagine the stress on relationships this causes.

She also explains that it is important to involve men, not just women, in HIV/AIDS education, testing and family planning, because she says, 'In the African context, sex happens when a man wants it.'

Community support visit at Alata's home.

Njoki and her seven year old daughter.

At this stage of the interview with Florence, we are brought a cup of tea by Maina, the janitor at the Good Samaritan Clinic. When he leaves, Florence says, 'I must tell you the Maina story.' It is a story that the bishop of Nyeri, Alf Chipman, an Australian who has spent 35 years in Kenya, also launches into when I finally meet him.

In 1997, Bishop Alf's wife, Nola, began taking in orphaned babies whose parents had died from AIDS or an AIDS related illness. Over the following year as numbers increased, a decision was made: it was better to have orphaned children fostered into families, than to have them in an orphanage.

Then in 1998, the Anglican diocese that Bishop Alf oversees, received their first funding to train women in the parish as HIV/AIDS counsellors and carers. (Sixty-nine attended the week-long course.) Just before that course, however, the bishop saw a fellow standing outside the office.

'He was begging, waiting for Nola to help him. He looked like he was on death's door. I'm ashamed now to say that I wasn't very kind to him. I told him to clear out. Fortunately he was desperate, so he stayed around', says Bishop Alf.

That desperate man was Maina. His wife had died of AIDS the previous year, and the stigma of their father having the disease had caused Maina's children to distance themselves from him. The bishop, in a subsequent meeting with his wife and Florence, had a change of heart.

'They made me see sense. I went to Maina and apologised. From then on, I put my shoulder to helping.'

It was Florence who invited Maina to attend the HIV/AIDS workshops, and to share his story. At a time when few people with the disease admitted their condition, Maina had taken a bold step. The effect on the local community was profound. A local minister explains:

'Five years ago no-one in the church wanted anything to do with people with HIV/AIDS. But when Maina began participating in Florence's workshops, speaking publicly all over the diocese about living with HIV/AIDS, attitudes changed, particularly [those of] the clergy. In a 180 degree turn-around, they realised it was their responsibility to be involved, to offer support. Maina has been such an inspiration to so many of us.'

In Rwanda, the incidence of HIV/AIDS is also high. In fact, in the next decade, the disease may claim almost as many lives as the 1994 genocide. In the Rwandan capital, Kigali, after visiting women with AIDS in the urban shanty towns—women made vulnerable by the potent mix of poverty and disease—I meet with Anglican Archbishop Emmanuel Kolini. He heads Rwanda's National AIDS Control Commission.

'In 1997 when I was made bishop of Kigali, I said in my inaugural speech, "I'll fight HIV/AIDS".' It is a promise he has kept. Kolini became Archbishop the following year. 'The HIV/AIDS program, here in Rwanda, was started by the church. Then the challenge was for the government to pick it up. But we kept up a program within the church so that all the clergy would be trained.'

These days Rwanda's National AIDS Control Commission, is an influential organisation, having links to a range of non-government organisations, as well as many government departments, and the president. The government even has a Special Minister for HIV/AIDS.

Archbishop Kolini is passionate about reducing Rwanda's HIV/AIDS rate, which he estimates to be 13.5 per cent.

'There are 260,000 orphans with HIV. Who is going to take responsibility for them?' he asks, adding that many church agencies have assumed this role. He laments the number of orphans and households where children have had to assume adult responsibilities. Yet there is some positive news. The World Bank, has recently granted Rwanda $US30 million to set up VCT centres, and to train doctors and counsellors. And the President's wife, who has taken a keen interest in the AIDS issue, said in February this year, that the HIV infection rate was beginning to decline, particularly in the urban areas.

It seems the fight against HIV/AIDs in Kenya and Rwanda has truly begun. It will be a long battle and continuing international financial support will be a critical factor in the campaign's success. ■

Michele M. Gierck is a freelance writer.

Wongborel/Mount Brown

It is said that the separated lovers, the warrior youth Walwalinj, and the sleeping woman, Wongborel, will only break the curse and come together when the world ends. Known on the maps as Mount Bakewell and Mount Brown, they now cradle the town of York, Western Australia.

– 1 –

From here, at the base
of Mount Bakewell — Walwalinj —
I can see Wongborel — Mount Brown —
coiled sleeping over the town: below,
my aunt and uncle, moved in from the farm;
a cousin and his family;
and distant relatives
by marriage I pass in the street
without knowing.

Awake, it would look down
on the cemetery
with a side glance.
My grandmother is buried there.
She liked Masefield's sea poetry.
You can't see the sea
from Mount Brown
but you can follow the treeline
of the Avon River —
levelled out, it's dry in most places,
though deeply watered
where it passes through town,
swaddled in algae, held in place
by fencewire and gravel roads.

We live on property
inherited from my grandmother;
craning my neck around a stand of York gums —
skewiff, Mount Brown is olive-copper
at sunset. I hit a twenty-eight
parrot in the car heading home today:
on a bend, I couldn't
get back to check,
with our daughter in the car.
Just its dull thud.

– 2 –

The heat folds
itself. High winds
lash the uncut grass
with fire risk,
yet water still glints
in the rain gauge —
the funnel brings
condensation to a dilated point,
to run the circumference
and break like the storm
that kicked up the dirt, drop
sharp as the black-shouldered kite.

A cuckoo shrike settles for the night.
A frisson in the jamtree.
The fire is built into the ground:
at night, it's infra-red.
My cousin says,
if fire comes round the hill,
stay in the house,
it's the only hope.

The bats are out of the folds
and crags of Walwalinj,
I strain to look the half-dozen kilometres
to its lover — Wongborel — and the twilight
works as a mirror.

– 3 –

From Mount Brown, the wheel of fortune:
the compass fanning out
to towns nearby, the city, Antarctica.
Kids do rococo burn-outs
in the carpark. They flame black
in the afterglow
of headlights. The granite boulders
tune the body magnet: it feels good
to cut loose up there.
The lookout swings you
around the district:
Trinity Church, the cut and paste
of the main street, wheatbins,
road to Northam, out back to Quairading...
and Mount Matilda
where the rainbow serpents cut their way through,
leaving an iridescence that can't
be farmed out —
hot when it's cold,
cold when it's hot,
sheltering from salt.

– 4 –

They need each other, the two high points
cradling the town;
to be brought back at the death knell,
when the fault lets go
and stresses the shed's metal.
They won't need the materiality
of the stars, the weight of a pinpoint
of gravity —
the water gone from the raingauge,
the language of wagtails
a constant. Suckers
emerge and unravel from the base
of a fallen red gum.

From Mount Brown,
they can see us clearly here:
the fencewire neon
to the blooded night,
the outlines
you know equally
in the familiar
or unfamiliar room.

– 5 –

The sleeping woman — Wongborel —
looks to the place of weeping — Walwalinj — the man.
With the tree-ripping
and the pesticide-dumping,
the herbicide assaults
and fertiliser drops,
there's one hell of a hullabaloo.
The curse is strong.
All turns on the parsing,
the massive refraction
of stubbled paddocks.
Tremors and aftershocks
have content; creatures of policy
commute on the weekends,
sheep huddle under single trees,
drinking their own shadows.

It's Auntie Elsie
I think of: sleeping alone,
unknowing. Luminous
in her alone-ness,
a different kind of community.
From the Needlings, out where lights glow
in sheoaks, she retired
to the town, between the sad, trapped youth,
and the sleeping woman.
Dead, beneath the ground:
a conduit linking the mountains,
an artery, a vein: flowing
back and forth. A silent
communication,
a side-stepping of time.

—John Kinsella

Mark Wakely

The author in front of his granny's fence.

Don't fence me in

Mark Wakely looks at our instinct to build fences

Bingara, New South Wales, 1963: When I was seven years old, the baker's daughter came to stay and for the first time I found myself sharing a double bed with a member of the opposite sex. In a desperate attempt to protect my boyish, personal space I hit upon an ingenious solution. I unfolded my parents' banana lounge and placed it, on its side, down the middle of the bed between the pig-tailed trespasser and myself. I had built my very first fence.

East Jerusalem, 2003: Walid Ayad is renovating his hotel. But he has a problem. The Israeli government is building a 360 kilometre security fence it says is designed to protect its citizens from suicide bombers. If the fence goes to plan it will run right through the middle of his property, dividing the hotel from its gardens. Ayad's life is only one of thousands that will be affected.

Fences are about territory. They are the way in which we see fit to order our world, the terms on which we are prepared to share it with others. And, from the 28 kilometers of razor wire surrounding the US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to John Howard's so-called 'white picket fence' view of society, they are always political.

A world without fences is almost impossible to imagine in a society that steadfastly believes that the planet can be divvied up between nations and land owned by individuals. The absence of fences from the Australian landscape before white settlement demonstrates a fundamental difference in this belief between indigenous and non-indigenous people. Fences are the marks white fellas like me have left on the country, the way we have attempted to tame the wilderness, transforming what we perceived as an empty, amorphous space into a peopled and parcelled place.

'It is when we find ourselves in a landscape of well-built, well-maintained fences and hedges and walls,' wrote the celebrated geographer John Brinckerhoff Jackson, 'that we realise we are in a landscape where political identity is a matter of importance, a landscape where lawyers make a good living and everyone knows how much land he owns'.

We have chopped, sliced and diced the world's rural and urban landscapes with millions of kilometres of fences. They form one of the most ubiquitous elements of our built environment. We might accept the Great Wall of China as architecture but fail to see any aesthetic value in the Dingo Fence which, running from the Great Australian Bight to central Queensland, is said to be the longest man-made fence on Earth. That's unless you happen to be John Pickard.

For the past decade Pickard, a visiting fellow at Macquarie University, has been studying the impact of pastoralism on the Australian landscape, focusing on fences. For him there is no doubt that a fence can be a thing of beauty. This man is truly in love.

'I admire them for several reasons', he tells me. 'One is the amazing perspective of just seeing post after post in a beautiful line disappearing into a heat haze. The small droplets of water out of fog that form on the spiders' webs on posts in the morning, and when the light's on them, well there are hundreds of these things down lengths of a fence. Or a very nicely preserved post-and-rail fence built with incredible labour, maybe 80 or 90 years ago. I find them very, very aesthetic objects.'

But does John Pickard also see ugliness in fences? 'Yes I do. I see human despair where people went out and settled in areas that were way beyond reasonable limits, for example north of Goyder's Line in South Australia.' Pickard is referring to a line in the sand, drawn in the mid 19th century by government surveyor George Goyder to delineate the point beyond which agriculture was not feasible. A line which was nonetheless ignored by farmers with a blind faith that rain would follow the plough. 'You can see the remnants of this [faith] today, the effort that people put into fencing and then obviously went bankrupt and walked off. What kind of human despair was involved?'

Fences tell Pickard about the extent to which the landscape has altered over time. Long stretches of a fence, built in the 1890s but today buried within 10 or

15-centimetres from the tops of the posts, tell him that the soil that has been swept there is the result of land erosion nearby brought about by human intervention. If it weren't for the fence you wouldn't recognise how much this part of Australia had changed.

Pickard is full of fencing facts and figures. It took somewhere between 10 and 20 million wooden posts just to fence the Western Division of NSW, and given that one small mulga tree might be good for only one post, that's 10 to 20 million trees. Some of the best stone fences are to be found at Kiama, south of Wollongong (basalt), and on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula (limestone). The most common fence post used in Australia, the three-armed star steel post, was invented in 1927 by two American rolling mill engineers working in Newcastle and they've been manufactured continually ever since. Our famous rabbit-proof fences were doomed to fail because the rabbiters, who were paid a bounty for catching bunnies, deliberately seeded the other side of the fence with what they were paid to catch. And the smallest fence in common use, if you consider a fence as a statement of property rights, is historically the wedding ring worn by a woman.

John Pickard inspects the massively over-engineered (but still stock-proof!) fence built for the railway north of Hawker, SA in the 1890s.

