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Imelda Marcos and the seduction of time

INTERNATIONAL

Fatima Measham

The persistent pattern of enforced disappearances around the world provides a critical backdrop for historical revisionism in the Philippines. Nearly 30 years after Ferdinand Marcos and his family fled the country - the climax to the first modern 'People Power' revolution - the consensus on the dictatorship seems to have become diluted.

Making people 'disappear' is both an exercise of power and the entrenchment of it. It is a practice associated with regimes in the 20th century, such as those in Argentina, Chile and El Salvador. Dissidents and political rivals were abducted or arrested, never to be seen again. The object is to cultivate fear and insecurity. These were features of martial law under Marcos.

Many Filipinos who had been part of the resistance are still alive. Some of them are survivors of torture or relatives of the 'disappeared'. According to human rights group Karapatan, the bodies of 759 who were 'disappeared' have never been found - a portion of over 3000 extrajudicial killings.

Yet as the world marks the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearance on August 30, post-1986 generations find it hard to grasp what it meant to express dissent or join opposition groups when Marcos was president. Some now assert that, compared to the current standard of governance and politics, life must have been better under Marcos.

Such perceptions are validated when trusted institutions invite Imelda Marcos as guest of honour. She appeared in July at a dinner hosted by the Ateneo de Manila University scholarship foundation, ostensibly due to the fact that the foundation began with proceeds from a Van Cliburn concert that she had organised in 1974. Students posted jocular 'selfies' with her on Instagram.

The optics caused considerable pain and outrage. There are staff members at the Jesuit university and its institutes who went 'underground' during the dictatorship. One of its former students, Edgar Jopson, was summarily killed along with many activists. Benigno 'Ninoy' Aquino Jr, the opposition senator who was assassinated at the airport on his return from exile, was also an alumnus. After the dinner, a faculty member posted a Facebook update - widely shared - in which he points out the incongruity of teaching

Catholic social values while giving Imelda Marcos a place at the table.

It is an episode that demonstrates the tension between living memory and the apparent distance of history. The university president was compelled to offer a public apology, though the scholarship foundation itself operates autonomously. His statement reads in part: 'Please know that in the education of our youth, the Ateneo de Manila will never forget the martial law years of oppression and injustice presided over by Mr Ferdinand Marcos. We would not be catching up on nation building as we are today, had it not been for all that was destroyed during that terrible time.' A little more than a month later, the Ateneo School of Government was renamed in honour of Ninoy and Cory Aquino.

In brief, there is no such thing as moving on. History is something that we live with. In truth, it is usually those with the least means or culpability who have to live with it.

Last year, the government response to typhoon Haiyan was hampered by the dynamics between a president who happens to be an Aquino and a mayor who happens to be a relative of Imelda Marcos. The sensitivities around who was in charge in the aftermath were grotesque against the backdrop of a humanitarian crisis.

In other words, the shadow of dictatorship looms far longer than is ever acknowledged. In *Norte: Hangganan ng Kasaysayan*, a four-hour Philippine film often described by critics as having shades of Dostoevsky, the central character Fabian pontificates frequently on matters philoso-political. At one point he asserts to a group of friends that the mistake that Ferdinand Marcos had made was to democratise corruption.

It is an acerbic observation that calls to mind the current scandal over the Priority Development Assistance Fund, in which certain members of Congress have allegedly participated in a scam to divert pork barrel funds into their own pockets, away from projects to improve local services and infrastructure. This is only one of the ways in which traces of the Marcos regime are manifest in the current political landscape.

While the English translation for the title of the aforementioned film is 'Norte: The End of History', the Filipino word 'hangganan' can also mean 'limit' - the limits of history. These limits are defined by collective memories, the contours shifting according to the intensity in which Filipinos remember life under dictatorship.

Such memories are supposed to strengthen efforts to transcend the past, and indeed there have been touchstones such as the passing of freedom of information (FOI) legislation this year. But as the brutality of the Marcos regime fades with time, so much so that its chilling effects are now misremembered as peace and order, the work of nation-building remains as daunting as it was in the days after the Marcoses fled.

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Bogan Jesus

REVIEWS

Barry Gittins and Jen Vuk

The Songs of Jesse Adams, by Peter McKinnon. Acorn Press Limited. July 2014.

Barry:

Though 19th century literati like Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy and Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky went to town on his works and words through imaginative quests and allusions, Yeshua bar Yosef (aka Jesus Christ, son of God and son of man) has largely been 'owned' by pop-cultural pundits over the last 40 years or so.

Not counting such appearances as a TV host on scatological cartoons, or as a misplaced alien in science fiction flicks, Jesus has been notably cast as a compassionate *L'enfant terrible* for Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber, a wise clown for John-Michael Tebelak and Stephen Schwartz, a caring stranger for Cecil B. DeMille and, misheard, an ardent advocate for dairy products for the Monty Python crew.

However, in first timer Peter McKinnon's new novelisation of the gospels *The Songs of Jesse Adams*, I find Christ's representation more comparable to that of US Lutheran writer Walter Wangerin Jr. The distinction is that McKinnon's is a uniquely Australian Messiah, with his guitar ablazing. How does Jesus as a Billy Thorpe-a-like strike you, Jen?

The oldest son of the Adams family (scriptural reference understood, but 'groan' nonetheless), Jesse is a troubled, long-haired balladeer driving a Holden FX. Jesse's Mum, Anna, knows he's special. After an onstage blessing from his cuz, Billy Rave (John the Baptist), Jesse wanders around like the Leyland brothers, turning home brew into French champagne and Grange while gathering his motley crew (his band and entourage, the Breakers).

Ockerisms abound unabashedly: the aromatic 1960s exude off the pages, with anti-Vietnam War campaigns, crashing surf, bush pubs, Kings Cross and trannies, the plush villains' men's-only seats of power of Melbourne, and St Kilda's 'poolrooms, brothels and dimly lit boarding houses whose curtains never opened and you didn't ask why'.

For the biblically-literate, a minority of Australians these days, there is the frisson of recognition, amusement and occasional distaste as Annie Martin (Mary Magdalene), Dinger Bell (Simon the Zealot), Big Al and Mick Gudgel (Simon Peter and Andrew), the Chunder brothers Dean and Johnny (James and John) and dodgy photographer 'Flash' Mervyn William Lester (take a bow, Judas Iscariot) are revealed.

High art? No. Engaging? Highly. Jesse Adams is on about peace; an inclusive peace that includes social outcasts such as women, immigrants, Aborigines and 'pooftahs'. Despite its subject and setting (or because of it?), McKinnon butts against relevant contemporary topics such as sexuality, the abuse of power and religion, through this sacred saga of

hope, betrayal, redemption and L_O_V_E love.

Casting Christ as a bogan will rub theological feathers awry; a larger linguistic burden for many readers, however, is the unrelenting Strine and hoary cultural references. The effect may be jarringly cornball. What did you make of this, Jen?

I am quite taken with McKinnon's paraphrased reading of Jesse's central message: reconciliation. Violence, Jesse teaches, is 'a circle that never ends, achieves nothing…Someone has to stand up and show there's something better… Come on home, no grudges, all's sweet. All's forgiven… Love wins, no matter what life throws up'.

Jen:

What was Peter McKinnon thinking? Taking on the important figure of Christianity and rebranding him a guitar-toting literary hero?

It's not just that *The Songs of Jesse Adams* will rise or fall on the reader's acceptance of Jesse as Jesus Christ; it's that many readers will then ask themselves - why stick with the story when we know how it all ends?

I'll admit. It's a question that crossed my mind on more than one occasion. But from the opening paragraph it's apparent that McKinnon throws everything he's got at this story:'Ahead, Nicholson Street breathed emptiness; one long, deserted strip of scattered streetlamps and shadows…The rest of the world was stumbling around in its pyjamas, oblivious.'

McKinnon knows more than a little about living a life 'oblivious'. Several years ago, the 'corporate survivor' (a psychologist, he spent three decades studying human behaviour within the business sector) somehow found his way to World Vision. It was from this altruistic platform that he started asking himself the big questions.

That McKinnon then turned to writing seems a natural progression. Where else can you thrash out ideas or test out what it is to be human, and still get out alive?

While Jesse is the novel's undeniable pivot, the author saves some of his best alchemy in summoning up the world's lost and forgotten: 'A couple of lonely strands of hair rested randomly across the top of his head in conceited defiance of raging baldness… In shape and form he resembled something a hunter might hang in his trophy room.'

This isn't just for show, although technical skill is keenly apparent. There's a palatable tenderness in these observations. And therein lies the answer to our earlier question. At least partly. Why stick with the story? Because it gives back in spades.

The simmering political climate, the gender interactions, the Aussie banter of a bygone era, and, of course, the songs - the commitment and eye for detail make for a debut novel that's near pitch perfect.

I see where you're going with the Billy Thorpe-like reference Barry, but for me Jesse Adams is more reminiscent of Sixto Rodriguez, the US folk singer whose radical song-writing renders Bob Dylan's ruminations lullabies in comparison, and who still lives a simple life despite his latter-day fame.

While 'the Strine' as you put it, Barry, is indeed, unrelenting, it carries with it the mark of authenticity, such as the scene of Jesse being witnessed to by Aboriginal people in the bush, rather than angels in the wilderness. This isn't just poetic; it's somehow fittingly political, too.

At its most transformative, *The Songs of Jesse Adams* reminds us that belief based on anything but love can do immense damage - a message as relevant and urgent today as it was in the 1960s and, dare I say? 33AD.

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Sowing dragon's teeth in Iraq

INTERNATIONAL

Andrew Hamilton

Only a year ago loud voices called for military intervention in Syria against the Assad regime. Now the same voices call for military intervention in Syria and Iraq against a feared opponent of the Assad regime. Many of us are caught between our desire to see the barbarous actions of the Islamic State (IS) halted and our justifiable lack of trust in military intervention and in its proponents. Caught in such hesitation, we might helpfully think through the tests any intervention must satisfy.