Gregory Dreicer, curator of an exhibition about fences at the United States National Building Museum in the mid-1990s, has written that they 'tell us where we belong and who we are in relation to others. Fences join the public and private. Remove a fence, invite chaos. Erect a fence, you are home'. Certainly most Australians could not imagine home without a fence.

'Good fences make for good neighbours', wrote the poet Robert Frost in *The Mending Wall*. Bad fences can certainly lead to bitter disputes. Presumably this is why state governments have dividing Fences Acts and why community legal centres and councils feel the need to publish fact sheets detailing how to avoid conflict with your neighbour about fences.

Julie Bishop, director of the National Association of Community Legal Centres says that last financial year, nationally, the centres received 1,527 requests for assistance with disputes over fences. 'That would indicate a major problem', she says. 'Because a huge proportion of our clients are tenants, not home owners, and home owners by and large would go to their local lawyer. So we're only getting the tail end'.

For John Pickard one of the real differences between a rural fence and a suburban fence is that the former is a very functional object. It's designed for the purpose of keeping stock in, or out, or away from crops, and it needs to do that as cheaply as possible. A fence in urban areas, especially a front fence, quite often says something about the status of the homeowner.

'If you look at some of the larger houses in the older suburbs you see very elaborate fences', Pickard observes. 'These are a very clear statement of "I am a wealthy person and I'm demonstrating this and all you riff raff can keep outside. But, hell, you can admire my fence".'

For most householders, however, the design of a new fence tends to be ruled by the hip pocket and the desire to reach quick, easy agreement with the neighbours. Not surprisingly, Colorbond rules. But for baby boomers like me, wooden paling fences still frame childhood memories. Perhaps they first entered my imagination on reading how Tom Sawyer tricked his friends into painting the paling fence for him so that he could venture down the Mississippi with his pal Huck Finn. I recall how a paling or two, once removed, could provide easy access through a neighbour's yard to reach the creek, or a much-needed structural beam to support the roof of a cubby, or how it fuelled a cracker night bomb fire. Asked what he thinks of the demise of the wooden backyard fence, in preference for powder-coated metal sheeting, John Pickard once again shows his colours, and they are all shades of green.

'The old paling fence ... was probably made from old growth hardwood, so its demise is probably a good thing. Secondly, some of the newer ones in the past decade or so have been made of copper chrome arsenate [treated] pine. And there's evidence coming from the US that CCA treated wood actually leads to problems of arsenic in the soil. So shifting to Colorbond does have some environmental advantages. Aesthetically? Well, beauty is in the eye of the beholder.'

Certainly a Colorbond steel fence is a beautiful thing to Canberra residents Rex and Lola Ensbey, whose home survived the devastating 2003 bushfire. In a testimonial posted in 2003 on the website of Bluescope Steel, which manufactures Colorbond, Lola credited their steel fence with helping save the house and protect the garden: 'Although the paint is peeling off in a lot of places, the fence itself is intact.' The wooden post-and-rail fence might be an Australian rural icon, but Colorbond emerges as a national hero in the suburbs.

Fences not only chequerboard our streets, increasingly they enclose them. Not content to corral our homes and gardens, we now partition ourselves along with 'like-minded' people in homogenous, walled and gated communities. We attempt to fortify ourselves against crime and minimise the risk of chance encounters with the hoi polloi. In the John Wayne school of urban planning, we circle the wagons at night. How much has changed since 122AD when the Emperor Hadrian built his wall across Britain to separate the Romans

from the Barbarians?

Wendy Sarkissian, a Brisbane-based social planner specialising in crime prevention, believes these housing estates create only an illusion of security: 'Burglars just aren't that stupid,' she says. 'And there's been anecdotal research from the United States showing that although burglary rates are low in the first couple of years they then rise to the level of the rest of the neighbourhood as the burglars work things out.

'The other thing is we are all struggling to bring life back to the public realm', she says. 'And if you don't even have a relationship between the dwellings and the street where you can see someone looking out, or somebody pruning their hedge, or talking to their neighbour, after a while the whole of the public realm, the street, just becomes completely empty. And all of the energy is going to making things lovely behind the fences. Nobody is contributing anything back to the street.'

Enclaves or ghettoes, both are likely to be surrounded by fences. The only difference is whether or not we live there by choice. Fences, of course, have two sides. Whether we feel included or excluded, protected or scared, depends on which side you find yourself. Peter Marcuse, who teaches urban planning at Columbia University, reckons walls and fences will always be 'a second-rate solution to society's problems'.

Presumably, the better solution has something to do with trust and mutual respect. But until humankind embraces these, fences are here to stay. All we can do is build them wisely, think of how aesthetically and ecologically they impact on the built and natural environment, and ponder the politics that underpin the humblest of fences. And, before we build another one, remember to ask what or who it is we are keeping in, or keeping out. If I had pondered these questions as a seven-year-old I wouldn't have been as quick to unfold the banana chair between me and the baker's daughter. ■

Mark Wakely is executive producer of ABC Radio National's 'Comfort Zone'. He is the author of *Dream Home* (Allen & Unwin, 2003) which has been shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Award for best non-fiction.

Andy Blunden

Capital investment

Andy Blunden examines proposals to target poverty and exclusion.

Social capital has been a topic of debate and research over the last few years, with attention focused on the non-economic causes of poverty and exclusion. This is a welcome development. There has, however, been confusion over how to interpret the data and therefore significant divergence about appropriate remedies.

There is more to well-being than having a fat bank account, and there is more to poverty and exclusion than having no bank account at all. What people living in poverty and isolation really need is the right to self-determination: the capacity both individually and with others to determine their own future and gain control over their lives. This applies to neighbourhoods as much as it does to individuals and families. Self-determination can only be realised by individuals through their relationships with others. Money is just one avenue towards realising this goal and merely a contributing factor which may allow people to realise autonomy.

The debate about social capital is hampered by the skewed assumptions that some hold about the relationship between economics and humanity. Instead of approaching the problem of poverty by looking beyond economics, and subjecting economic theory and policy to practical criticism from this broader perspective, proponents broaden the scope of economics by casting human life as a form of capital (rather than capital as a form of human life), as a resource which can be converted into cash or used for self-advancement. The concept claims, confusingly, to subsume political and moral problems under economic science.

Such is the view taken by Mark Latham, in his latest book *From the Suburbs*, which focuses on capital accumulation as the sole route to self-determination, a 'ladder' which people climb alone. He poses one solution to the problem of building social capital to the exclusion of all others, and what is more, this is a solution whose capacity to overcome the anomie and injustice of modern society is problematic.

Tony Vinson, whose report on community adversity and resilience was reviewed in *Eureka Street* (April 2004), reflects a contrasting view. He reports on a number of projects in which Jesuit Social Services have participated. Each project begins with efforts to find out the concerns of as broad a range of residents as possible. A public forum is then called, in which people are encouraged to step forward to take responsibility and gain a mandate from the wider community. This group then drafts an action plan, makes further consultation with the community and implements decisions. The outsiders take on the role of supporting and resourcing the efforts of the community. The outcomes reported are many and varied, including new small businesses, new voluntary projects and new initiatives for local management of public sector service delivery. This is a widely supported approach, one which recognises the need for a community to 'own' the project and emphasises self-help and self-determination.

Mark Latham however, passes a rather harsh judgment on this kind of project: 'In the past, governments have provided a huge amount of money to community development projects, but with little success. These programs have followed a familiar pattern of failure: the formation of local co-ordinating committees; the involvement of residents enthusiastic about a new approach; some capital works and physical changes; scepticism and resistance from central government agencies; a gradual loss of effort and enthusiasm at a local level; demands for further government funding; and, ultimately, the collapse of the program.'

Despite the fact he concurs with Tony Vinson's observation that 'some authorities have no sooner embarked upon a renewal

plan than they are devising an "exit plan",' Mark Latham places the blame for failure not with government (which, if he is elected, will be his responsibility), but on the idea of directly promoting community cohesion.

Mark Latham's featured case study is the work of Brian Murnane of the Brotherhood of St Laurence in the Western Sydney suburb of Claymore. I do not share Latham's wish to counterpose the approach used in Vinson's case studies to that used by Murnane; I believe that Mark Latham counterposes them solely in order to make his own point.

LATHAM QUOTES Murnane as summing up his approach with the words: 'every time someone said let's do something, we backed them', a sentiment which expresses the same orientation to supporting self-determination as Vinson's.

Thus there is an essential common thread between Murnane and Vinson, namely the need to support and reinforce local initiative. I don't believe either would want to be seen as prejudiced as to whether people organise themselves along private-sector models in the form of a company, along 'third sector' models in the form of voluntary associations, or in the form of a 'micro-public sector'. The point is that people need to get organised, building connections along lines of trust with others in pursuit of common aims, and there are many different ways of doing that.

Whereas Vinson and Murnane appear to have a very broad approach which encompasses whatever is appropriate and favoured by members of a community, Mark Latham is promoting a single road out of poverty, that of becoming a capitalist and accumulating wealth in the form of capital. He is willing to withdraw funds from other projects in order to promote this perspective.

Mark Latham proposes to move government funds out of community development into start-up capital for social entrepreneurs, through Social Venture Capital Funds, bodies reminiscent of the Cain Government's ill-fated Victorian Economic Development Corporation. According to him, '[Social entrepreneurs] operate on increasing returns on investment ... Social venture capital would aim to back this kind of success. It would allow social entrepreneurs to move poor communities back into the real economy'.

Latham is advocating profit as the preferred way to combat poverty and achieve self-determination. Making a profit is what he calls 'the real economy'. Charities and government alike are, according to Latham, not qualified to act within this real economy. In fact, communities which get organised and place demands on government are deemed to have a 'culture of dependency', and even government itself appears as a form of dependency, subordinated to the needs of business. But I believe that, for example, people forming themselves into a political lobby group to force the government to upgrade medical services is just as effective a way of building social solidarity and helping people move towards controlling their own lives, as setting up a company.

Latham's idea is part of a larger vision of social policy characterised as asset-based welfare, which is premised on the assertion that we live in a period of mass capitalism in which a claimed 60 per cent of the population are already capitalists. It aims to lift people out of poverty by making everyone a capitalist.

But this is a very narrow view of the factors highlighted by social capital data—networks, norms of reciprocity, trust, etc—which are self-evidently relevant to the problem of self-determination. If we conceive of the problem as one of self-determination, we can see why capital investment, philanthropy and state welfare services all fail in their own ways to address the situation. And we understand what Brian Murnane means when he said, 'every time someone said let's do something, we backed them', and why the Jesuit Social Services workers were so concerned that the community 'owns' a project. If we ask ourselves: What builds social cohesion? Then the answer is social solidarity, that is, lending unconditional support to worthy projects defined by people themselves (including strangers), rather than subordinating them to one's own program.

In relation to state delivery of welfare, given that the very raison d'être of a bureaucracy is control, it is easy to see why they are reluctant to aid in the self-determination of communities.

While Latham's claim that channelling government funds intended for relief of poverty through tax-incentives to corporations 'can save the public sector vast amounts of money' may be true, this kind of privatisation of welfare will contribute little to extending solidarity to those who are struggling to drag themselves out of poverty. In reality it is just substituting one form of subordination for another.

Instead of threatening to withdraw funds from community development, Mark Latham should be tackling the problem of why authorities want to pull the rug out from under such projects as soon as communities begin to find their own voice.

THE WHOLE POINT OF social capital is that poverty is not just an economic question and that well-being and wealth can be neither defined nor achieved by the accumulation of capital alone. In a sense, even a company is a vehicle of collective self-determination just like any other association in modern society—people establish lasting relations of trust and collaboration in order to make a living together. Accumulation of capital and employment of wage labour are really incidental functions of a company, which may as well employ voluntary labour and dedicate itself to the public good.

I believe the best way to move towards greater clarity is to recognise self-determination as the basic need of all people, and consequently to see poverty as just one factor that may hinder people from attaining self-determination and wealth as just one of the objectives people may seek through self-determination.

There is more to well-being than having a fat bank account, and there is more to poverty and exclusion than having no bank account at all

Change can only be effected through the efforts of those working within all these bodies—charities, government agencies, corporations, and so on—to extend solidarity and support the self-determination of poor and excluded communities, even if that means, at times, swimming against the stream. ■

Andy Blunden's book *For Ethical Politics* was published by Heidelberg Press in October 2003.

essay

Anna Griffiths

In my mother's footsteps

Italy, Caravaggio and Catholicism

The year 2000 was Holy Year in Rome. It was a special one celebrating the end of the second millennium according to the Gregorian calendar.

I was in Rome in March and again in May, bookending a stay of several weeks in the south of Italy and in that most Catholic of countries, Malta. I travelled not as a pilgrim to the Holy City in pursuit of indulgences, but to three cities in the indulgent pursuit of some of the most powerful painted images of the counter reformation—the paintings of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.

In March, new leaves were starting to appear on the plane trees but there was still a wintry feel in the air and a fairly insignificant number of visitors, measured by the relative ease of being able to squeeze in the door of the Vatican buses heading down via Nazionale.

The city was gloriously clean, its classical columns and pediments and its baroque scrolls and volutes now clearly delineated by the shadows cast by an oblique sun on their pale surfaces.

St Peter's, no longer overbearingly dull and grey, looked manageable, visually contained and quite beautiful. Rows of plastic chairs filled Bernini's grand piazza and dozens of young volunteer red-capped guides led hundreds of red-capped pilgrims around the basilicas.

Among the red caps in Saint Peter's I saw my mother. At least I thought I did. I had been thinking of her, so when I saw a short, sturdy, elderly woman with a guide book in her hand and an intensely happy expression on her face, a bit of morphing happened. She returned my smile and went on her way with her group.

My mother came to Rome for Holy Year in 1950, half a century earlier.

She was 44 years old, the mother of five children aged from three to 15, a Catholic whose faith combined a keen intelligence with a simple set of Irish superstitions. In our home, serious tomes from the Catholic library sat beside the little porcelain statue of Our Lady which she put outside under an umbrella the night before any event for which rain was absolutely proscribed. This was her first trip out of Australia and she threw up all the way to Aden and all the way back to Australia. The Suez Canal and the Mediterranean must have been kinder because they were never blamed for her indisposition.

She bombarded us with letters and postcards and on her return, small souvenirs from exotic places: *mille fiore* mosaic bracelets, St Peter's in a snow dome, medals and printed cotton scarves, the mandatory laced and tooled leather pouffe from Aden. My treasured favourite was a fabric doll with a scarf tied under her chin, on top of the scarf a basket in which sat a little goose. I believed that such wondrous girls walked around Rome with birds on their heads while I suffered the drab and comfortless interior of boarding school for two whole terms.

Her letters, carefully bundled, expressed her wonder, her passion, her erudition and her faith. Settling back into suburban life must have been hard: fund raising, parish affairs, cutting lunches and ensuring that her shoes and bag matched, were mindless pastimes after poking around Rome and discovering that Michelangelo's marbles really did exist outside the covers of the Phaidon book.

I tried hard to see Rome through her eyes but our faiths are different and my cynicism got in the way. Eugenio Pacelli was on the throne then, a distant, patrician figure in whose presence she was quite overcome when her group attended a special audience. In 2000 one of his successors wanted to beatify him, but knowledge of his failure to protect even his own Roman Jews from the Nazis was a bit of a sticking point. The inclusion of Saint Pius XII might just provide me with the departure stamp which has been hovering above my Catholic passport.

I visited many of the basilicas and churches she did, but my attention was probably more on Borrominian curves and appropriated Roman columns than on whose relics were under the altar, curious as they were. I am sure she went to mass at least once at St Peter's and wandered around, her way unimpeded by security guards or bullet-proof shields. I too wandered through, shook my head again at the over-scaled, aggrandising opulence of the interior, paused at that serenely beautiful mother and her slaughtered son then exited into the big arms of Bernini's superb colonnade.

I also visited Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana, Prada and friends, to drool. Rome, five years after the second, devastating world war, had barely re-established its market for such luxuries. My mother probably found a pair of hand made shoes or a classy handbag. I think we both enjoyed many strong, aromatic coffees, though she probably beheld those shiny machines for making them with wonder. Did the enamel percolator plop-plopping on the gas stove at home ever seem really adequate again?

Thoughts of my mother's travels preoccupied me intermittently on the train journey to Naples, the point of disembarkation for antipodean visitors to Rome. Apart from the vast relief that her feet were on terra firma, how did this New City of the Greeks affect a middle aged housewife from the suburbs? Early June was hot, perhaps not as dirty as now because the love affair with the car was in an unimaginable future, and industry not as widespread around the beautiful Bay of Naples. But it was poor, and, damaged by the allied bombings towards the end of the war, even more run down than its current state of what Peter Robb describes as terminal decrepitude.

Hundreds of orphaned urchins hung

around the piazze and churches and the rabbit warren of streets in the Quartiere Spagnole, begging and stealing a mean living. Was she shocked by the presence of these undernourished, bare footed children the same ages as her own who were safe back home in the care of a housekeeper and boarding school nuns? Did she visit those vastly over decorated baroque churches, so different from the predominant neo-gothic equivalents in Australia, and marvel at the bejewelled statues adorned with silver offerings and flowers, candles, embroideries? St Lucy holds her eyes, St Barbara her severed breasts, eyes rolling ecstatically to heaven, tiny glass-encased corpses with wax hands and faces and dusty silken gowns were all disturbingly sensuous compared to the ubiquitous blue, brown and red plaster figures from Pelligrini at home. Probably she lit a few candles, said a few prayers for her distant family and was touched by this richer, more sentimental strand of her own faith.

My Naples, visited in pursuit of the young painter from Caravaggio, was still dirty, noisy, poor, decrepit, but also charming, rich, stylish, exuberant. Today's versions of urchins are four-to-ten-year-old boys and girls, tearing along the tiny streets in the evenings, three or four to a noisy little motor bike, presenting more danger to others than to themselves. Perhaps this is how Neapolitans learn to drive. In some quarters women tell you conspiratorially to watch *la bursa* because their own men and boys are likely to nick it. The Bay of Naples is still breathtaking if you can see it through the smog and the smoke from Vesuvio. Today's girls are not the virgins and martyrs raising their eyes heavenward, nor are they in the demure cotton skirt and petticoats of my goose girl. That Campagna is long gone. They are bleached blonde and gorgeous, racing the boys on their motor bikes and squeezing themselves into mauve snakeprint hipsters while their mothers join the evening passegiata along elegant via Chiaia lugging armfuls of shopping bags. For every Signora Maria arranging flowers in any of the dozens of still functioning churches, there is her Neapolitan sister, tawny, elegant, jewelled, sauntering on the arm of a superbly groomed man or taking *aperitivi* and checking herself in the mirrors at Bar Gambrinus.

There is an acute reminder of 1950s Naples, though, in the numbers of tiny elderly people, smaller than modern ten year olds, whose bodies never recovered from years of malnutrition and poverty in the fascist and war years.

One day just before Easter, we joined a procession which wound along singing litanies, in and out of four churches, before finishing at Santa Chiara, a sort of liturgical pub crawl. Along the way, we squeezed through a short section of Spaccanapoli, the long, narrow, ancient street which slashes through the city. Shoppers and strollers accommodated us as if we were an every day occurrence, motor cyclists weaving carefully along the edges of our litanising crocodile. A line of bianchi would have created no greater stir half a millennium ago, flagellating themselves on the same street, donkeys no more inconvenienced than Vespas.

So aside from being part of what I trusted was an ancient urban tradition and enjoying bellowing out *prega per noi* over and over, I wondered why I was so determined to do this as I am not of the rosary rattling persuasion at all.

I realised I was doing it for my mother. This is just what she would have delighted in had she been in the back streets of Naples long enough to have discovered such a performance.

Procession over, we dropped in to see our local Caravaggio, the wonderful Seven Acts of Mercy, for about the tenth time. No museum can deliver the same experience as seeing a work in its original context and location. Seven Acts fills the space over the altar of the small and naturally lit church of the Pio Monte della Misericordia. Miraculously, the painter incorporates the Seven Acts and 13 figures in a shallow, vertical composition barely three metres high. The symmetry of the church is so dramatically pierced by this dark rectangle of urgent action that we feel as if a curtain is about to drop and restore architectural order any minute.

That other essential Neapolitan experience followed: *pesce alla griglia* straight from the open air market.

My pilgrimage continued on to Malta. Again my mother's travels came to mind as we threw up for hours (better than six weeks) across the shallow strait between Sicily and Malta that has similarly wiped out sailors and visitors alike, voyaging by trireme, hydrofoil and every other craft in between.

There above the altar in the Oratory of St John in Valetta was our goal: Caravaggio's largest and almost final painting, the huge, asymmetrical, dark, terrible *Beheading of John the Baptist*—commissioned by the Knights of St John and still in its original position. There is plenty of space in this canvas, room to move. This is a very secular painting, all narrative, the murder committed and the clean-up about to begin as two horrified prisoners look on from the otherwise empty right side of the space.

The artist's red curtain, which seems to be his main prop, has come down to Malta with him to drape over the dead John's lower body. He uses it again in the nearby portrait of the Grand Master Wignacourt as St Jerome, where it is rather superfluous as a piece of clothing but literally and compositionally brilliant as a slash of colour in the rich brown chiaroscuro which pervades the work. The ingenious way he reused this piece of cloth has been noted and admired, the simplest of objects used to its maximum.

Street procession in Naples. Photo by **Don Gazzard**.

In one of Carravaggio's stabs of realism, he shows Wignacourt half naked, his warrior's hands and face weatherbeaten and worn in contrast to his smooth white body.

Back to Rome and more Caravaggios—a special pilgrimage to the pilgrims in Sant' Agostino. How brave of the church bosses to accept this painting of a very streetwise Mary coming to her Roman doorway to greet the road-weary pilgrims, one with his bottom and dirty feet thrust

directly towards the viewer.

We then endured our version of road weariness—a 20 hour economy flight back home. Sick of Italian food, we made a bee line for a feast of Singapore noodles.

I know more about this dark, subversive and hugely influential painter now because I have followed his trail from Rome to Naples to Malta to Sicily, walked along his streets, seen the prison from which he escaped and the night harbour from which he was smuggled away, seen the lyrical sweetness of his *Flight into Egypt*, been overcome and buried beneath the dark, enveloping fear and desperation of his southern paintings as he ran out of places to go. His models' faces have become familiar, as has the humanity with which he suffuses them.

My mother's return voyage was much less endurable. She was sick again, emerging from her cabin only as the *Strathaird* made its way up Port Phillip Bay towards her family waiting at Station Pier.

She took me to Italian films of the New Realism genre, those suitable for children, that is, and made friends with new immigrant parishioners and shop keepers from Italy.

She planted pencil pines around the fence and lobbied (unsuccessfully) for the verandah roof to be removed from our Victorian house so she could place cumquats in tubs on the tessellated terrace. Dozens of miniature reproductions of Madonnas by Filippo Lippi, Botticelli and Raphael gradually filled the wall above the bedroom fireplace.

I don't know how else she was changed by her pilgrimage or how it otherwise changed her view of the world because, sadly, I never asked her.