Two kinds of intervention have been proposed. Both are envisaged to be conducted by the United States armed forces. One, already practiced, has been to launch limited attacks on IS forces in Iraq to prevent the massacre of civilians. This seems justifiable by most criteria for the making of war. It has been requested by the legitimate government of Iraq. The cause of freeing civilians from the risk of murder is just. The use of force is proportionate and limited, and the military means used seem appropriate to the goal sought: the safety of the civilians. The risk of any longer term harm from the action, such as intensifying internal conflicts in Iraq, also seems small.

The second kind of intervention proposed is to use military force to destroy the IS both in Iraq and in Syria. This proposal is open to criticism on many grounds. It must be authorised. But although the Iraq government may allow action on its territory, the permission of the Syrian Government is unlikely to be sought or given. So any action would need to be authorised by the United Nations. This is unlikely to happen. Authorisation is not a mere formality. In both Iraq and Syria many freelancing militias fight for their own interests. A Western force that joined them in bombing and killing

would strip the enterprise of any humanitarian pretensions it had.

It may be conceded that the cause of curbing the Islamic State is just and calls for a police action, but those who call for action against it envisage something more - perhaps destroying its capacity to fight, killing all its leaders, or even exterminating it. When this uncertainty of goals is married to the rhetoric of the war against terror, the cause becomes a blank cheque. It should not be signed.

The vagueness of what is envisaged in the call for military action against IS makes it difficult to establish whether the harm caused would be proportionate to the good achieved. Attacking IS military forces in open country, for example, would be very different from attacking the buildings in which they took shelter in towns and cities and so causing many civilian casualties. Still, in purely military terms, it is possible to argue that the good of weakening IS's capacity to cause mayhem would outweigh the harm.

But in interventions like this we must look beyond military goals to the political ends that are sought. These are to create conditions for peace and safety in a devastated, divided and militarised region. To ask whether Western military intervention will help secure these goals, we should examine the results of earlier interventions. The record is not good. The aid given to the mujahideen against the Russian occupation forces in Afghanistan spawned the Taliban. The attack on Iraqi forces in Kuwait contributed to the growth of Al Qaeda and the war against terror. The invasion of Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein led to sectarian war, to the wiping out of the Iraq Christian church, and to the conditions for IS to flourish. The action in Libya against Muammar Gadaffi led to tribal warfare and the resurgence of militant Islam.

None of these things were predicted. But the catalogue suggests strongly that Western military intervention will make things worse. Their military are operating out of their own culture with minimal understanding of the complex societies in which they fight. They have little reliable intelligence. They and their nations of origin will be manipulated and used by sectional groups, and will be blamed for all the consequences of the actions in which they are involved.

This point is embodied in the strategies of Hamas in Gaza and of IS in Iraq. Both movements are militarily weak in comparison with Israel or the United States. But the strategy of each group is to draw its enemies into massive military intervention. What the stronger party sees as bombs, shells and incidental victims, the other side sees as recruiting officers for their movement and the glue that binds their supporters together, united against a more powerful foe. Why should the West dance to the Islamic State's tune?

The final test of military action is whether it will be successful. Ultimately success must be judged in political terms. In the open-ended military intervention advocated in Iraq and Syria, we can anticipate an increasingly destructive campaign leading eventually to a weary withdrawal, leaving behind dragons' teeth sown to beget even more powerful enemies. It should not be countenanced.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of Eureka Street.

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Not a good time to be Catholic

RELIGION

Kevin Donnelly

Now is not a good time to be a Christian - especially, if you are a Catholic. Read *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, listen to the ABC or read Irfan Yusuf's recent piece and it's obvious that the critics are on a roll.

Wendy Squire's op-ed in *The Age* provides a good illustration of the often vitriolic and very public campaign to tarnish religion and to undermine the beliefs of the 61 per cent of Australians who describe themselves as Christian.

In addition to refusing to be a godmother to a close friend's baby as the ceremony was in a Catholic Church, Squire attacks the Church for opposing her views on marriage and abortion and for, supposedly, indoctrinating children and condoning child abuse.

Ignored is that Christianity is one of the foundation stones on which Western civilisation is based and that the various Christian denominations and their related organisations and community bodies constitute an overwhelmingly positive and beneficial force in Australian culture and society.

There is no doubt, as Cardinal Pell and Pope Francis admit, that child abuse is an offensive, horrific and evil act that destroys the innocence and faith of those who are most vulnerable.

But, to use the fact that priests have been guilty of such an unforgivable betrayal of the Church's teachings does not mean that Christianity has no value or that we should turn

our backs on Christ.

Growing up in working class Broadmeadows in a Housing Commission estate with a communist father and a Catholic mother - mass on Sunday and the Eureka Youth Movement on Tuesday - taught me first hand about what BA Santamaria described as two of the most influential and powerful forces of the 20th century.

My father taught me the socialist mantra of 'from each according to his ability and to each according to his needs' and my mother taught me how to recite the Rosary and to follow the Stations of the Cross.

The Eureka Youth Movement taught me about Stalin's glorious revolution and how Mao heroically struggled to free his people from years of oppression, disease and starvation.

It was only years later that I read about the gulag and how Mao's cultural revolution, like Pol Pot's Year Zero, killed millions and condemned others to poverty and oppression. The reality is that communism, as pointed out by George Orwell, is an evil ideology that promises a working class paradise on earth while delivering subjugation, suffering and thought control.

Being a Catholic, on the other hand, taught me that we have a conscience and free will, that there is good and evil, that life on earth is far from perfect and that the spiritual and transcendent are equally as, if not more important, than our physical and worldly needs and aspirations.

Many of the parables and sayings I heard as a child still resonate as they portray something essential and significant about human nature. 'Turn the other cheek', 'let he without sin cast the first stone', 'as you sow, so shall you reap' and 'be a good Samaritan' offer a strong moral compass to help navigate life's dilemmas and pitfalls.

The aphorism that 'it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God' and Jesus' act in expelling the money changers from the Temple also resonate in an age where material pursuits and gratuitous consumption are rampant.

Studying literature at university made me realise how important Christianity is to Western literature. John Bunyan's *A Pilgrim's Progress*, William Blake's poetry (even though he criticised organised religion), much of TS Eliot's poetry and novels, Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* - all require an understanding of Christianity.

Listening to Bach's Mass in B Minor recently performed at the Melbourne Recital Centre underscored the fact that Christianity has also profoundly affected the music that is such a fundamental part of Western culture.

The great European galleries and museums also contain thousands of religious icons, paintings and sculptures that are testimonies to how religion can inspire a sense of artistic beauty associated with the transcendent and the sublime.

From a more practical perspective Christian morals and beliefs are also a prime motivating force for charitable organisations like the Salvation Army, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Caritas Australia.

There is also no doubt that Australia's hospital and education systems would collapse if not for the presence of Christian, mainly Catholic, schools and hospitals. Catholic schools,

for example, enrol approximately 20 per cent of Australian students and save taxpayers billions every year as governments do not have to enrol such students in more expensive to fund state schools.

Having lost a son to a hit-and-run accident I can also attest that in times of great suffering, anguish and loss, religion, while never offering complete peace and understanding, offers succour and hope.

In times of darkness and despair, as suggested by the Christian mystic Julian of Norwich, there is comfort and reassurance. She writes: 'And although the battle is not won nor the pilgrimage completed, we know that we have sufficient light. This is our source of life. But we cannot escape the suffering and the sorrow: there are dark sides to life. Realism forces us to face the fact. And the same realism enables us to trust the light and life and love in which we are enfolded'.

Dr Kevin Donnelly is director of the Educational Standards Institute and a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Catholic University.

Practical magic

MEDIA

Megan Graham

Magic in the Moonlight (PG). Director: Woody Allen. Starring: Eileen Atkins, Colin Firth, Emma Stone, Marcia Gay Harden, Hamish Linklater, Simon McBurney, Jacki Weaver. 98 minutes.

Stanley (Colin Firth) is a spiritual debunker and magician. Believing that he has pretty well achieved expert status on life, and on the ways in which human beings can delude or be deluded, he uses this intelligence to make money. As a magician he deludes willing audiences for entertainment, and as a debunker he ousts those who make money by deluding the gullible and vulnerable such as purported clairvoyants, mystics and the like.

Stanley doesn't dream; what is the point? He doesn't see the possibilities in front of him. He only sees the things that affirm his pessimism about the human condition. His pragmatism comes in like a sledgehammer, quickly taking any sense of wonderment to task.

Enter Sophie (Emma Stone), a beautiful, charming young mystic who predicts the unpredictable and communicates with the dead - for a price. Stanley is brought in by a rich American family to expose Sophie, whom they believe has misled them. But when the two meet, an undeniable chemical reaction - magic, minus the 'abracadabra' - ensues.

This film is enchanting, full of comedy, cute dialogue and charming scenery, and featuring pitch perfect performances by Stone and Firth. The premise itself is both fun and thoughtful. In the end it's a film all about one's view, the lens through which one chooses to see the world. Cynicism or wonder? Mayhem or magic? Have you ever looked up at the stars and marveled at the mystery?

The film's exploration of questions regarding the existence of God is particularly engaging. At one point Stanley, despite being a staunch non-believer, begins to pray. In worry and uncertainty, he lets his guard down and surrenders to a potential power that he cannot understand or see. It is a rare moment of vulnerability.

Stanley's cynicism, pragmatism and pessimism all help him to avoid feeling vulnerable. But they have not protected him from life, its uncertainties and pain. Perhaps looking at life through a calculated and methodical lens cannot offer any more predictability than looking at it with a sense of magic. This film poses the question: Which way brings more joy?

The wit of writer-director Woody Allen sparkles through these charming characters and engaging storyline. The film is populated by lovable characters who, even when they do wrong, are never dark but simply human. There is a lightness to the film but also a lot to

stimulate thinking and conversation.

There's money in magic for sure. There's also something magical about the ways in which some people make money. Money, after all, is what allows you to live, or to go see this film for example. Sophie cannot deny the practical realities that dictate her decisions. Equally, Stanley cannot deny the emotions of the heart that mysteriously ignore practicality, attraction that doesn't follow physics or any other scientific law, or moments of coincidence that have significant effects.