Her pines are now about three stories high and a local landmark. The verandah roof is still there and the south facing terrace was not the right place for cumquats anyway. ■

Anna Griffiths is an art consultant.

books

Celia Conlan

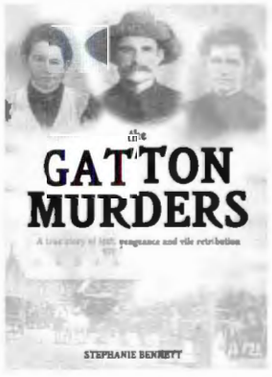
Deathly silence

The Gatton Murders, Stephanie Bennett. Pan Macmillan, 2004.
ISBN 1 405 03574 9, RRP $30

Over the last century our nation has striven to become an increasingly civilised and progressive flagship of democracy and equality. But the reality of how we treat each other in the context of certain unfortunate circumstances appears set in stone. Although probably not its primary purpose, Stephanie Bennett's book, *The Gatton Murders*, deftly reinforces this disparity in the evolution of our social maturity.

The book is a well-researched, forensically sound who dunnit. It reconstructs the events leading up to, and following, the Boxing Day assaults and murders of two sisters and their brother, on their way home from a dance in 1898 outside the rural Queensland town of Gatton. It also examines the associated murder of a teenage boy two weeks earlier in nearby Oxley.

The author makes no secret of the fact that much of what she proposes is speculative. Bennett even invites the readers to draw their own conclusions from the facts and information she presents. Her tendency to leave some loose ends untied provides plenty of opportunity to ponder what secrets may have been permanently erased by the passing of time. However, the author skilfully interprets the evidence available at the time in the context of what she has gleaned about the lives of the principal players and the community surrounding them. This results in a fascinating albeit complex study of how seemingly disparate events and individuals can merge and collide resulting in unspeakable tragedy.



The circumstances of the Murphy siblings' deaths have long held a macabre fascination in this country and have provided inspiration for stories that focus on white settlement in a dangerous, untamed land. Rodney Hall's *Captivity Captive* is an obvious example. Bennett's book goes some way further, providing a detailed insight into the challenges facing a late 19th-century town such as Gatton.

Her analysis of the deficiencies of the police investigation and the internal bickering and conflict which undermined any potential for competence, invites comparisons with frustrations voiced about the Victorian Police 20 years earlier around Glenrowan. It portends the propensity for such flaws to plague our police force well into the 21st century.

The book also examines the price a community, or more notably its women, will pay to ensure that the appearances of a God-fearing society are kept up, even where this results in an intolerable loss of young lives.

Perhaps the most chilling aspect of this book from a contemporary perspective is its analysis of young men in groups and what they are potentially capable of doing. The book examines what happens to young men, particularly when spurred on by alcohol, inspired by an asocial leader, and provided shelter by a frightened, ashamed community which can find sufficient justification for their deeds to look away and remain silent. ■

Celia Conlan is a lawyer.

Christopher Heathcote

All that jazz

Television's engagement with the arts

On Sunday evenings late last year, ABC television's ratings jumped as viewers across the nation tuned in to *Love is in the Air*, a documentary series on Australian popular music in the late 20th century. If these viewers had watched the same network a few hours earlier, they would have seen a re-screening of *Jazz*, another musical documentary series, which showed American popular music over the early and mid 20th century. The former show was an ABC production, while the latter came from the United States—and what a contrast they presented.

The focus in *Jazz*, which was the work of the American film maker Ken Burns, was upon artistic endeavour. A typical slice of the narrative started by telling you about a dishevelled young man who slouched into a smoky club on 52nd Street. He looked a mess, with odd shoes on, his hair messed up, wearing a rumpled jacket, and he pulled out of a shabby paper bag a saxophone held together with rubber bands. He stepped over to the small group that had just set up and had a word with the drummer. They started up a riff, and next thing the sax player was playing, not the melody, but the base line, putting notes in there that no one had ever thought of before, and they sounded discordant but they worked, and there was this weird spacing in the passage. Next thing the trumpeter was jamming with him, using this rapid fingering; and a small but significant revolution had just occurred in Western music. The guy on sax was Charlie Parker and the hornblower in heavy glasses was Dizzy Gillespie. Together, they had just made one of those paradigm shifts that—according to musicologists—only a Beethoven can come up with. And even if you didn't fully agree, you had to admit that music had changed.

Jazz was about artistry and expression, exploring how music is food for the soul, even how music can convey our individual, and sometimes collective humanity. Nestled in front of the box, they laid it out for you. The music played, and your appreciation deepened; and it didn't matter if you were unfamiliar with Bix Beiderbecke or Duke Ellington or Theolonious Monk, of if you couldn't before tell 'West End Blues' from 'St Thomas' or 'Take the "A" Train', because *Jazz* spoke to all viewers on their level, lifting them up and getting them to enjoy music, considering how it connects with and expresses the human condition.

There is no gentle way to speak honestly about *Love is in the Air*, Australian television's own effort at engaging with music. The performers might have been intermittently referred to as 'artists', yet artistry did not figure in the show. Instead, it was dismal—a litany of disc sales, production figures, chart ratings, gold records, industry awards, profit ratios, and how to milk a hit. What is going on, not just in the media, but in our broader culture, that we now seem only to talk in such shallow materialistic terms? Where the American program spoke continually of hard work, perseverance, musical vocation, craftsmanship and talent, the locally produced show advanced the idea that anyone can be a musical star provided they are cleverly managed.

Creative accomplishment was notable for its absence, indeed, an underlying message of the series was that the supposedly best pieces of recent Australian popular music have either been tossed together in minutes, or relied on a gimmick. *Love is in the Air* not only showed the music it dealt with to be trivia and froth, but applauded these qualities. Nothing made to endure, nothing great, nothing that reaches for, or expresses our humanity was celebrated— the show paid homage to the quick, empty jingle that pulled the big bucks.

I worry that *Love is in the Air* is pretty much an indicator of how our nation is being impelled to assess imagination and creativity nowadays. Looking at the treatment of visual art in the media, you see the same materialistic fixations. It's all marketing and hype and dollars. We speak little of art; it's always prices and figures, with artists treated as winners or losers depending on how much money they turned over. Australian culture is now in the hands of those who want us to see everything only in terms of dollars.

Sadly the ultimate victim of this creeping materialism is the unwitting public. Culture never has been widely understood in this country, many people regarding serious artistic, literary and musical activity as either pretentious accomplishments of little inherent utility or else suspect forms of entertainment intended solely for the privileged. In appealing to commercial values, these attitudes are hardly countered.

There is much to be learned from Ken Burns' *Jazz*. It is a marvellous object lesson in just how we could make entertaining, stimulating and solidly-rating television (the ABC has broadcast the series three times now) while doing something as allegedly 'unpalatable' as introducing viewers to quality music, writing and painting. *Jazz* affirmed what any capable arts practitioner already knows: getting people to enjoy music isn't that hard. It's a matter of sharing what you perceive—of sharing how you experience a work—and next thing the audience is moving down the path to that essentially inward delight of the artistic by losing one's centre and finding fulfilment; most of all, to that inexplicable joy a fluently handled passage of sound or oil paint or words can trigger inside you, the visual chords and individual notes, the emotional colour.

'Music', the great American drummer Art Blakey used to say, 'washes away the dust of everyday life'. ■

Dr Christopher Heathcote is co-author with Bernard Smith and Terry Smith of *Australian Painting 1788–2000* (Oxford University Press, 2002).

Andrew McGowan

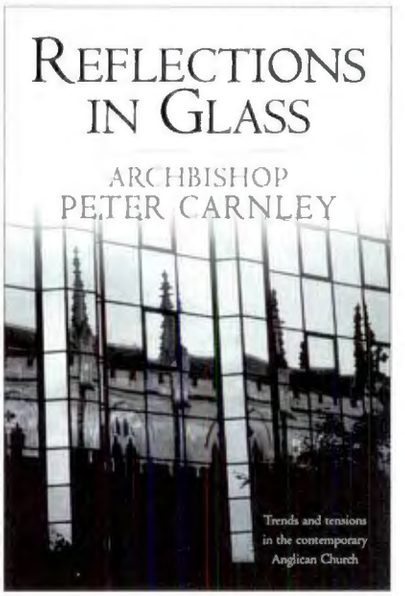
Thoughtful reflection

Reflections in glass: Trends and tensions in the contemporary Anglican Church, Archbishop Peter Carnley.
Harper Collins, 2004. ISBN 1 863 71755 2, RRP $35

FOR OVER 20 YEARS Peter Carnley has been a thoughtful and at times provocative voice in Australian public discourse, straddling ecclesiastical and secular worlds and issues with aplomb. Now that his retirement as Anglican Archbishop of Perth and Primate of the Australian Church has been announced, *Reflections in Glass* appears as a not-quite-parting shot. It presents his concerns on issues from theology to bioethics to ministry to religious pluralism, and embodies his mode of leadership not so much as representative conciliator but as an inspirational leader and controversialist.

Carnley's conflicts with the Anglican Diocese of Sydney have been no secret and are a prominent thread through this book. From the opening pages which narrate the controversy surrounding his 2000 *Bulletin* article on 'The Rising of the Son' to the chapters on women's ordination and religious pluralism, conservative evangelical Sydney Anglicans are a real or implied opponent in the articulation of Carnley's 'progressive orthodox' Christianity.

This constant subtext of a debate between Anglicanisms—Peter Carnley to the West and Peter Jensen to the East, as it were—could be read as a slanging match between duelling scholasticisms, liberal and evangelical. Some readers will wonder whether the polarity between progressive and fundamentalist tendencies in the Anglican Church might be handled more creatively—whether by rapprochement or just amicable separation. At many points, however, this struggle with a conservative Christianity documented in *Reflections in Glass* will be enlightening to people of faith, beyond as well as within Anglicanism, who seek alternatives to the conservatism so evident across traditions and denominations in Australia recently. Archbishop Carnley's thought is actually as different from the liberalism of Bishop Jack Spong as from the fundamentalism this book opposes. He begins with a clear fidelity to key elements of Christian doctrine, but seeks to ask how they can be interpreted in ways that do justice both to tradition and to contemporary realities. In this respect the Australian Anglican Primate can justly be compared with the English one, Rowan Williams.



Three chapters on aspects of leadership and ministry are relatively clearly focused on Anglican issues—the possibility of 'lay administration' of the Eucharist (a Sydney proposal to authorise a further order of local elders who have the same liturgical roles as priests), the role of priests, and the possibility of women as bishops. These include some technical discussion of the political and legal processes the Anglican Church faces in dealing with them, but also a broader engagement with Roman Catholic, Orthodox and other Christian traditions which face (however readily they admit it) similar fundamental questions about the nature of ministry and the roles of women and men in church and society.

THE TITLE *Reflections in Glass* is an allusion to St Paul's metaphor of seeing divine realities imperfectly in a mirror. Dr Carnley returns to the theme of mystery at numerous points, arguing for a Christianity that allows and even celebrates uncertainty over claims of propositional assurance. Chapters on revelation 'God: Manifestation or Mystery', the nature of doctrine, and scripture all deserve to be read widely and discussed fully by Christians of various backgrounds. That on the Atonement—just how the events of Jesus' death and resurrection save us—may be the most interesting of these particular theological explorations. Just as Dr Carnley's thoughtful approach to the resurrection was widely misunderstood some years ago, early reaction to this book suggests that his understanding of Atonement has again become a tripwire for those inclined to confuse a foundational Christian doctrine with a particular understanding of it. In fact, he deftly points to the difference common in Western Christian thinking since Anselm that Jesus saves us by taking the punishment due to us, and the actual doctrine of the Atonement which can of necessity be interpreted or presented in a variety of ways. Again he argues that dogmatic precision is not the point, and can even be dangerous and unorthodox. 'Atonement', he says, 'does not really need a theory; what it needs is a liturgy'. *Reflections in Glass* is an engaging survey of the concerns of a leader and scholar of remarkable breadth. The significant shadow cast by its author will continue to encourage those across the Christian community and beyond, for whom faith and mystery are friends rather than rivals. ■

Reverend Dr Andrew McGowan is the director of the Theological School and Joan Munro Lecturer in Theology at Trinity College, University of Melbourne.

Matthew Lamb

The end of a friendship

Sartre and Camus: A Historic Confrontation, edited by Adrian van den Hoven & David A. Sprintzen.
Humanity Books, 2004. ISBN 1 591 02157 x, RRP $45

Camus & Sartre: The Story of a Friendship and the Quarrel That Ended It, Ronald Aronson.
University of Chicago Press, 2004. ISBN 0 226 02796 1, RRP $66

In October 1951 Albert Camus published *The Rebel*, an essay on man in revolt, concerned with criticising the legitimacy of political violence, irrespective of whether it originated on the left or the right.

The central argument of Camus' book is that although the origins of revolt are legitimate, there is a point in the revolutionary arc when a rebel's actions may negate the legitimacy of these origins, and this is the point when the oppressed in turn becomes the oppressor. Against this outcome, Camus argues for the presence of limits or measure in the act of rebellion; a balance between justice and liberty, which he hoped would create a rule of conduct separate from the extremes of both sides of the political divide.

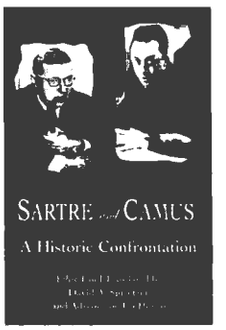
To have such an argument heard in Cold War France was an impossible task. *The Rebel* sold far fewer copies than Camus' previous publications. It may have been largely forgotten had it not been for the late, and vitriolic, review that appeared in May 1952, in *Les temps modernes*, the leading cultural and philosophical journal, operated by Camus' long time friend, Jean-Paul Sartre.

This review led to a quarrel which effectively—and very publicly—ended the friendship bet ween Camus and Sartre.

A large section of *The Rebel* criticises the violent excesses of communism; and this came at a time when Sartre and his journal were aligning themselves more closely with the communists. Their view was that any criticism levelled against communism would aid both Western capitalism and the right, and must therefore be silenced.

The eight month delay in issuing this review was partly due to the relationship between Camus and Sartre. On a personal level, they may have been friends, but politically and philosophically the pair had been moving in separate directions for some time. Sartre took a long time reaching his own position, justifying the use of political violence. It was first articulated in some articles he wrote during the eight months between the publication of *The Rebel* and the appearance of its review. In light of this, any review of *The Rebel* would no doubt have been negative; but Camus had hoped—perhaps naively—that it would at least be fair. It wasn't.

The review, published in May 1952, was written by Francis Jeanson, one of the younger members of the editorial board at *Les temps modernes*. In August, Camus' furious reply was published, along with Sartre's acerbic response, and an additional article by Jeanson.



It is difficult to imagine today the significance and the spectacle of this dispute for France in the 1950s. Adding to this difficulty, is that the original articles which appeared in *Les temps modernes* between May and August 1952 have not been fully available in English, except in scattered quotations teasingly alluded to in studies.

The recent publication of *Sartre and Camus: A Historic Confrontation*, edited and translated by David Sprintzen and Adrian van den Hoven, has brought the texts together in their first complete English translation.

The articles themselves are both interesting and disappointing. They are interesting because of their significance to the study of Camus and Sartre. It is always good to get back to the primary sources. The disappointment, however, comes from the witnessing the shamefully out of character behaviour of these intellectuals.

Jeanson's 20-page review attacks the reception of *The Rebel* amongst the right wing press, Camus personally and his previous work. Jeanson then attacks the book itself, albeit bypassing its central arguments.

Understandably, Camus was upset by this treatment, but his wounded pride impaired his judgment, as his 20-page reply shows. Camus completely ignores Jeanson, instead addressing Sartre, as the editor, holding him personally responsible for the attacks. He claims his main arguments were not addressed, but then repeats this error in his own article by focusing, not primarily on the content of Jeanson's review, but on what Camus took to be the underhanded method which he employed.

Sartre's response comes next. It opens with him breaking off their friendship; he then uses the friendship as a weapon against Camus, attacking his life, his literature and his thinking. What is most remarkable (and disappointing) about this response, is its viciousness. Even after Sartre has clearly decimated Camus, he keeps going, for 30 pages. Unnecessarily, this is followed by a further 40 pages of derision from Jeanson.

The saving grace of the book is the inclusion (also for the first time in English) of Camus' article *In Defence of The Rebel*, written in the months following the quarrel, but only published posthumously. Here Camus has regained his composure and, without overt reference to the quarrel, he sets out to clarify his basic arguments: that true rebellion possesses a limit beyond which it negates its legitimacy, that the role of the artist is to create value in a world which may not intrinsically have any, and that the application of a principle of measure in political activity is necessary so as not to slip into extremism, which excludes parts of reality, and ignores the existence and dignity of other people, including our opponents.

Sartre and Camus: A Historic

Confrontation is an excellent book providing the primary sources from an interesting moment in history, but lacks a thorough examination of the context in which this event occurred. The book opens with a 70-page introduction, providing only a rough outline of the historical and theoretical background of the quarrel. This is followed by the translated *Les temps modernes* articles. Then come two essays which, while purporting to provide 'contemporary reflections' on the quarrel, seek only to prove who won. William L. McBride, argues that Sartre had the better of the argument, while Jeffrey C. Isaac argues that Camus had the better of the exchange.

COINCIDING WITH THE publication of this book is the publication of another, *Camus and Sartre: The Story of a Friendship and the Quarrel that Ended It*, by Ronald Aronson. Aronson provides a thorough comparative study of the two men, adequately providing a context to the quarrel. The author examines the beginnings of their friendship in the early years of World War II (when their first novels and essays were published), through to the Nazi occupation of France (during which Camus edited the clandestine resistance newspaper, *Combat*) and into the promising liberation and post-war period (which saw the surfacing of *Combat*), to the start of Sartre's *Les temp modernes* (from which both men gave voice to the cultural reconstruction of France). The promise of a new France, however, quickly faded, first during the purge trials, which began as the necessary bringing to justice of war-time Nazi collaborators, but ended in arbitrary vengeance; and then during the onset of the Cold War. With this came the pressing need to once more take sides to which Camus and Sartre's friendship fell prey.

The August 1952 edition of *Les temp modernes* quickly sold out, and when reprinted, sold out again. All the major newspapers in Paris ran headline articles on the quarrel. Retrospectives started appearing before the end of September. Even the tabloids joined in, albeit focusing more on the personal, rather than the intellectual, rift between two of France's leading intellectuals. Everyone was talking about who won, Camus or Sartre? Fifty years later, the debate continues.

What is remarkable about Aronson's study is that, unlike van den Hoven and Sprintzen, Aronson refuses to take sides.

> 'I discuss this compulsion to take sides,' he says in chapter six, 'to show how it came to dominate Camus and Sartre—how they sided against each other, destroyed their friendship, and contributed to the Cold War divisions that shaped the second half of the 20th century. We have to see their rupture in its true colours—as the product of a distorted choice. The Cold War confused political thinking, destroyed friendships and individuals, and deformed the Left and the entire political universe. As with the rest of the Camus–Sartre story, seeing and engaging both points of view critically as well as sympathetically may allow us to free ourselves from the dualistic thinking of the Cold War.'

This also touches on the larger purpose of Aronson's book, one more relevant to the questions of today, which is to highlight the continuation of this dualistic mindset in the West, which simply exchanges one of its terms, shifting its focus from the 'East' to the 'Middle East'.

The underlying message of Aronson's book, then, which is negatively reinforced and illustrated by Sprintzen and van den Hoven, is that in maintaining this dualistic mindset there is a danger in intellectual debate for vanity to overcome wisdom, which can only act to undermine the usefulness of such debate in guiding the survival of nations. ■

Matthew Lamb has a PhD in Literature, he lives and writes in Brisbane, and will soon commence a PhD in Philosophy, on the work of Albert Camus.

BOOKS

Bede Heather

Saving faith

Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism, Jacques Dupuis SJ. Orbis, 2002. ISBN 1 5707 5264 8, RRP $30

AT ONE POINT IN THIS long and gripping study, Jacques Dupuis remarks 'Today the debate on the theology of religious pluralism has pride of place on the theological agenda.' His work is a searching and wide-ranging treatment of the subject which is likely to serve as a point of reference for years to come. His own works listed in the bibliography show the reader the theological path he has followed.

The issue with which he deals could be simply stated as follows. The discovery of the new world following 1492 brought to Christians a long delayed realisation that there had existed from distant times great populations that had had no opportunity to know the name of Christ. Was it the case that their ancestors had been irremediably condemned to hell? And what did that say about God? From the Council of Trent onwards theology began making adjustments, finding Christian substitutes, as Dupuis puts it, for explicit faith and actual baptism.

In the century just passed Christians have for the first time made lasting theological contacts with the great religions of the world: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam. Latterly they have come to recognise the Jewish people as their own flesh and blood. The question has inevitably arisen, Are the adherents of these faiths touched by God's saving grace? And, do their institutions, and their scriptures, have some place in God's saving plan?

If these questions are answered positively, questions of another sort arise: What about the necessity of the

incarnation and of the cross for human salvation? Can we still say that 'there is no other name in which men and women can be saved' (Acts 4.12).

For nearly 40 years Jacques Dupuis (a Belgian by birth) taught theology in India, then took up a chair at the Gregorian in Rome. Obviously he comes to these questions from a real experience of non-Christian religions.

There are two parts to this book, one historical or 'positive', the other synthetic. In the first part, he explains how the religions of the nations have been seen from within the Christian tradition, beginning with the Hebrew scriptures and concluding with the debate following the Second Vatican Council.

For all their condemnations of the idolatrous nations, the Hebrew scriptures acknowledged pre-Mosaic covenants, and could extol a non-Israelite saint like Job. Dupuis also cites John's Gospel: 'The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.'(Jn 1.9) The early Fathers, from Justin to Clement of Alexandria, recognised the seed of the word sown by God outside of the Jewish and Christian worlds. But subsequently a rigid interpretation of the axiom, 'Outside the church there is no salvation', made it difficult for theologians to think positively about non-Christian religions. Dupuis traces the history of this axiom in church teaching, showing how its rigid interpretation was eventually condemned.

Dupuis leaps centuries to the Second Vatican Council and subsequent church teaching. He pays particular attention to the Encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (1990). 'It may be said that the singular contribution of Pope John Paul II to a "theology of religions" consists in the emphasis with which he affirms the operative presence of the Spirit of God in the religious life of non-Christians and the religious traditions to which they belong.'

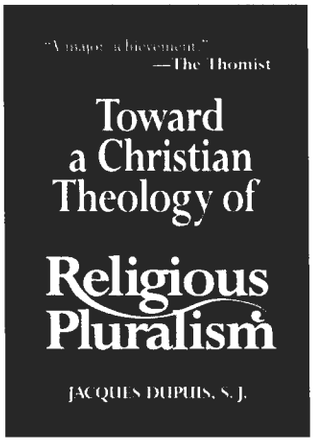
Part two is entitled: One God–One Christ–Convergent Paths. He argues that God and Christ belong inseparably together. The one God has become known through Jesus Christ, the human face of God. He makes effective use of the Gospel of John in demonstrating this. For example, he says, Jesus is 'the way, the truth and the life' (Jn 14.6), but never the goal or the end. The goal is the unfathomable mystery of God, who has been made known to us by Christ.

This alone could lead to an exclusive theology of religions. It is balanced by a second relationship, between Christ and the Spirit.

A theology of religious pluralism elaborated on the foundation of the Trinitarian economy will have to combine and hold in constructive tension the central character of the punctual historical event of Jesus Christ and the universal action and dynamic influence of the Spirit of God.

This is the program carried through in the second part, in which it becomes evident that Dupuis' favourite modern theologian is Karl Rahner. He reserves his most radical criticisms for the theology of John Hick. His reflections conclude with chapters on the church and the place of interreligious dialogue.