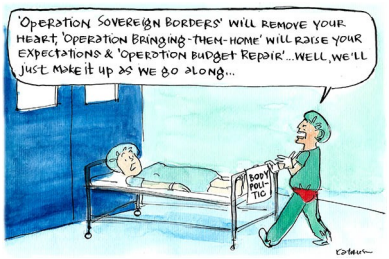
This tension between the two worldviews and their contradictions is a balancing act and it's beautifully done. We all know life is better with a little magic. And while we are all afraid of the unknown, complete certainty and predictability do not make for a vibrant life. In fact, without the mystery inherent in unknowable possibilities, there is really no life at all.

Megan Graham won the 2013 Margaret Dooley Award for Young Writers.

Just what the spin doctor ordered

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas



Fiona Katauskas' work has also appeared in ABC's *The Drum*, *New Matilda, The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Financial Review* and Scribe's Best Australian political cartoon anthologies.

Homes that enable the disabled

MEDIA

Andrea McQueen

The ABC's new reality TV series, *The Dreamhouse*, premiered earlier this month. I was curled up on my couch, watching with a mixture of excitement and trepidation. Excitement because we were finally going to see the portrayal of people with intellectual disabilities on primetime television. Apprehension because we were finally going to see the portrayal of people with intellectual disabilities on primetime television. I didn't know whether the topic would be handled with respect and sensitivity.

The inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in our television programming is long overdue. Three percent of Australians have an intellectual disability. However, like many other minority groups, they are rarely represented in our cultural lives. It is hard to imagine three of every hundred characters in Australia's dramas, comedies and current affairs programs having a cognitive impairment. Instead our televisions continue to bombard us with images of fit, sharp-witted, attractive Caucasian types who fall short of our reality in many ways.

Over the past 25 years people with disabilities have been coming out of institutions. They are in our streets, our shops and our schools, but not, it would seem, on our television screens. This is a loss for us as a society. It warps the lens through which we present and see ourselves. It is a yet greater loss for young people with intellectual disabilities, who often grow up without accessible role models, and are quietly pushed to the margins of our collective cultural life.

The Dreamhouse is important because it shows real people with intellectual disabilities living ordinary, socially integrated lives. More significantly it shows them in a positive light. The three people at the heart of the show, Sarah, Justin and Kirk, are portrayed as capable, likeable and funny. The program does not ignore the challenges faced by its participants, nor does it present them as insurmountable. This approach offers hope to many other people with disabilities and their families. By gently challenging fears and

stereotypes, it also encourages a more inclusive society.

As its name implies, *The Dreamhouse* focuses on one significant challenge faced by many people with disabilities - finding liveable, affordable housing outside the family home. Moving out of home is a rite of passage for young people, yet people who need supported accommodation face long waiting lists. Sometimes the waiting time is so long as to be impractical or intolerable. For some families the heartbreak of legally relinquishing their adult children is the only means of securing appropriate housing during the parents' lifetimes. Even then some of the sons and daughters spend years being shunted between short-term respite facilities waiting for a room in a house to become available.

For those who are lucky enough to find a place in a government or non-government managed group home the challenges continue. In many cases residents have minimal say in decisions most of us would take for granted, such as the selection of housemates and staff, what to eat, where to shop, and what time to go to bed. *The Dreamhouse* offers a solution (in the form of a stylish Perth home staffed with volunteers) for the three people directly involved in the program. For others, outside of the program, the dream house remains a dream.

The program however has value in bringing their predicament into public view. It encourages us as a broader society to consider the options we make available to our citizens with disabilities. Its success in this was demonstrated by the flurry of activity on social media during and after the first episode.

Such discussions are particularly important at this time, with the advent of the long-awaited National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Amongst the general community there is a view that the NDIS will solve accommodation and other crises for people with disabilities. Yet with limited funding and without enormous systemic change, it is unclear how encompassing the solutions will be.

We need programs like *The Dreamhouse* to prompt conversation about what kinds of lives are possible for people with disabilities, and how we can best use our tax money to make dreams come true. These are not easy questions in a climate of stretched resources, competing priorities, and conscious and unconscious prejudice. Nonetheless, the conversation is an important one.

 *Andrea McQueen is a speech pathologist who has been working with people with disabilities for the past 20 years. She has recently produced Good Things, which explores communication and quality of life in group homes for adults with intellectual disabilities. She tweets as @aj_mcq.*

Image via the ABC.

Our future is public

MARGARET DOOLEY AWARD

Andy Lynch

In April 1855, only four months after dust had settled on the Eureka Rebellion, Melbourne's first public university was opened to these following words before a modest crowd by its founder and Chancellor Sir Redmond Barry:

'We are engaged this day in throwing open, for the first time, the portals of a great institution, founded in the second year of the political existence of the country, at a time when the convulsions of domestic perturbations filled all but the most constant with apprehension and alarm.'

The social 'convulsions' and sense of apprehension of Barry's Melbourne in 1855 reflect a mood not unrecognisable from the social climate of Australia in 2014. Though the precise circumstances were radically different, the forces of change in 19th century Melbourne were remarkably similar with the newly settled colony buckling under the pressure of rapid advances in technology, redistributions of wealth and a shift in political order.

Life in 1850s Melbourne was by no means just or stable, but the response to instability serves as a useful blueprint to the world of 2014. In the face of a fivefold population between 1851 and 1861 and insufficient resources, the response was not to shut out, but to create and 'throw open' the society to new ideas and spaces for human flourishing. In that same decade Justice Barry was responsible for the founding of the State Library of Victoria, the National Gallery of Victoria, the University Melbourne, the Philharmonic Society and the Royal Melbourne Hospital amongst a suite of private institutions.

Across a century and a half, each institution has contributed to the public life of this nation in a way that cannot be measured accurately except to say that without each the

cultural life of this country would be significantly diminished.

But in 2014 is it even possible to carve out new public institutions or reboot those that have waned in relevance? Around the world trust in institutions, both private and public, has plummeted. Much of this is justified.

The crushing testimony by victims to the Royal Commission into Child Sex Abuse has repeatedly revealed fundamental and systematic failings of institutions whose only object was to care.

The 2007 global financial crisis exposed flaws at every level of institutions entrusted by millions with their entire livelihoods.

Voters around the world have retreated to the margins of political life where messages are clear, if not democratic, in the face of established political parties who have shirked their founding values.

The rhetoric of conflict is swelling in Eastern Europe and North Asia and has ignited in the Middle East and central Africa as political groups and states abandon international institutions in favour of unilateral action.

In all of these examples and countless others, betrayal, dishonesty and corruption are prominent and recurring features.

So what would a Barry of 2014 seek to carve out of the mess? What would it take to muster the courage to 'throw open the portals' of the next great public institutions? And why is this a matter of ethical as well as political concern?

Though Barry's views on social hierarchy, gender roles, his judicial approach and even dress sense were anachronistic by mid-19th century standards his approach to public institutions was remarkably innovative.

The first point to note is that their very foundation was novel: a public library, hospital and university may seem like essential ingredients for a civil society today but they were in fact radical additions to 1850s Melbourne. So from the outset a great public institution of the 21st century is unlikely to look like the State Library of Victoria or the Melbourne Museum or anything that currently exists. It may not even take physical form, but it will capture the same vital essence.

From this starting point of radical invention, I think there are three additional pillars that we can look to for guidance in building and restoring institutions that are relevant for the 21st century and beyond.

The first is social inclusion. Despite holding a deep seated belief in class distinction, Barry maintained that Melbourne's library, gallery, university and hospital should be free and open to all who could come.

Aside from free entry, inclusion played out through the question of whether public libraries ought to include the 'cheap literature' of the present day alongside those texts of historical significance that might lead to self-improvement.

In another speech at the opening the Free Public Library of Ballarat East, Justice Barry

knocked the issue on the head, albeit in a fairly condescending fashion:

'But why this indignant crusade against classes of works at the least harmless and entertaining, even though their aim may not openly be that of positive instruction in some particular branch of abstruse learning or favourite doctrine? Men's minds are not cast in one mould - what charms one may repel another…Persons of wavering religious principles are not always to be captivated by a tract. Those who partake too freely of intoxicating drink are not usually allured by a Rechabite lecture'.

These institutions only remain 'public' for as long as the public at large are able to actively and easily participate in their daily happenings and reinvention. Concomitant with accessibility is the need for a plurality of institutions that are able to channel a range of human faculties and passions and include a wide range of audiences. For public institutions to be trusted again by the public they must first include the public.

The second pillar is longevity. The grand proportions and weight of Joseph Reed's design for the State Library and later a number of buildings at Melbourne University gives some indication as to the ambition of the trustees of 1855 that these ought to be institutions that transcend generations.

This architectural confidence was driven in no small-part by gold rush headiness, but beyond the structure they have remained vital over 150 years by challenging and refreshing their institutional purpose in order to maintain relevance in function and service to the Public.

Fixed into the concept of longevity is the need for reflexivity and renewal. Rather than enduring physical architecture, an enduring 21st century public institution will require well designed structures of governance that make adequate space for challenge, debate and renewal and do not rest too heavily on any one individual.

The third pillar is independence. 'Free, secular and democratic' was the founding vision for the State Library of Victoria: an institution that was able to draw support from political circles but was firstly accountable to the public. This separation is important for two reasons. The first is that independent public institutions provide space for citizens to participate in civic life in a way that is fundamentally different from the mechanics of politics. At their best these institutions call on participants to share their passions and faculties, to reason and build rather than simply react to their short-term interests.

Secondly an enduring institution of the 21st century should be independent of government because the strength of our independent public institutions provides the scaffolding necessary to weather the inevitable faltering within the political or legal arms of government.

The presence of a plurality of institutions diffuses public power in a way that is able to provide an informal but powerful check on the execution of rights and interests. Bodies such as the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience, community media organisations particular unions and demonstrate this most clearly today.

So with these three characteristics in mind, why is this question of institution-building a question of ethics?

It is of ethical concern because how we build or fail to build our institutions is directly linked to the kind of human characteristics we believe should be celebrated and pursued.

The kind of Australia we live in today can be directly attributed to the kinds of institutions built by Barry and his peers 150 years ago. The kind of Australia we live in today is still paying the price for the institutions of indigenous lore and culture that were paved over to make way for that colonial vision.