In asking, What about the church?, Dupuis begins by considering the universality of the Reign of God: 'All religious traditions contribute, in a mysterious way, to the building up of the Reign of God among their followers and in the world.' According to Dupuis, the church is the necessary sacrament of the Kingdom as intended by God. Those who are saved have an orientation to the church. Dupuis explores how this 'orientation' has been understood in recent theology.



Following recent church teaching, Dupuis argues forcefully that interfaith dialogue is integral to the mission of the church. It is distinct from the proclamation of the gospel, and any attempt to make it part of proclamation should be resisted. In dialogue, 'The Spirit is at work on both sides, the Christian and the other; thus the dialogue cannot be a monologue. The Christian partners not only will give, but will receive as well.'

In this book, the occasional repetition is compensated by its encyclopaedic quality. All the theologians who have contributed to this subject over the past 40 years are summarised in some detail and often in their own words. Dupuis is concerned to name directions and to open up new areas for further exploration.

Dupuis has written a work of Christian theology not a study of comparative religion. He explains how a Christian thinker may make sense of religious pluralism. Although it may seem as unflattering to non-Christian faiths to describe them as oriented to the Christian Church as was Rahner's description of them as 'anonymous Christians', we must also presume that non-Christians, beginning from their standpoint of faith, will work out for themselves a theology of religions, including the Christian religion.

The work of Dupuis and his colleagues is hugely important. At the beginning of the 21st century, a key question for the future well being of humans, and perhaps for their survival, is a plan for human harmony: a vision of unity. We are offered political visions (universal democracy) and economic visions (globalisation). Is there any vision of faith for unity? This is not about unanimity but about being united in peaceful co-existence. Dupuis' work reaches out, positively and hopefully, courageously but carefully, from a clear Catholic tradition.

For this reason it seems to me unfortunate that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith found it necessary to issue a Notification, which is included in this work. The issues raised are those Jacques Dupuis has been dealing with over the preceding 400 pages. All the references of the Notification are to documents of church teaching, to most of which the author himself has referred. In subsequent statements, also included, the Jesuit General noted the seriousness of the author's research in a fundamental area for the future of interreligious dialogue and his readiness to work within the parameters outlined in the Notification. Archbishop Henry D'Souza of Calcutta has the last word. He gladly welcomes the Indian edition of the book, noting that 'for us in India and in Asia the living religions are a reality which we have to address in our daily task of evangelisation'. ■

Bede Heather is a former Catholic bishop of Parramatta.

Christine Salins

Tastes of the Orient

Rosemary Brissenden will eat almost anything—except perhaps the termites, procured from a rotten stump, offered to her while living in a village in Thailand.

'That was the one thing I gagged at', she says of the food she ate throughout her year in Ban Koi Noi. As for the rest, 'It was earthy but it was nutritious and a lot of it was extremely delicious,' says Brissenden, who was interested in the role of food in village life.

The author of the culinary classic *South-East Asian Food* was worried about a loss of culinary traditions in Asian cities and wondered whether the situation was the same in the countryside.

What she found was pretty much a subsistence lifestyle. Apart from the pork delivered each morning on a motorcycle, the villagers ate plants gathered from beside paths and in the rice fields, fish from the river, frogs, flying ants, crickets and termites, as well as homegrown chickens and produce from the house garden. Brissenden lived with a local family.

'I went out into the fields, I watched them cooking, I was just part of the scene. I went [to Thailand] to see what the food situation was like but I became fascinated by the whole village life.'

So fascinated that it will be the subject for her next book. In the meantime, she is promoting her recently revised *South-East Asian Food*. The authoritative and groundbreaking book has sold steadily since it was first published by Penguin in 1969, at a time when such food was relatively unknown and exotic in this country.

It was the first book of its kind which attempted to discuss and characterise the food of the region, though Brissenden was limited by the political events of that time, covering only Malaysian, Indonesian and Thai food. Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were included in a revised edition in 1996.

Martin Boetz, chef at Sydney's acclaimed Longrain restaurant, called *South-East Asian Food* his bible, praising it for its 'phenomenal detail' and for being ahead of its time. Elizabeth David listed it among the books every serious cook should possess.

High praise indeed for its author, who grew up in the Pacific islands in the 1930s when her father was posted by the Victorian Department of Education to Nauru, and later the Solomon Islands, to help establish their education systems. Some of her earliest memories from that time involve food. She remembers eating a bowl of fragrant steaming noodle soup with seafood and fresh herbs at the age of four, during a family visit to a small Chinese trading settlement.

It was one of the bright spots in the 'rather boring and repetitive Anglo-Saxon diet adhered to by expatriate colonial service communities at the time'. Tropical fruits and exotic foodstuffs fired her imagination, yet it was many years before she discovered the huge variety of delights that were possible in food.

'Our daily fare was built around supplies brought in on ships once every six weeks and tinned corned beef, soups, cold-climate vegetables and fruit. The 40s and early 50s in Australia brought little gastronomic joy. Rationing, followed by seven years of bad boarding school food, could only contribute a sense of what good food should *not* be like.'

In 1957, Brissenden, then a student in Melbourne, went to Indonesia for three months with a goodwill delegation of Australian students. It was there that she discovered the joys present in the sweet, sour, salty, hot and bitter tastes that could stand alone or be mixed and matched, the textures that were creamy, crunchy, cleansing or rich, the flavours and aromas based on herbs and roots, and age-old techniques of fermentation and food preservation.

All were a revelation, and in time she came to make similar discoveries throughout the rest of south-east Asia. On her return to Australia, she searched for a book on the subject, without success.

'Melbourne Uni at that time was one of the major centres for Colombo Plan students, so I sought out Asian students, watched them when they cooked, picked their brains and started to develop a bit of a repertoire of my own,' she said.

In 1958, after graduating from Melbourne University with a BA (Hons) in politics, Brissenden moved to Canberra, where she lives today. She was appointed a research fellow in international relations at the Australian National University, where her academic career continued until 1984.

Brissenden's late husband, Bob, worked in the English department at ANU and during the mid-60s he held a second job as literary editor of *The Australian*, then in its infancy. When she suggested to the newspaper's editor, Max Newton, that the newspaper needed a column on south-east Asian food, she was asked to write it.

'It was then I realised what I didn't know.' But she took to the task enthusiastically, and the column soon aroused the interest of Penguin. Thus, in 1965, a heavily pregnant Brissenden embarked on a six-week tour of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, where she was welcomed into private homes and kitchens.

At the time of the book's publication in 1969, 'the whole south-east Asian ingredient thing was a problem. You had to be devoted. You had to be really keen on the food to make the effort of finding ingredients.' Brissenden bought dried spices and made her own coconut milk from desiccated coconut.

'The big difference came after the end of the Vietnam War when the Indo-Chinese refugees came to Australia. Their main entry into economic life in Australia

was through food, not only in restaurants but in bringing food into the country.'

In the decades since the book was first published Brissenden has found that much has changed within Asia itself. The most obvious changes in terms of its food has been the loss of culinary skills brought about by rapid urbanisation.

'When I was first in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand in the 1960s there was very little in the way of electricity. You might have had a kerosene stove if you were wealthy, otherwise it was charcoal.

'They were rural economies and the capitals were just emerging from the colonial period. People lived in extended families, they had cooks, they had grandmothers who supervised and were in control of the culinary activities in the household. Culinary knowledge, skill and activity were all passed down through the generations.'

Today, in cities such as Jakarta and Bangkok, there are more nuclear families and few servants. It takes a long time to negotiate the traffic to get to work, so people often have breakfast in the car or stop at a street market to pick up dinner on the way home.

'Supermarkets have whole bags and refrigerators full of ingredients already packed, and there's the attraction for American fast food. There's much less cooking done in the household, and this has meant a huge loss of skills.'

Brissenden says such changes are inevitable, and that it can't be wrong for people to enjoy greater choices and a growing affluence. But she is worried that south-east Asia is following a similar path to that of western countries. The original south-east Asian cuisines showed great eclecticism, having been built on a 'large number of fascinating influences and an assertion of individual development of culinary heritage, and I find it a pity that that is being lost.'

Given her academic background, it is not surprising that Brissenden takes a scholarly approach to her research, though her writing is far from tedious.

From the outset, Brissenden has been intrigued by the culinary patterns of south-east Asia: 'There are individual cuisines in the various countries but also echoes between countries.'

Photo: **Heide Smith**, used with permission.

THIS HAS LED HER TO examine trade and migration patterns and the role they play in the evolution of the various cuisines. Brissenden says that while the cuisines of each country display individual characteristics, an overall regional character is also recognisable, as a consequence of common historical, cultural and ecological experiences. She believes that with people's increasing familiarity with Asian ingredients and flavours, there are many who 'want to go a bit deeper' with their cooking and who seek more substance in the books they buy.

Rather than organising her recipes into categories such as soups and main dishes, she has arranged them according to ingredients and the ways in which they are cooked. Part of her reasoning was that a category such as soups is an odd notion in this context: 'really they are just wet dishes ... some we might identify as soups, some as stews'. But she also hopes that by organising the book in this way, it allows readers to better develop their expertise.

'South-east Asian cooks don't have recipe books, they taste everything individually. They make their own spice pastes and adjust the five basic flavours—sweet, sour, salty, hot and bitter—to their own taste, and this is something I've tried to encourage in this book. People should not take the measures as being authoritative.'

Brissenden admits that entertaining with south-east Asian food is often difficult, since the shopping and preparation is time-consuming.

'If you are cooking this kind of food you do have to immerse yourself in it,' she said. 'I've given shortcuts but I have to say I do believe that spending a bit more time cooking in a relaxed way is coming back in. A lot of people who are working very hard find it extremely relaxing to do something completely different.' ■

South-East Asian Food by Rosemary Brissenden, has been revised and re-released by Hardie Grant, ISBN 1 740 66013 7, RRP $49.95.

Christine Salins is a Canberra based freelance writer. She edited *The Canberra Times* Food & Wine supplement from 1994–2003.

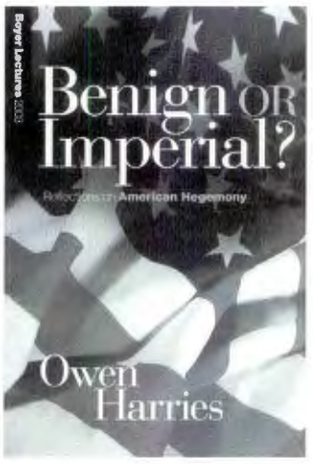
Ralph Carolan

National identity

Benign or Imperial? Reflections on American Hegemony, The Boyer Lectures 2003, Owen Harries.
ABC Books, 2004. ISBN 0 733 31349 3, RRP $22.95

EXPRESSIONS OF DISSATISFACTION with American culture are not rare or new. Yet, since World War II, Australia has been one of the great consumers of American culture, and, through strategic alliances such as the ANZUS pact, one of the great followers of American foreign policy.

Owen Harries' *Benign or Imperial* tackles the issue of Australian national identity through an examination of the emergence of the United States as the world's sole superpower, and Australia's relationship with it. The text itself is a transcript of the 2003 Boyer Lectures. Harries brings to the debate a formidable pedigree, including stints as director of policy planning in the Department of Foreign Affairs, senior adviser to Prime Minister Fraser, and Australia's ambassador to UNESCO, as well as numerous publications on the issues of foreign policy and international affairs.



Harries' analysis essentially operates on the macro level: namely the international relations of the United States and Australia. Though Harries questions the importance of the 'soft power' of cultural imperialism, his analysis contributes to the question of Australian national identity by examining Australia's relationship with its main point of identification and differentiation: the United States. Harries provides an interesting and enlightening historical context, arguing that we are at a unique juncture in world history, in which the US has became the first ever 'global hegemon'. In Harries view, this is a position that the US attained by default, with the rapid collapse of the USSR leaving it in a position of unprecedented global power. Harries claims that the sheer speed of events meant that the usual historical process of determined opposition did not take place. Nor was the US itself ready, and despite strong economic growth and continued expansion of its military, it failed to capitalise on, or indeed recognise, its new position.

Harries argues that the US did not define or enact a clear vision, and that it wasn't until September 11 2001 that the US gained a 'clear purpose, (or) central organising principle', namely, the 'war on terrorism'. Forced to act in the interests of national defence, the Bush Presidency initially focused on the protection of the nation and the destruction of terrorist organisations. However, this initial response quickly morphed into something far more expansive. A year after the attacks, 'The National Security Strategy of the United States of America' was published, which Harries claims is 'the most important statement about American foreign policy since the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947'. In it, the Bush Presidency expressed a determination to use its hegemonic power to reorder relations among states to ensure world peace, and to reorder the internal conditions of countries along the lines of free market liberal democracy.

Towards this end, the strategy expresses a commitment to use the US military preemptively and, if necessary, unilaterally. Harries argues that such use of liberal democracy is a precarious business, which is seldom successful and often produces unintended consequences. Here, Harries' analysis takes on a certain urgency, as the success of the 'coalition of the willing' in Iraq becomes not just crucial for the future of Iraq, but for the future of America's newly stated ambitions. If Iraq is seen to be a test case for the strategy, then failure would mean not simply the collapse of liberal democracy in Iraq, but the collapse of US foreign policy as it currently stands. Already, the parallels with Vietnam are striking.

IN THIS CONTEXT, the Howard government's policy of 'unhesitating, unqualified and conspicuous support for the United States in its wars against terrorism and against Iraq' would seem to be a huge risk, in terms of both foreign relations and electoral success. The government's support of US foreign policy is not a new phenomenon in Australian history. However, the potential results of a failure in Iraq may leave Australia isolated at a time when the country is attempting to expand its international role and export markets. Harries asserts that the overriding responsibilities of the Australian government are to this country, and that in following the US lead, it is leaving itself open to a cultural, economic, and perhaps even a terrorist backlash.

Harries' lectures provide a clear and powerful overview of the rise of the US to the position of global hegemon, with its attendant ramifications for Australian foreign policy. His analysis of the National Security Strategy is essential reading in light of current world events. However, underlying the text is the question of just what it means to be Australian, a tension that often expresses itself in a forthright protestation against American imperialism in all its forms. At present, Australian foreign policy is closely identified with that of the US, but it is difficult to see how Australia could enact such a policy without reference to the global hegemon, even if it were a complete repudiation. ■

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

the shortlist

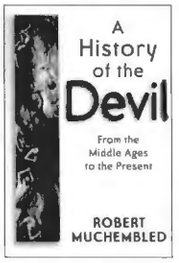
Who did this to our Bali? Dewi Anggraeni. Indra, 2003. ISBN 1 920 78708 9, RRP $24.95

In the wake of October 12 2002, little has changed in my little corner. I get an extra going over by security at Canberra airport and the temporary white fence girding Parliament House remains. We were called urgently to 'be alert, not alarmed'. In the wake of the bombing the cries from Bali differed greatly from those in Canberra. Anggraeni notes at the scene of the bombing, amid the flowers, a poem that reads:

> '...God are you angry with us?
> We know we have been made a lot of mistakes (sic),
> We know we are often misguided,
> God please forgive us...'

Anggraeni's book is largely one of perspective. Where Australia saw the bombing as an event of diplomatic and political significance, for the Balinese the incident became a focus for mourning and symbolic of some spiritual retribution. The significant contribution by the international community to assisting Bali is also put into perspective. Whilst Australia helped bring to justice the perpetrators, the AU$4000 granted to Endang Isanik, whose husband Aris was killed in the blast, won't go far in a home with no income earner and three young children. The second half of the book tracks the investigation and incarceration of the bombers, and differs significantly from the initial accounts, if not from the title.

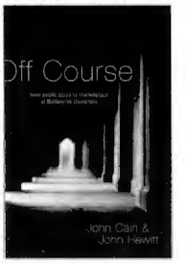
—Nathan Kensey



A History of the Devil: From the Middle Ages to the Present, Robert Muchembled. Blackwell Publishing Asia, 2003. ISBN 0 745 62816 8, RRP $27.95

A History of the Devil dissects the popular image of the devil in Western culture over the last thousand years. This is the devil revealed in jokes and tales, in literature and art, in judicial proceedings and medical instruction, and, more recently, in comic strips and advertising. Robert Muchembled, Professor of History at the University of Paris XIII, uses these entrails to argue for a transformation in the European image of the devil in the Middle Ages. The image changes from Old Nick, a trickster, to the cloven hoofed Lord of the Sabbath who rules over the torment of sinners in hell. This latter devil was a force in the 'civilising' of Europe. Since the Enlightenment, however, there has been a trend to internalise the devil. The devil has become synonymous with desires that sometimes rule human beings. This is not necessarily the death knell for the devil's influence on society. Contrary to the internalisation of the devil, the latter half of the 20th century has seen a resurgence of conservative beliefs stressing the devil's reality, particularly in the US. Muchembled's reading of the devil's intestines does not attempt to predict the future of Western imagination and the subsequent influence on society of the devil. He contents himself with presenting the devil's past in detail, making this a fitting book for those interested in the blood and guts preceding the devil selling ice-cream.

—Daniel Marti



Off Course: From Public Place to Marketplace at Melbourne University, John Cain and John Hewitt. Scribe, 2004. ISBN 1 920 76909 9, RRP $29.95

With issues of national security dominating the political landscape, higher education is unlikely to get much of an airing in this election year. One hopes that *Off Course* will do a little to redress this. Written in an engaging style—more journalistic than academic—*Off Course* is a welcome antidote to the usual array of literature on the subject.

Part One of the book concerns Melbourne University's transition from 'academic institution to corporation'. Cain and Hewitt argue that the university, with its connections and influence, could have resisted the move to reduce public funding of Australian universities. Hoping to be an early winner and establish itself as another Harvard or Oxford, it openly embraced the corporate-management model—particularly regarding staff and student morale.

Part Two, 'The Commercial Experiment', examines various commercial projects the university has engaged in, namely Melbourne University Private and Melbourne IT. Cain and Hewitt argue that Melbourne's step into the brave new world of private higher education funding was ill-considered. The failings of Melbourne University Private and Melbourne IT have tarnished the university's proud history.

Off Course is not a call for a return to the golden age of education. The authors deny such an age ever existed. Rather, it is a look at the state of higher education and an examination of what happens when a university undertakes risky commercial ventures at the expense of its role as a public institution.

—Aaron Martin

Dark Dreams, Australian Refugee Stories by Young Writers. Edited by Sonja Dechian, Heather Millar and Eva Sallis. Wakefield Press, 2004. ISBN 1 86254 629 0, RRP $19.95

Young people are honest. They carry a sincerity which allows them to tell the truth. *Dark Dreams: Australian Refugee Stories* are such anecdotes about arrival to Australia—a balanced collection, documenting 60 years of migration. From stories of Jewish refugees fleeing Hitler's Europe, to Vietnamese and Cambodian 'boat-people'. More recent accounts include stories from the Kosovo conflict, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. One story is of a girl who watched her entire family drown at sea, and others tell of times in German labour camps. A young woman tells of being tortured for seven months in Iraq after speaking Kurdish—a language that was forbidden under Saddam's regime. The book is likely to renew the enthusiasm of those advocating on behalf of refugees, and perhaps persuade those not so prepared to welcome them.

The depth and simplicity of style in this book has much to recommend it. It casts a human face on the refugee issue that more analytical texts cannot. The stories of extraordinary courage and humanity are profoundly moving.

—Beth Doherty

A class above the rest

To Be and To Have (dir. Nicolas Philibert). In what is turning out to be an exceptional year for documentary cinema (*Capturing the Friedmans, The Fog of War*) Nicolas Philibert's *To Be and To Have* stands out not merely as an extraordinary documentary, but as the finest film of any kind this year. Its subject matter is as humble and unprepossessing as one can imagine—the passage of a teaching year in a Classe Unique school in an isolated section of Auvergne, where a dozen students from ages three to 11 are taught together in the same single room. Their teacher, and focal point of the film, George Lopez, is on the verge of retirement after 35 years of teaching (21 of them in that school alone). Lopez's gently insistent questioning guides his charges through the intricacies of their moral and emotional development no less than their ABC's. His unflinching honesty and realism draws them to recognise the challenges of the world in which they are growing up, and the necessity of helping each other through this.

Philibert's style has been compared to the observational documentaries of Fredrick Wiseman. Where Wiseman's long career has focused largely on the dehumanising impact of the institution on the individual, Philibert seems more concerned with the deeply human and humane communities that individuals are capable of forming, even within an institutional framework. (It's hard to imagine two more different perspectives on school life than *To Be and To Have* and Wiseman's *High School*). This is a film that is suffused with a profound sense of love—not only that between Lopez and his students, their families, or indeed the rural community of which they are part—but also for the landscape and the place itself, the ebb and flow of the seasons, the snow and the sun and the changing colours of the fields. It is both funny and moving, simple and richly rewarding, and most certainly worthy of your attention.

To Be and To Have.

One slightly dispiriting post-script is necessary, however. The film has been an enormous success in Philibert's native France, making Lopez something of a minor national hero. But with success comes money and now, apparently, Lopez is suing the filmmakers for a share of the profits.

—Allan James Thomas

False security

Safe dir. Todd Haynes. In *Safe* (1995, on release for the first time in Australia), Todd Haynes' first attempt at dismantling a suburban Eden, actress Julianne Moore's inscrutable femininity dominates the screen—as in her second bite of the apple, critical hit *Far from Heaven* (2002). Carol White (Moore) is a wealthy 'homemaker' in 1980s Los Angeles who develops multiple allergy syndrome. So, in spite of the fact that she inhabits a polyester nirvana of American material aspiration, she ends up choosing to live alone in a cabin at Wrenwood, a new age desert community devoted to sufferers of similar ilk. The obsessive 80s stylings of this film are repellent—her home resembles a hotel foyer with staff and workmen continually passing through spraying industrial-strength chemicals everywhere. *Safe*'s LA freeways are terrifyingly reminiscent of similar scenes in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972). Modern life is posited as suffocating horror in and of itself, with no need for monsters.

Safe opens with an long overhead shot of Carol and her spouse abed, engaged in the joyless marital sex that Haynes possibly assumes heterosexuals always have. Their awkwardly polite exchanges of information suggest a relationship like that of an employer and his upper house-servant, yet Carol exudes a vacant Jackie-Kennedy queenliness. Never animated except in extremes, she drifts like a slightly apologetic sleepwalker through scene after scene. Her lack of affect forestalls even pity at her plight—Hitchcock's icy blondes are vivid and engaging, compared with Carol. We follow her to parties, dinners, shops, aerobics classes and doctor's offices, where conventional medicine has no answers to her increasingly debilitating symptoms. Her doctor insists that it is 'all in her mind' which later resonates with the theory expounded by Peter, Wrenwood's resident guru, that her immune system has broken down because she needs to 'love herself'. Her condition doesn't seem to improve, however, as she parrots his banalities while progressively isolating herself from human contact. A lesion on her forehead grows—a broad hint at an AIDS subtext.

Haynes plays with us: in subverting a multiplicity of film and TV genres, he mimics narratives we are used to and then denies us the payoffs and catharses we expect. Sometimes there is an unsettling feeling that you could be observing the home life of Stanley Kubrick's astronauts from *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) remade for the Hallmark channel. A coldly brilliant tour de force which stays in one's thoughts for some time.

—Lucille Hughes

Nice moves

The Company, dir. Robert Altman. Altman's new film *The Company* explores moments in the life of an American Ballet company. Don't panic, it's not a tale of horrid little pretty girls in tutus with tragic mothers and eating disorders. Well actually it is, but Altman has found a way in that makes it about that and a good deal more. In many ways it's as much about Altman's film making style as it is about its subject. And this subject is very much a reflection of his style. No one character is explored exhaustively and no one moment overshadows another. He floats through a world of art that is at once phoney and pure, collaborative and autocratic—much like the film making process. Altman clearly understands the connections.