While the rule of law and good policy are critical elements to a free and democratic society it is only through many strong and good institutions that we can engender a decent and humane society.

In a world acutely plagued by 'perturbations' and 'apprehension' I hope to meet that uncertainty with the courage to build with and support those who are willing to throw open the doors to the institutions of our future.

Andy Lynch is a Juris Doctor student at Melbourne Law School and the president of SYN Media. This essay is was highly commended in the 2014 Margaret Dooley Award for Young Writers.

Image of the State Library of Victoria in 1930 via the State Library of Victoria collections. Obtained under Creative Commons licence via flickr.

Car park hunger

CREATIVE

Brendan Ryan

To Do List
The rush to make drama class -

shoes, teeth, notebook, brushing
my daughter's hair. Anybody would think
a war had started. Still, we make it
out the door, collect her friend, enter
Saturday morning traffic. Hopeful day.
I tick off jobs from my floating to do list.
It keeps me anchored to the here and now
a mental sheet designed to stop me from drifting
through the day hopelessly unencumbered.
At the Highton Circulator,
a roundabout large as a supermarket,
an L-plater nervously edges forward.
He waits, falters, misses the gaps. I shake my head,
pound the steering wheel. SUVs and Magnas
cruise towards us before arcing away
like a show ride that promises danger within safety rails.
He makes a run for it and I am hot on his heels,
pedal to the metal, turning to glare
at drivers who have to slow for me.
My daughter and her friend rehearse lines
for an upcoming concert. Horses in a paddock
have them squealing. We pass the tents
of a Farmer's Market. Cars drop down
Shannon Avenue towards us like chicks
falling into a chute. The jobs I have to do.
I turn right into West Fyans Street
flashing blue light,
police ribbons stretched between shrubs.
A policeman stands with a specimen bag
another chats to a man on the footpath.
The girls stare. Stalled traffic.
We wait, roll forward, wait, are released
to continue staring at the ribbons,
a policeman guarding the concrete driveway
to a block of flats that have always been there -
ugly, functional as a bad decision.
We make the class, just, and I am free
to return to my list, the record of my days
I cling to like a remora to a whale.
The radio tells me of a man

who took a container of petrol,
poured it over himself and struck a match -
a man who gave his body to flames
rather than be returned to a country of torture.
His death on a patch of concrete in West Fyans Street
as I was taking my daughter to drama.
Some days I just throw the list away.

Car park hunger

Tattoos and paunches
school kids on skateboards
4wds and Beemers
charity bins overflowing.

A topless man shuffles into Coles
The Big Issue seller is liked and avoided.
Buskers who specialize with the night
streetlights mooning the spaces that never close.

Each day is a rush to pick a few things up
keeping busy with baskets, not trolleys.
Tension builds after school pick-ups -
snarls at exits, windscreens for protection.

The day-before-public-holiday-gridlock
a line of drivers stare resolutely ahead
refusing to make eye contact. Like shoals of fish
other drivers angle in.

Barometers of wealth in a trickle down
economy. Each car space equals a business case
equals a Range Rover forcing its way through.
We lock our cars with a backward flick of the wrist

hungering for a quick exit, settling for a close park.

Some days there's traffic

I drive through ennui into restlessness
past footballers training on an oval.

The hour of pick-ups and drop offs
office workers quickening at the lights.
Somewhere a whiff of grease -
a childhood mechanic,
his advice beneath car hoists,
one leg shorter than the other
and supported by a local who threw fits
on the oil-stained linoleum floor.
What I remember, what I forget.

Darkness gathering ovals and reserves,
brake lights arcing down Shannon Ave.
The streets I know, the signs I miss.
What is holding this ragged day together?

Night smells from out the back door-
spinach, celery, dirty water in the bird bath.
I marvel at the porch lights stacked along Wandana Heights
passing traffic, thankful to be placed, here, tonight.

Brendan Ryan is a Geelong poet whose most recent collection of poetry, Travelling Through the Family

(Hunter Publishers), was published in 2012 and was shortlisted for the 2014 Victorian Premier's Awards.

Image by Michael Valli via flickr under Creative Commons licence.

Corruption and atonement in NSW

AUSTRALIA

John Warhurst

Fact can be stranger than fiction. That certainly applies to the most recent revelations before the Independent Commission Against Corruption in New South Wales. Two Liberal MPs have resigned from Parliament and by-elections will be held shortly.

Andrew Cornwell, the first-term Member for Charlestown, admitted taking a total of $20000 from two property developers before the 2011 state elections, $10000 used to fund his campaign and $10000 used to pay his personal tax bill.

A second new MP, Tim Owen, the Member for Newcastle, initially lied about accepting $10000 cash from one of the developers, and allowed that developer and a second one jointly to pay the $20000 salary of his campaign media adviser. Both MPs have apologised without accepting much personal responsibility.

The developer at the centre of the scandal, Jeff McCloy, the mayor of Newcastle, was throwing around so much money before the state election that he jocularly described himself as like a 'walking ATM'. He too has now been forced from office.

All this follows an earlier string of allegations before ICAC that have brought down the Liberal Premier, Barry O'Farrell, the former Minister, Chris Hartcher, two other Central Coast MPs, and a parliamentary secretary, Marie Ficarra. The allegations have also claimed the former chairman of the official Liberal Party fundraising organisation, Paul Nicolau, and the former federal Liberal parliamentary secretary, Arthur Sinodinos.

The previous Labor Party government had itself descended into a shambles of petty corruption, musical chairs and factional bitterness. Since then ICAC has revealed major corruption inside that Labor government involving not just major figures like Eddie Obeid

and Ian MacDonald but other ministers as well. The truth about Labor corruption is still emerging more than three years later, including even playing a part in defeating its own sitting member in Newcastle.

One can only conclude that such corruption, petty, middle-range and major, is business as usual at the higher levels of public life in New South Wales. There is an entrenched culture of doing political business that is not just contrary to reasonable ethical standards but illegal.

Both sides of NSW politics claim to have turned over a new leaf and support tough new lobbying regulations, separating paid lobbyists from party office-holding, and increased transparency surrounding all dealings with ministers. But at the heart of the shambles are not commercial lobbyists but personal and institutional ethical failure, often driven by the lure of self-interest and advantage whether it is in getting elected or in feathering their own nest.

The NSW example demonstrates the key intersection between campaigning and corruption. Many of the failures in NSW have involved fund-raising for campaigning. The same has been true in other states, including the activities of the lobbyist and former Labor Premier Brian Burke in Western Australia.

Some of the corruption involves party head offices, but in NSW it clearly also extends to the local level. These latest cases involve professional people, one a former veterinarian and the other a former Air Commodore, who were corrupted even before they entered Parliament.

The NSW cases show that everyday corruption of the political process is both deep and wide. It is deep in that it involves new backbenchers who are initially far from the inner circle of ministerial power. It is wide in that it involves not just major public policy issues at the heart of cabinet government but also the local implementation of rules and regulations surrounding development proposals.

The prevailing culture on both sides seems to be to get away with what you can. There is little evidence of heart-felt contrition. The Premier, Mike Baird, promising wholesale reform of electoral funding rules before the March 2015 elections, has declared that as an act of atonement the Liberals will not stand candidates in the forthcoming by-elections and so forfeit the two seats. But it has an enormous majority and this looks more like a tactic to avoid a huge voter backlash as the seats (one held by nearly 10 per cent) are unwinnable in the present climate.

John Warhurst is an Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the Australian National University and a Canberra Times *columnist.*

An elusive peace in Ukraine

INTERNATIONAL

Tony Kevin

My optimism in previous essays on Ukraine ('Ukraine endgame' and 'Signs that East Ukraine has averted mass human tragedy') continues to be undermined by the remarkable capacity of all players in this tragic drama - the government in Kiev, the rebels in East Ukraine, and their respective backers in NATO and Moscow - to dig in stubbornly and refuse to compromise goals in this now very nasty civil war. Both Petro Poroshenko and Vladimir Putin are hard men, heading military-political establishments that would see concession as signs of weakness.

On the ground, superior Ukrainian Army firepower continues to batter the shrinking rebel perimeters around the besieged cities of Donetsk and Lugansk. The Ukrainian army now holds most of the surrounding countryside. Tenuous access corridors to the nearby Russian border to the east (at another city confusingly called Donetsk) remain contested, including the MH17 crash-area.

Refugees trying to flee along those escape routes to Russia have been shelled and killed. Each side blames the other; truth is the first casualty in this increasingly bitter war. Allegations of atrocities abound. There have been a reliably estimated 3300 casualties so far. Over 2000 of these are civilians, with many women and children killed as rebel-held areas come under inaccurate national artillery fire. International agencies estimate 330000 refugees have fled their homes, about half to other parts of Ukraine and half to Russia. The latter may never return.

Damage to the social fabric in East Ukraine has been profound. The former bi-cultural 'live and let live' spirit of Russian-speaking pro-Russian people and Ukrainian-speaking pro-nationalist people has been shattered by the cruelty of the war. There is deep anger

against Kiev now in Donetsk and Lugansk.

Yesterday, a boastful Soviet-style military parade in Kiev to celebrate Ukraine's Independence Day was countered by a cruelly humiliating forced march of captured Ukrainian Army prisoners of war through Donetsk, recalling similar parades of captured German soldiers in WW2.

The only ray of hope on this bleak scene of locked-down embittered warfare is the patient, quiet diplomacy of German Premier Angela Merkel. She visited Kiev for talks with Poroshenko on Saturday. Major Western news agencies emphasised her public support for Poroshenko, and her public demands on Putin to stop smuggling men and arms across the border to help the rebels.

But, digging deeper into agency reports, I found she had strong messages for Kiev too: that it is now time for compromise on both sides when Poroshenko meets Putin on Tuesday evening (AEST) in Minsk, the first face-to-face talks between the two leaders since the war started.

Merkel, a fluent Russian speaker, has good personal bonds with both Putin and Poroshenko. With Obama's hands full of the Middle East and domestic difficulties, Merkel is carrying the Western brief in the Ukraine civil war: above all, that it must not spread to other areas on Russia's periphery. She would have had strong private words for Poroshenko.

But there is no sign yet of him heeding those words. In their joint press conference, he declared Ukraine ready for compromise, yes, but determined not to cede any of Ukraine's national territorial integrity and sovereignty. Translation: he wants back both East Ukraine and Crimea.

Yesterday's military parade in Kiev was accompanied by a demand for $3 billion from the West to reequip Ukraine's war-depleted army hardware and missiles. Poroshenko declared Ukraine will have to remain in a state of permanent military alert.

Putin has been quiet these past days. He is, I would guess, waiting to take Poroshenko's negotiating measure in Minsk. He has recent cause for satisfaction in the undoubted propaganda success of the 240 Russian humanitarian aid trucks which, after waiting eight days for Ukrainian border clearance that never came, unilaterally drove to Lugansk and Donetsk under white flags, unloaded their humanitarian cargoes, and quickly returned to Russia.

Condemned by Western leaders as a provocative violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, the humanitarian convoy made the West look powerless and callous. It will have raised the morale of the beleaguered and starving defenders of Lugansk and Donetsk, and made them more prepared to fight a Gaza-style urban defensive war if necessary. Russians don't give up easily.

As recently as yesterday, I thought Putin might be prepared to concede East Ukraine if Poroshenko agreed to Crimea staying in Russia. I thought this may have been Merkel's private advice to Kiev. But now I am less sure.

The aggressive national parade on Sunday, and the defiant Donetsk counter-parade of prisoners, don't suggest to me a war on the point of conciliation. Poroshenko's aggressive truculence has left Putin no room to climb down.

So I will not predict an early peace after Tuesday, though I will pray for it. This war, with all its attendant risks of escalation, seems set to continue.

Tony Kevin is a former Australian ambassador to Poland.

Image of Ukrainian tanks in Slovyansk taken by Sasha Maksymenko in July 2014. Obtained under Creative Commons licence via flickr.

Tony recommends 'Watching the Eclipse', an essay by New Yorker editor David Remnick for background on nationalist forces fermenting in present-day Russia.

Controlling information about child abuse

AUSTRALIA

Michael Mullins

There is a certain bitter irony in the fact that widespread child abuse is occurring within the Federal Government's regime of immigration detention at the same time that the government sponsored Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is seeking to achieve justice for victims of past abuses.

This begs the question of why Immigration Minister Scott Morrison continues to enjoy popular support for his management of border protection policies that facilitate child abuse even though there is overwhelming public backing for the work of the child abuse Royal Commission.

Surely the explanation lies in the extraordinary level of resourcing that the Government allocates to the Immigration Department to manage and manipulate public opinion. In March Fairfax reported that the Department employed a 66 strong team of 'spin doctors' and communications staff, up from just 13 under the previous government in 2011. By June this year, Fairfax was reporting that the number had risen to 95.

If churches and institutions caring for children had made that kind of investment and successfully controlled the flow of information, it is less likely that there would have been the groundswell of public opinion that prompted former PM Julia Gillard to call the Royal Commission in November 2012. The scale of institutional child abuse would remain hidden and many victims denied eventual justice.

In July, the Human Rights Commission invited Sydney University Medical School paediatrician Elizabeth Elliott to join Professor Gillian Triggs in observing the health and well being of children in detention on Christmas Island. Her report, which described the children's chronic physical and mental illness, was chilling.

In commenting on the the minister's announcement on Tuesday that 150 young children and their families would be released into the community on bridging visas, Dr Elliott asserted that 'when it comes to children in need, most Australians feel compassion' but compassion had 'gone missing'.

Most likely this has happened because the channels of communication - and consequently compassion - had been blocked by the Department's media managers and the stories of these children have not been allowed to reach the hearts and minds of ordinary Australians.

Such compassion is a vital trigger that helps people access legal protections that they have a right to. It involves individuals talking and having their stories heard, far and wide if necessary. The stories become common knowledge, at least in general terms, and the compassion of Australians follows. This has occurred in the case of victims of past child victims of sexual abuse in churches and institutions.

Dr Elliott says 'conversations with teenagers who could articulate their predicament were particularly poignant'. It is a pity that most detained children are not afforded the opportunity to reach professionals such as Dr Elliott, who could then advocate on their behalf. It is outrageous that the system actively denies this such opportunity in a calculated manner, particularly as the minister is, in many cases, their legal guardian and therefore responsible for their well being.

 *Michael Mullins is editor of* Eureka Street.

Image - Human Rights Commission 'A Last Resort' Report

<!--*Follow him on Twitter.*-->

Flag-waving foolishness that divides

AUSTRALIA

Tony Kevin

In the wake of distressing news of James Foley's murder this week by ISIS terrorists, I venture critically to visit the concept of Team Australia, a phrase launched by the Prime Minister a few weeks ago during the debate on weakening the anti-racial vilification laws, and in recent days revived in the context of proposed tougher new anti-terrorism laws ('everybody faces the choice now whether to join Team Australia').

Team Australia, as the term is employed by the Prime Minister, is the antithesis of multicultural Australia. No amount of explanatory glossing or qualification ('whatever your background, we want you on Team Australia') can escape the fact that the term divides people into Us and Them.

It postulates that the world is a competitive environment of nations that win or lose. We are being encouraged to get on the winning team. Games can be friendly or unfriendly, but they are unavoidably about winning or losing. You can't belong to Team Australia and at the same time belong to Team Italy or Team China or Team India , or even Team Israel. You can't play for Team Australia and play for Team Islam or Team Hinduism, because Australia is a Christian (or occasionally a Judaeo-Christian) society. You have to choose your primary loyalty or affiliation: 'He who is not with us is against us'. The more one unpacks the term Team Australia, the nastier it gets.

The wisdom and humanity of multiculturalism is that it recognises the reality that people's loyalties and affiliations are complex and often contradictory. We live with and celebrate those contradictions. For example, by virtue of my birth, citizenship and ethno-religious background, I could be said to belong to Team Australia, Team Christianity, Team Judaism and Team Ireland. I'm still not sure if I am on Team Labor or Team Greens, and probably never will be now.

Abbott has recently reminded us that he also belongs to Team Britain, or perhaps more accurately Team England (his birthplace and source of political values) in his emotive and unhelpful entry into the Scottish independence referendum question. He showed there a remarkable ignorance of the serious and responsible nature of that vital debate in Scotland - a source nation for many Australians - and its possible outcomes. This did not stop him barracking aggressively from the sidelines for what he imagines to be Team Britain: a concept of a nation that no longer exists except in Abbott's own sentimental, 'Boys' Own' imagination.

An irony in this is that, having recently been walking in Scotland for three weeks, I thought I recognised more recognisable 'British' traditional values there, of compassion, fair play and social justice, than in the frenetic, distracted, money-driven culture of London and its surrounds.

As for me, my membership of Team Ireland has led me naturally to side with Team Scotland in the coming referendum. Had I a vote, I would vote 'Yes' for independence.

All this might suggest how intellectually and morally limiting the 'Team X (insert your preferred term)' terminology quickly becomes. My core values tell me that if I had to choose just one team, I would choose to play for Team Humanity. But that term itself trivialises and debases the seriousness of these matters. It turns us all into flag-waving fools.

Because of the fraught global context in which we now live, in a world where Islamic-based extremist fundamentalism has become a terrifying reality in several countries, we need to be especially mindful and respectful of the hurt and harm this phrase is causing to Australia's diverse Muslim communities, many of which go back many generations. Abbott's breathtakingly insensitive words and actions were demonstrated last week, when he invited Australian Muslim community leaders to a meeting to discuss anti-terrorism law. The revelation that his government had already drafted bills in detail, which Muslim communities were expected to endorse, led inevitably to a boycott by many of those leaders, who rightly complained it was not a serious dialogue but just a public relations stunt.

This boycott provided the opportunity for savagely bigoted 'news' coverage by the *Daily Telegraph* which juxtaposed images of ISIS terrorists about to behead victims with that of Australian Muslim leaders, some of whom were wearing turbans. The general message to readers is that Australian Muslims were - yet again - refusing to join wholeheartedly in the national fight against terrorism. And that article, in turn, provoked a torrent of hate-filled and abusively Islamophobic reader comments which were published. I can only imagine and try to empathise with the distress that the article and reactions to it would have caused in Australian Muslims.

This, I suggest, is where Team Australia rhetoric leads us: to a thoroughly ugly place. The term hurts and divides, rather than unites, our national community. The Opposition is forced to say that it, too, supports Team Australia. Anyone who does not express loyalty to the concept is, by that very fact, marginalised as disloyal or potentially disloyal.

These days, I sometimes find myself falling into the trap of thinking in such divisive categories: of the Compassionate Australia Team that feels and expresses deep distress at the cruelties our nation is inflicting on innocent boat people families, and the Hardheaded Australia Team that claims those huge cruelties are necessary in order to

deter other boat people from coming.

I am losing my sense of a national community of shared civic values, and I am struggling to hold onto the belief that it is possible to persuade fellow Australians away from prejudice and deliberate cruelty to our fellow human beings: that there is actually a wide spectrum of views, and the task is to move enough people to make a political difference along that spectrum towards compassion and decency.

It's time to expunge Team Australia from our political vocabulary.

Tony Kevin is a former Australian ambassador to Poland.

Image via the Sydney Morning Herald.

Let's talk about how we talk about China

AUSTRALIA

Evan Ellis

By now Clive Palmer's comments during last week's Q&A have been widely rebuked by politicians, business leaders and media pundits. I doubt he cares.

It wasn't a gaffe so much as a stump speech.

The Guardian's Alexandra Oliver juxtaposed Palmer's outburst with recent polling, in which 56 per cent of respondents thought the government allowed too much Chinese investment. A 2012 Lowy Institute poll found a majority of respondents were worried about Chinese investment in the mining and agricultural sector. In the same year, another poll showed a majority of Australians agreed that 'China has so much money to invest it could end up buying and controlling a lot of Australian companies.' Faced with Tony Jones' dogged questioning, Palmer seized the opportunity to speak to this considerable disquiet within the community.

China's meteoric rise is still a relatively new phenomenon. The contours of public discourse on this topic are not yet well worn. Our elected officials, Palmer included, are still exploring both how to negotiate it and also how to talk about it.