Opening with a dance performance that employs ribbons and bodies to draw elaborate patterns across the stage, the film immediately sets up its (and Altman's) central dramatic concern—the intricate and subtle intertwining of human stories. Slowly characters are introduced with tiny snaps of conversation and physical observations. We are introduced to Harriet (Barbara E. Robertson) working at the bar, sweaty and alone. She is interrupted by a class of younger dancers. She dresses and leaves. That's it, but the graceful crafting of this scene taught me

more about the ache of this character than Arnie could communicate in a full 120 minutes. Of course the comparison is unfair, but it shows that Altman and his cast are concerned with the depth of moments, not wham bam 'moments of depth.'

Altman shows a lot of dance performance in this film, fully costumed and staged. Mike Leigh did the same in his glorious film about Gilbert and Sullivan, *Topsy-Turvy*. And it works. In part, simply because they are very good performances, but as a device in the film it hints at the weird and wonderful difference between artistic process and public performance—charting a narrow course between physical reality, pretentious pondering, prima donna grand standing and the inscrutable public face. To laugh loudly at an artist espousing the virtues of his or her 'visionary' idea (as many in the audience did, I assure you) and then to be silenced by its extraordinary execution was decidedly uncomfortable.

This is nowhere near Altman's greatest film, but boy can he direct. He is master of the form he has created and it is a pleasure to watch his films peel off in front of you. There will be too much ballet for some and too little drama for others but be assured there is plenty of Altman here for the true believer.

—Siobhan Jackson

The Company

Thanks for the memories

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, dir. Michel Gondry. A love story, yes. Moving, yes. Bizarre, YES. A masterpiece, not quite. But hell, it comes close enough.

Charlie Kaufman (screenwriter *of Being John Malkovich, Confessions of a Dangerous Mind, Adaptation* etc) has done it again, this time in collaboration with video clip 'master' Michel Gondry. While the thought of delving into Kaufman's mind makes me slightly nervous, he certainly doesn't baulk at the idea (quite literally) when it comes to his characters. He's right in there having a good dig around. And where Kaufman treads Gondry doesn't fear to follow.

Eternal Sunshine is a love story. Your classic boy meets girl. But unlike so many writers that tackle the subject Kaufman doesn't faff around with all the cute lead up shenanigans. He tackles the main game—the real part where you actually spend time together, loathing and loving.

Joel (Jim Carrey) and Clementine (Kate Winslet) met on a train (or was it on a beach or in a bookstore—hmmm—such is the madness of a Kaufman script). Clementine has coloured hair and a fearless personality. Joel is a bit of a loser—charming in his lack of chutzpah, but lacking none the less.

They fall into a kind of love one recognises, each making the other work in a less than perfect way. But when things get too sad and imperfect for Clementine she chooses to undergo an experimental medical procedure that wipes Joel from her memory. A quick fix that suits her impulsive personality. Joel, angry and in love, follows suit. And so the film unfolds in the memories and imaginations of an aching heart—a heart desperate to eradicate pain but even more desperate to reclaim the possibility of romantic love.

The plot is too insane to recount in more detail, and frankly it doesn't really matter. Suffice to say Gondry and Kaufman are not afraid to push you through a visual and emotional menagerie to tell their tale of troubled love. And God bless their little cotton socks.

The performances are wonderful. At one stage Winslet pulls down her pants and looks at her bottom in the mirror. It is neither smutty nor artful—just true. The film delights in such moments, employing its ensemble cast (including Tom Wilkinson, Elijah Wood, Mark Ruffalo and Kirsten Dunst) with a charming lack of reverence. And Jim Carrey has finally nailed a dramatic role. He'll never be a Marlon Brando, but his face gives more in stillness than I ever could have imagined.

Kaufman is clearly intrigued by the famous lovers, Abelard and Heloise. He wrote them, obliquely (in puppet form), into *Being John Malkovich*, and again into *Eternal Sunshine*, via an Alexander Pope poem about the pair.

> 'How happy is the blameless Vestal's lot!
> The world forgetting, by the world forgot.
> Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!
> Each pray'r accepted, and each wish resign'd'.

Handsome poem, handsome film. See it!

—Siobhan Jackson

Jim Carrey in *Eternal Sunshine*.

watching brief

Looking through the cracks

My Grandma Hughes' neighbour Mrs Tiveney smashed all her crockery one day. It took her nearly half an hour to get through it all because she was a woman of means and many dinner sets. Armed with the poker she chased the last bowl as it rolled around the kitchen, yelling 'Coom 'ere, you boogger, Ah'll bloody get you yet!' In the 1920s there were no television gurus, no therapists for such as her: only Fr Finn the choleric little parish priest who felt himself to be above his company, God forgive him.

In those days Gorton, Manchester, was full of little brick terraces on narrow streets dotted with pubs that were an obstacle course for the returning worker. Woe betide the family whose dad liked to shout the bar with his week's wage. A woman could be the wife of a high earner and still have little to put on her prized dishes. So Mrs Tiveney cracked, along with her crockery, and her family drank from tin cans and ate from the saucepans for months after. Neighbours might offer replacements if they dared, but in vain; the Tiveneys were almost as proud as the Hugheses.

I was tempted to follow her example the other day when I was faced with an unusually horrible washing up. (O spoilt 21st century bitch that I am! Mrs Tiveney's wildest dreams could not encompass the legal equality, the educational opportunity, the mass entertainment, the household appliances, the medical advances, the comfortable runners, the aromatherapy and the Mars bars that are routinely available to me and my whinging ilk.) I glared at the pile of messy saucepans and yearned suddenly to live with vampires, whose culinary needs are simple, with no washing-up required afterwards. This, despite the fact that I'm very disappointed in the latest series of *Angel*, the Buffy spin-off that began so promisingly. It's finished now in the US and the last episode will be seen here soon. But it's not the great loss to TV that it should have been. Joss Whedon's great feminist-spiritual project degenerated into a clunky, blokey soap with all the strong and likeable female characters written off. Pity: we need a strong female voice again in the world, when even the ABC radio's *Life Matters* led up to Mother's Day last month with a 'Father's Week', in which we were told repeatedly how inadequate women were as single parents and as teachers of boys.

Anyway, to return to our muttons, the lads had been cooking again, not that they would ever deign to cook something as ordinary as mutton. They are greatly encouraged in this by the TV. There must be 20 male TV chefs to every Nigella or Delia, who tend to be sniffed at for whatever reason. (Nigella so annoyingly privileged; Delia so annoyingly domestic-science correct; both such *female* cooks.) Everyone thinks of Jamie Oliver when this comes up, but there are legions of others on cable: Nigel Slater, Giorgio Locatelli, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Nick Rhodes, Ainsley Harriot, Neil Perry. They all have a tendency to the obscure über-gourmet stuff; the truffles, the quails, the venison, the chocolate couverture that costs more than the pot it's melted in.

This fascinates the Y-chromosomed in our house. Not for them the ham and salad roll, unless the ham is parma and the salad rocket and the dressing themed heavily with words such as virgin and balsamic. When men are cooked *for*, the call is for lots of fried red meat and spuds, with bacon featuring everywhere. But when they take to the stove, it's a different story. Woks, bamboo steamers, mandolines and pasta makers pop up in your kitchen like daisies on a lawn. You come home to a new ceramic carving knife from Japan whose cost means you can't afford to go on holiday this year and a French cast-iron cauldron that weighs more than the piano. Your cupboards bulge with clumsily ripped bags of Arborio, wild, basmati and jasmine rice because they never use a whole packet of anything. You keep finding bits of saffron in the tea caddy. The house starts to smell more garlicky than van Helsing's jockstrap. Your discarded dental floss is black with vanilla seeds and squid ink, and you keep washing pots.

This is because men in their Y-effrontery can be as indifferent to the ultimate fate of the pots they pollute as a footballer is to a silly girl looking for approval. I hear indignant baritone rumblings in the background; claims are being made regarding the washing of dishes. Yes, yes, dishes: Things you eat off, frequently licked quite clean to start with. I agree that men are quite handy around the china and glass; they love the sound of chipping Doulton. But it's the women who have to sandblast the burned-on gravy, the caramelised onion residues, the stiff brown floor of scorched sauces from the bottom of the cooking pots.

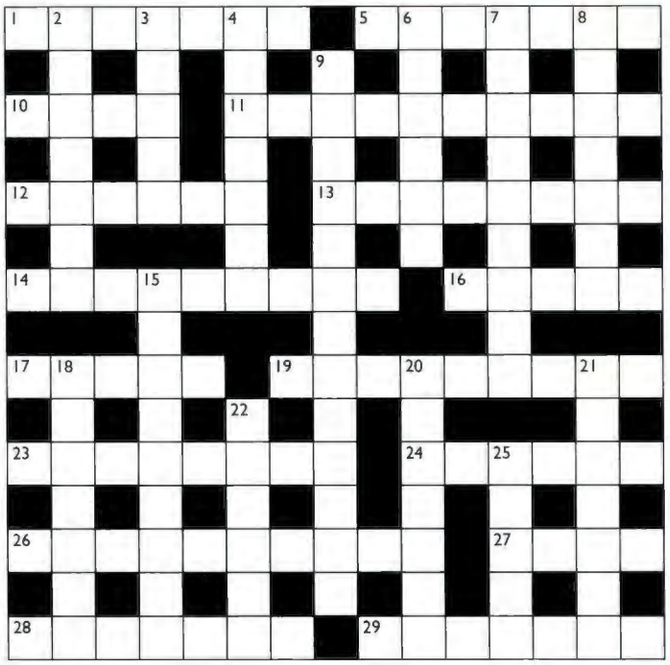
Which brings me back to Mrs Tiveney in the 1920s. She cooked, cleaned and got a bit fed up. They treated her differently after that. But I must be a wimp, because I let the damn dishes live to spite me another day. I wonder what the footballers' wives have to wash. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer.

puzzled

Devised by
Joan Nowotny IBVM

Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 124, June 2004



ACROSS

1. Could friend declare that all the talk was mere hubbub? (7)
5. Hamlet's father appeared thus; treat him with special respect (7)
10. He, for example, returns and takes directions to discover his heredity—or an element of it. (4)
11. Fast train I've boarded—it's moving! (10)
12. Sharp practice required for this instrument? (6)
13. Reportedly chained evangelist to highest point, or it could be lowest water level. (8)
14. Where musicians play on their feet? (9)
16. Marinate, but the price is exorbitant. (5)
17. John, at first was uncertain, but came round in a short time. (5)
19. He wouldn't do anything that wasn't cricket! (9)
23. The relevant substance is tangible or my friend is an awful liar. (8)
24. Although only a small skiff, it somehow maps an area of the Chinese sea. (6)
26. Upset at having a haircut? ... (10)
27. ...Use this to search for the lost locks and smooth them out, perhaps. (4)
28. Slewed sideways when the kids unfortunately drifted, though there was no rift between them. (7)
29. Benefits concerning protected minors have been granted. (7)

DOWN

2. 'It is a cream I ordered' she states? (7)
3. When the morning is over, it is time to make corrections. (5)
4. The first lady to relax on the mountain. (7)
6. Begs for quiet escorts. (6)
7. Trunk friends bring to the armoured compartments. (9)
8. Do an about-turn on poetry? (7)
9. Punctilious attention to neatness, in spite of untidy sandpit and wax. (4,3,6)
15. Turned aside on coming across strange cleft, indeed. (9)
18. Like 17-across, at the blink of an eye. (2,1,4)
20. Remains to live on Fifth Avenue. (7)
21. Pal carrying weapons lost head in panic. Should have been more alert, perhaps. (7)
22. A hand that will win no tricks? What unhappiness for the French. (6)
25. Coffee held in soft leather glove. (5)

Solution to Crossword no. 123, May 2004

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

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