For all the criticism directed at Kevin Rudd and his handling of foreign policy, he articulated a particularly innovative way of talking about our relationship with China. In a much-lauded speech in 2008, he positioned Australia as a 'zhengyou' to China. This meaning-laden term refers to a confidante who speaks truthfully, even boldly because they have a person's best interests at heart.

Rudd wanted Australia (and no doubt himself) to perform this role while strengthening the US engagement in the region, both to temper China's ambitions and provide

insurance if things went awry. This remains government policy.

I doubt Rudd saw these as being mutually exclusive but the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) seemed to. As such Rudd developed a reputation among some Chinese officials for being hypocritical. His outburst at the Chinese delegation at Copenhagen and the Wikileaks revelations did not help.

If you read the Wikileaks dispatch between Hillary Clinton and Kevin Rudd you are left with a distinct impression that Rudd was a very successful 'zhengyou' to the US. This probably undercut his chances of establishing a similar relationship with their strategic competitor. Whether you can be a 'zhengyou' to two competing nations remains problematic.

However there are several connotations with this term that should not be discarded. Indeed we can pull them out to provide some broad guidelines for shaping our current discourse on China.

Firstly, a 'zhengyou' cares. The rise of China has increased the material livelihood of hundreds of millions of its citizens. This is a good thing. Prime Minister Tony Abbott has been good at vocally welcoming this and acknowledging the deft handling of the current regime. This deftness has been accompanied by appalling brutality but the material improvement of millions stands. The loyalty of many Chinese to the CCP makes little sense outside of this context.

Also we show we genuinely care by not name-calling. All politicians and commentators should be mindful of how our debates about the powerful state of China might impact on the Chinese diaspora, who don't have the luxury of the Chinese navy backing them up. The multicultural fabric in Australia is tenuous enough without lobbing talk of 'Chinese mongrels' around.

Secondly, a 'zhengyou' is trustworthy. You cannot be a confidante if the gap between rhetoric and reality yawns wide. This means being upfront with Beijing about where we stand on issues. It means a willingness to occasionally run the gauntlet of Beijing's displeasure. In return we should be willing to listen and not let our alliance with the US, Japan and other hedging powers deafen us to China's different perspectives.

Another aspect of this honesty is that we should be open about the plurality of opinions in our community. Diplomats might want to shout down PUP Senator Jacqui Lambie's comments as unrepresentative but how would they know? For them to be certain we would need to have a much broader conversation within the Australian community. If after this conversation we find such sentiments exist we should be open about that too.

Finally a 'zhengyou' is clear-sighted. The dynamics of power are as important, if not more so, for understanding China's behavior than any unique aspect of Chinese culture. The report that Beijing is buying up Chinese community media in Australia should surprise us no more than Gina Rinehart's tilt at the Fairfax board. Powerful people want to control the message. This is a more useful framing than 'the Chinese are coming'.

If we focus on the dynamics of power we might be able to reduce the amount of ethnic stereotyping and craft both a respectful dialogue and a sober policy to the monumental geopolitical shifts currently occurring.

Evan Ellis is a freelance journalist currently completing his Masters in International Studies with a China major.

A daughter's life rekindled

CREATIVE

Catherine Marshall

My daughter comes to me in the early evening, when the summer sun is still elevated and the azaleas flourish in a profusion of fuchsia outside the kitchen door.

'I need to speak to you,' she says. 'Will you come to my room?'

They are interminable, the minutes that follow. Long, slow-motion minutes which transform the trivial concerns of the day - a looming deadline, uncooked dinner - into something far graver: please - please - don't let her be pregnant, I think.

I follow my daughter into her bedroom, sit down beside her. She looks me in the eye, gathers herself and draws a breath. 'I think I'm depressed,' she says.

Bewilderment and relief sweep over me all at once: my daughter is not pregnant, she is not addicted to drugs, she is not in trouble with the law. Instead, she is depressed and, superficially at least, this does not come as too great a surprise.

Now that she has put a name to this pall that hangs over her, certain things come into focus, things I must surely have sensed but which were blurred, lacking in clarity: the dark rings beneath her eyes, the melancholy swimming within them, the empty space where *joie de vivre* once lived.

But I am riven with alarm, too. My daughter is 16 years old and embarking on her final year of high school. She is young, beautiful and confident. She has a boyfriend and plans that would break an older person's heart: study, parties, travel. It blindsides me, this news that she is afflicted by an illness that will sap her of the joy and optimism on which I have tried to raise her, an illness which threatens to snatch away her spirit just as she blossoms into adulthood.

The next day we sit in the consulting rooms of my doctor. This is where we will begin, I tell my daughter. She is disarmingly cognisant, given the circumstances. She has consulted the Internet, drawn up a list of her symptoms, armed herself with questions, and is ready to tackle this problem. If anyone is swimming blindly in this sudden, unanticipated quagmire, it is me.

'This happens sometimes, to teenagers,' the doctor says, sliding a packet of Zoloft across

her desk. 'There's no knowing why such chemical imbalances occur.'

The doctor can't tell how long this treatment will last. 'Possibly for life,' she says with a shrug. My daughter sits beside me; I can almost feel the retreating of her spirit, the slow extinguishing of her spark. She is sinking into herself, like a whirlpool collapsing back into its dark and treacherous centre.

The antidepressants sit on the desk between us with their promise of relief; they may well resolve my daughter's problem, but the doctor's prognosis has not placated or reassured me. I had expected a more thorough examination of her symptoms, a broader approach to her treatment.

'What about therapy? I ask hopefully. 'Shouldn't she see a psychologist?'

But the doctor is adamant. Chemistry cannot be altered by mere words, she says.

We drive home in cold, foreboding silence. My daughter throws the packet of Zoloft into the back of the pantry cupboard and retreats to her bedroom. She feels weak, she tells me; she feels like a failure.

The next day I make an appointment with a registered psychologist. At the first meeting my daughter holds in her hand the list of questions and symptoms, but she carries in her bearing this time the stoop of defeat. There is a quiet desperation in her demeanour as she sits before this man on whom all her hopes are now pinned. It will be up to him to unlock the dungeon inside which her contentment and sense of self have been sealed.

They drag on, the weeks following her diagnosis. The psychologist confirms that my daughter is depressed, that she will require weekly therapy sessions, that there is every possibility she will benefit from cognitive behavioural therapy.

I pick her up after school on Tuesday afternoons and drive her to her appointment; I sit in the car and try to focus on my laptop computer screen as the hollow minutes tick by. I have become unhinged by this, for I am the person who birthed this child and cared for her all of these 16 years. Surely I bear some responsibility for this alteration in her state of mind, for the quiet desperation that has seeped into her psyche?

And there is something else, something strangely disquieting. Slicing through my consciousness is the realisation that I have seen all this before, in my own self, as a deeply melancholic teenager, and years later as a young mother and migrant grappling with an overwhelming sense of dislocation, exclusion and grief. My daughter's depression is a dark and inhospitable valley in which she has lost her way, but it is also a mirror held up before me, forcing me to acknowledge the deep troughs into which I myself have fallen, and to recognise the needlessness of having clawed myself out of them alone. I tell my daughter that she is not weak, that she is by no means a failure. Indeed, she is stronger than any other person I know.

The cognitive behavioural therapy is not a magic trick; it requires adherence, it demands hard work and practice. It is like some form of aerobics, I imagine, for the soul. I am ever watchful of my daughter, terrified that she will self-harm. I tell her that there is no shame in taking medication for her condition - she need just reach into the cupboard and

she will find there the discarded packet of Zoloft.

But the pall is beginning to lift, and beneath it I can see the glow returning, a dying flame coaxed gently back to life. One day her psychologist calls me in. 'She has done beautifully,' he says.

My daughter is sitting beside me, a sweet smile illuminating her face. She will reduce her sessions and then discontinue them altogether. She will complete her final year of high school and take a gap year, working, travelling, partying, feasting on life. And then she will return home and enrol in university as a student of psychology, the subject for which real life has prepared her best.

Catherine Marshall is a Sydney-based journalist and travel writer. Follow her on Twitter @zizzyballord.

For information about depression visit the Black Dog Institute at www.blackdoginstitute.org.au. Catherine's daughter gave permission for the depiction in this article.

Image source is shutterstock.

Order is not justice in Ferguson

INTERNATIONAL

Fatima Measham

Tensions remain heightened in Ferguson, Missouri two weeks after Darren Wilson shot Michael Brown around midday on a Saturday. Rallies have spread to places like New York and Washington DC, with protesters subverting the gesture and speech of surrender - hands raised, 'Don't shoot!' - into a symbol of resistance.

The security response to these protests illuminates the conditions in which Brown was killed. The use of police dogs, land mine-resistant vehicles, rubber bullets, tear gas and sonic weapons in the streets of Ferguson is so disproportionate as to be nearly comical, except that it underlines the hostility that can turn fatal if you were black.

It is a hostility that has been internalised by blacks. In a letter published in the *New York Times* a week after Brown's death, 'a black mother to a mixed race child' lists the rules that she makes him recite over and over: 'Don't run after dark. Don't put your hood up. Keep your hands visible at all times. Always be scrupulously polite.' These are the rules that she hopes will keep her son safe, like being careful around a stove.

Such sentiments are eerily echoed by a Los Angeles police officer in a Washington Post opinion piece: : 'If you don't want to get shot, tased, pepper-sprayed, struck with a baton or thrown to the ground, just do what I tell you.' The onus of restraint, it turns out, does not rest on the man with the gun who is vested with the force of the state.

The specifics of the Ferguson incident are yet to be resolved by federal and St Louis County investigations but there are certain things that cannot be refuted. Brown and his

friend were initially stopped for jaywalking. Both were unarmed. Six bullets hit Brown, four in the arm and two in the head. Wilson did not call for medical help. A dead man was left on the street for a few hours in the summer heat.

The lack of restraint on Wilson's part, the indignity that shrouded Brown's body long after his death, the disproportionate force deployed against protestors and journalists in the aftermath - this has become the canvas upon which the long grievance of racialised oppression has found vivid expression.

Inequities in the United States are often magnified by the justice system, just as they are magnified in education, health and housing. A report on Ferguson by the Missouri State General, for instance, found that 86 per cent of traffic stops last year targeted black drivers, though their contraband 'hit rate' (searches with found contraband over total searches) is lower than that of white drivers by 12 percentage points.

National data shows that black people are nearly four times more likely to be arrested for drug possession, though they use drugs at similar rates as white people. Their drug sentences are 13 percent longer. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), SWAT raids are more likely to occur in 'communities of colour'.

The mentality revealed in LA officer's remarks - that 'in the overwhelming majority of cases it is not the cops, but the people they stop, who can prevent detentions from turning into tragedies' - is alarming in that context. In many of the manslaughter cases in which police officers shot black men to death, victims were unarmed, not resisting arrest or had been mistakenly identified.

The killing of Michael Brown may have thus sharpened a malignant pattern, but the broader conditions that make it more likely for such incidents to occur will remain unless police departments confront the way they have perpetuated injustice rather than enforced order.

What we have seen over the past weeks is an unreconciled history of racial oppression intersecting with more contemporary features such as security theatre and heavily militarised police.

It is worth pondering whether this episode will remain unique to Ferguson and the United States for long.

Fatima Measham is a Melbourne-based social commentator who contributes regularly to Eureka Street. She tweets as @foomeister and blogs at This is Complicated.

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Abbott's Team Christian Australia

AUSTRALIA

Irfan Yusuf

Australia is a Christian country. We wear Christian clothes. We eat Christian food, speak Christian languages and play Christian sport. We also drive Christian cars on Christian roads. And we do all that because we say we have Christian values.

And when we're feeling a bit ecumenical and/or guilty for 2000 years of persecution culminating in the Holocaust, we say we have Judeo-Christian values.

Pardon the scepticism but I've lived here in Australia too long to believe all this 'Christian values' nonsense. And I won't be lectured about my alleged failure to integrate. I won't forget easily the 'Asians out' and 'STOP THE ASIAN INVASION' stickers on shop walls at the Blenheim Road shops. I also won't forget my then-Federal Member John Howard tell me in 1988 that Asians don't make a neat cultural fit into Australia.

I won't easily forget the kids (and in some cases, parents) at Ryde East Public School during the 1970s calling me a 'Paki' and 'nigger'.

My father's advice when I'd come home with a black eye was simple. 'If they hit you, hit them back!' My mum's advice was the same, except she preferred I use words of sarcasm and not bare fists.

'Tell them your skin is the same colour as the real Australians, the Aborigines'. The line didn't work. Now the kids at school started labelling me 'coon' and 'boong'. Logic just

couldn't win.
The same bullies would grab my school bag and throw it on the road hoping a car would run it over. And the same bullies would ignore me and punch up a white kid from a different school. I never quite understood this phenomenon until one bully explained.
'It's because he's a f*cking Catholic!'
My experience of Australia as a kid was that it was a nation of bullies trying to protect their turf from anyone they perceived as outsiders. This usually meant people sufficiently different in the wrong way and for reasons beyond their control.
Perhaps this was Tony Abbott's experience growing up as an English Catholic migrant in a very Protestant Australia. Perhaps that is why he took up boxing as a young man, in the same manner as many young Indigenous and Lebanese men take up the sport. In self-defence he may have found a deep sense of empowerment. Abbott knew he had to fight his way into Team Australia.
Abbott must have known what it was like to have his faith pilloried and made the subject of public scorn. He also felt the pull of political Catholicism in the movement of an Italian migrant named Bartholomew Augustine Santamaria, whose anti-Communist views often translated into divisive positions on domestic and international politics, which many Catholics abhorred. That did not stop Abbott from sitting beside Santamaria's deathbed during the latter's final hours.
Australia's history since Federation has been dominated by the politics of exclusion and marginalisation. Minorities have been bludgeoned into joining 'Team Australia' by shedding what they could of their foreign dress, food and religion. They refused. They fought back. Since his days in the campus Democratic Clubs, Tony Abbott was amongst them.
So what now leads him to repeat the same divisive rhetoric? Why is he asking people to give up their legal rights as their price to join his Team Australia?
Abbott told Radio 2GB recently: 'Everyone has got to put this country, its interests, its values and its people first, and you don't migrate to this country unless you want to join our team'. But Mr Abbott didn't become a Protestant. He remained a Papist, part of a religious movement seen by many as putting the Vatican's interests before Australia's. He joined a movement led by a man accused of siding with dictators.
And consider this, Mr Abbott. Many Muslims did not migrate to Australia. Over 40 per cent were born here. They grew here. You flew (or perhaps sailed) here. Albanian Muslims have lived in Shepparton and Mareeba since the 1920s. Descendants of Afghan cameleers can be found across the country. Every major wave of Australian migration has included persons of Muslim heritage.
These people were, in many cases, part of Team Australia before you were born.
Our cultural warriors should familiarise themselves with the Sermon on the Mount or 1 Corinthians 13. They'll then recognise there isn't much Christian about their imbecilic 'Team Australia' yelling and chest beating.

Irfan Yusuf is a lawyer and blogger of Muslim Indian heritage who recently moved from Sydney to Melbourne.

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When legitimate criticism hurts

AUSTRALIA

Andrew Hamilton

Antisemitism and racism are rightly considered shameful. So those accused of these things usually deny the charges vehemently. But such is the heat provoked by the accusation that people often shrink from reflecting on the issues that provoked the accusation. So it is worth reflecting on just why the recent graffiti on synagogues and abusive remarks about Jews in Australia are wrong, and under what conditions accusations of antisemitism or racism are justifiable or unjustifiable.

Many groups suffer from offensive words and actions on the basis of their gender, race, ethnicity, religion or political convictions. The behaviour is offensive because the perpetrators attribute to persons negative qualities that they associate with the group to which these persons belong, and abuse them for the negative qualities. They wrongly assume that attitudes and behaviour of individuals can be predicted from their membership of a group. Ultimately they deny personal freedom and value. Those treated in this way may feel afraid, disrespected and alienated. The perpetrators are legion: antisemitic, anti-Muslim, anti-Catholic, anti-Protestant, anti-Communist, anti-American and anticlerical, to name just a few.

These attitudes are more vicious when they focus on more than one distinctive quality of the group under attack. Antisemitic behaviour, for example, is often fuelled by hostility both for the ethnic origins and for the religion of the people attacked. The combination of qualities intensifies hatred and contempt. This is also true of anti-Muslim prejudice, which feeds on negative beliefs about both Islam and about ethnic origin, and so about persons. This double prejudice makes antisemitism especially damaging and deplorable.

Historical and cultural factors can make prejudicial behaviour even more offensive and destructive. The history of the Jewish people in the West has been one of discrimination, occasional persecution, expulsion and, in our time, of attempted genocide. Persons were regularly targeted for their ethnic origins and religious beliefs. The history of murderous cultural prejudice means that survivors of the Holocaust and their descendants will legitimately fear for their security when they see anti-Jewish slogans painted on walls or hear the reality of the Holocaust denied. These historical and cultural factors explain why in some nations Holocaust denial has been criminalised as a symbol of the dangers and viciousness of anti-Semitism.

To say that antisemitism is uniquely vicious, however, is not to say that the targeting other groups, whose members have also suffered a long history of repression, discrimination and contempt, is any less shameful. Abusive words and actions directed against Indigenous people in Australia, against blacks in the United States, and the Romani throughout Europe, for example, are also uniquely vicious because they reflect a history and culture in which people have been discriminated against and treated with contempt by dominant groups in their nations.

Because antisemitic and racist language and actions are so divisive and damaging, accusations should not be lightly made. Nor should they be given automatic credence. In particular the common practice of declaring critics of the actions or policies of, say, the Zimbabwe or the Israeli government, to be racist or antisemitic should be called for the bullying it is. Certainly such criticism may be motivated by antisemitic or racist prejudice. But that prejudice needs to be demonstrated, not asserted.

To criticise the Russian government, for example, for its actions in the Ukraine would be anti-Russian only if we attributed its actions to the supposed bad qualities of Russians as a whole. It is perfectly legitimate to claim that its actions are ethically unjustifiable and should be subject to sanctions, provided we have subjected the behaviour of the Ukrainian government and others involved in the conflict to the same ethical scrutiny. Our claim may be right or wrong, our call for sanctions may be justifiable or not, but if it is carefully considered it is a proper expression of ethical responsibility. Governments represent their people, and should be held accountable for doing so ethically. Their critics should not be deterred by being smeared as racist or antisemitic.

Judged by these criteria, the defacing of Jewish synagogues is a deplorable example of antisemitism. It identifies Australian Jews and their religious institutions, not to mention Jews in Israel and their faith, with negative qualities assigned to all Jews because of their race and ethnicity.

It is, however, legitimate to criticise the Israeli government for its actions in Gaza on the grounds that they are a disproportionate response that cannot achieve its ends, and to call for sanctions that will discourage further violent action, just as it was legitimate to criticise the Assad regime on the grounds that the harm done to civilians was disproportionate, and to call for sanctions.

The fact that criticism is legitimate, of course, does not mean that it is correct. Nor that the actions of the Hamas leaders are ethically justifiable. Indeed the Syrian example should give us pause before taking sides. If we criticise policies and advocate sanctions on ethical grounds we should expect robust rebuttal of our critique.

Both the viciousness of antisemitism and the need to hold the Israeli government accountable for its actions spring from the same respect for the preciousness of each human person. No people may be defined and treated as if their value was determined

by their ethnicity.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of Eureka Street*.*

Signpost image by shutterstock.

Multimillionaire's self-indulgent science

MEDIA

Megan Graham

Deepsea Challenge. Rated PG. Release date: 21 August 2014. Director: John Bruno, Ray Quint, Andrew Wight. Running time 90 mins.

In *Deepsea Challenge* James Cameron admits that, having desired it since he was a kid, his film *Titanic* was basically the excuse he needed to explore the depths of the ocean.

The same seems to be happening in this, his latest film; a documentary about his expedition to the deepest point of the world's oceans. If you read that sentence and think there should be more to it - well, I thought the same, but there's not.

The challenge, like in the explorer times of the 18th and 19th centuries, is simply to find or arrive at some destination as yet 'unconquered'. After watching Deepsea Challenge one might reasonably ask what the point of it was. My best guess is simply ego.

Cameron talks about the ocean's deepsea creatures as a testament to nature's imaginative and unique creations. While this is true, that alone cannot carry the proposition of the film.

Cameron claims his challenge is not just about finding more &'cool&' underwater creatures or creating bigger, better high-tech toys to play with. He attempts to position the expedition as contributing to science.

Yet the moment at which he reaches the bottom in his deep-water vessel is so anticlimactic it's nearly absurd. There is nothing to see. The mechanisms useful in gathering materials for science fail quickly. The goal becomes more about Cameron surviving the trip - not about the usefulness of the expedition in itself.

And so Cameron resurfacing alive is celebrated and cheered: his wife is relieved; the crew are proud. And although we are told that the expeditions (plural - there were several trips besides the main one) discovered new species, the film carefully avoids saying they were discovered during the trip that reached the deepest point of the ocean.

Considering there was nothing down there and the gathering mechanisms failed, I assume this means science gained nothing from the project's ultimate goal. Which is possibly why no one has *really* bothered to achieve the goal before.

Deepsea exploration is expensive. And perhaps the achievement wouldn't have held the same appeal to Cameron if he couldn't tell his courageous story to a worldwide audience. For both reasons, it made sense for Cameron to make a movie. Does it make sense for moviegoers to help pay for a wealthy Hollywood director's indulgent deepsea expedition? You'll have to decide for yourself.

What Cameron and his team did - privately creating a vessel to withstand the enormous pressure at the deepest point of Earth's oceans - is &'cool&'. But having a whole lot of money makes doing a whole lot of cool things possible. With such resources at his fingertips, Cameron's achievement is not that amazing. And the cost, you'll find out if you watch the film, was the highest it possibly could be for two men involved in the project.

I assume at his age, and having already achieved such huge success in the film industry, a man of Cameron's intelligence and drive needs more, and bigger, goals to keep him amused. But surely our greatest goals are those driven by bigger things than self-aggrandisement. Otherwise the pursuit is ultimately empty. And those around us will see it as such.

My final issue with this film is the fact that out of the sizable Australian team chosen by Cameron for the project (much of the work took place in Sydney and off the NSW coast) there appeared to be only two women, who were given a combined total of perhaps five seconds screen time. The only other woman to feature in the footage - a few times, relatively briefly - was Cameron's wife. Who was brought on to talk about Cameron.

Essentially, *Deepsea Challenge* feels like James Cameron meets 'Make A Wish Foundation' with the audience acting as the benevolent donors. I wouldn't recommend the investment.

Megan Graham won the 2013 Margaret Dooley Award for Young Writers.

Coaching Team Australia

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas

Fiona Katauskas' work has also appeared in ABC's *The Drum*, *New Matilda, The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Financial Review* and Scribe's Best Australian political cartoon anthologies.

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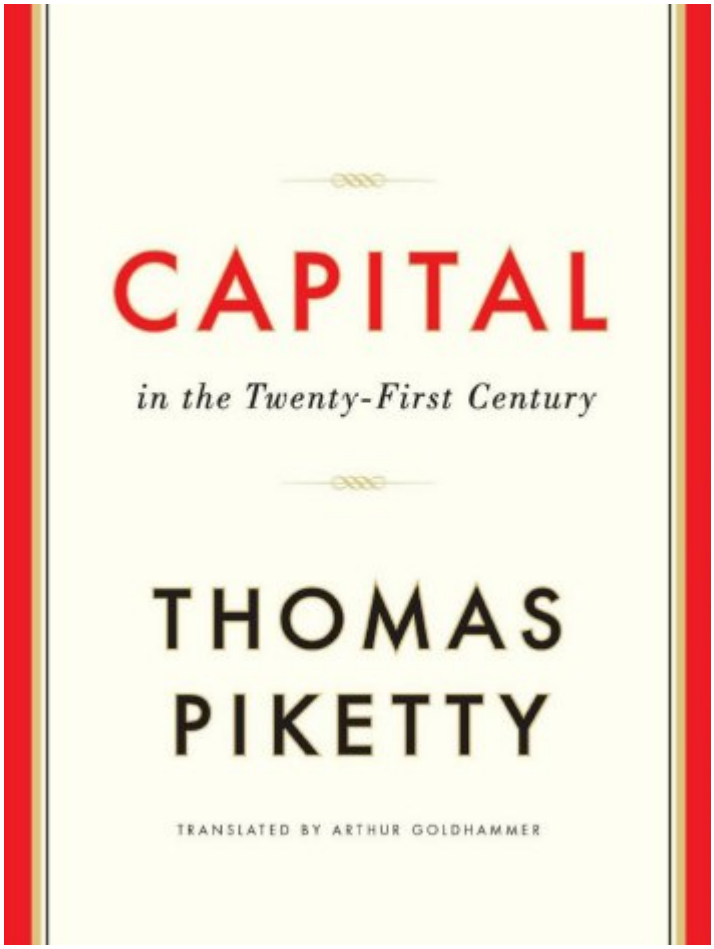
Inequality matters

MARGARET DOOLEY AWARD

Harry Maher


CAPITAL
in the Twenty-First Century
THOMAS PIKETTY
TRANSLATED BY ARTHUR GOLDHAMMER

Inequality matters. Inequality is dangerous. And inequality is at a near all-time high. At its core, the Government's recent budget not only engenders but actively exults in the creation and maintenance of inequality, a phenomenon rapidly expanding not just in Australia, but around the world. Generations of economists have promised that free markets and competition would bring an end to disparity in society. But the statistics are out. And the statistics don't lie.

French economist Thomas Piketty's 'Capital in the 21st Century' presents a comprehensive history of inequality and capitalism. Lamenting the never-ending arguments between economists regarding the effect of capitalism on inequality, where each side of the political spectrum merely asserted their views and pointed to the other side's lack of evidence as proof of their own views, Piketty presents a comprehensive, impartial and statistical view of income and wealth inequality over the last 150 years. His statistics demonstrate conclusively that the free, uninterrupted and unfettered operation of capitalism inevitably leads to widening inequality, as is occurring around the world and in Australia, even without the help of Hockey's inequality budget.

Piketty's history shows inequality climaxed in 1913, at the end of a period of uninterrupted capitalism, before rapidly diminishing as the First World War, Great Depression, Second World War, and finally the Cold War effectively disrupted and prevented the free operation of capitalism. Post WWII, economists heralded the return to peaceful capitalism and a drop in inequality. But Piketty's stats show the exact opposite. Since 1960, global income and wealth inequality has steadily and consistently increased, climaxing in the present day at near 1913 levels. Capitalism and inequality, Piketty shows, perpetuates inequality, which under the hegemonic operation of free market economics, has grown to unconscionable proportions.

However Piketty, as a mere statistician, stops short of attributing the series of global crises beginning in 1913, the highpoint of global inequality, to inequality. That bold link is made by Hannah Arendt, who in examining the origins of totalitarianism and the dark 20th century, cites explicitly the heightened inequality of income. Capitalism leads to inequality (that much is clear from the stats, that don't lie), which in turn inevitably leads to the problem of over-saving in the rich and superfluous capital. Yet superfluous capital cannot remain idle - due to the very rules of capital itself - and hence becomes a major destabilising force, as money pursues more money pursues more money. It was the destabilising force of inequality and superfluous capital in the early 20th century that led to imperialism, an attempted outlet of capitalism, and inevitable conflict over scarce resources triggering WWI and WWII vis Arendt. The 20th century was soaked in the blood of the innocent, resulting directly from inequality endemic to the modus operandi of capitalism.

Yet inequality is not a problem of the past, and world leaders would do well to heed the lessons of history lest they be devoured by history, as inequality reaches near 1913-levels. The GFC, the greatest economic crisis of our generation, was caused by the age-old problem of superfluous capital; inequality created excessive savings in the rich, which sought further profit through risky sub-prime mortgage derivative products, that eventually unravelled, triggering a disastrous halt in our global system. But if the lessons of the past century are to be heeded, the GFC could be just the first dire warning of worse to come. So long as inequality is treated as a tolerable and necessary economic problem, rather than a social and moral problem, our leaders continue to lead us, like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, obediently over the cliff's edge, just as in 1913 (while we don't look up from our iPhones!).

But surely, many would reply, capitalism has delivered immeasurable prosperity and progress, and a luxurious quality of life? As the tide rises, all boats are eventually lifted, the popular argument goes. Yet this view is based on an unbalanced snapshot of global capitalism. Sure, capitalism and free trade may have brought prosperity to Australia, but this is at the direct expense of those labouring in the sweatshops of the developing world, and the starving children of the parents who grow our coffee in the African sub-

Sahara.

That is why 'boat people' unsettle Australians on such an existential level. They give us a brief glimpse of the global economy, of the widespread institutional inequality and of the suffering and poverty just beyond our fortified borders. They are indeed 'economic refugees' fleeing from our global hegemony that brings nothing but poverty, conflict and ruin. That is why a usually humane population is prepared to have desperate human beings shipped off to prison camps on faraway islands, out of sight, out of mind, because they remind us that our incredible privilege in Australia comes at such a heavy cost, a cost no man or woman should be willing to pay.

You see, it's not capitalism and liberal democracy that I don't accept, Alyosha, only I must most (dis)respectfully return my ticket. Is not the cost of salvation too high? How can one live on our edifice of unrevenged tears, of starving sick children. Surely my humanity, my Christianity, or my secular humanism tells me that I must reject an economic system in which I eat three meals a day, while next door, a neglected child dies of starvation? How then does one square the limitless opulence of parts of Australia with a world in which 3.1 million children die each year due to poor nutrition, according to the World Food Program?

Even in wealthy Australia inequality exists, in Indigenous Australia, in the working poor, and the underclass of impoverished unemployed that the budget enshrines. A recent Oxfam Report showed that the richest 1 per cent of Australian's own the same amount of wealth as the bottom per cent, a rate of inequality below the OECD average. The ironic contradiction of the budget's Christian-capitalist led attack on the poor and marginalised has not been lost on many. A generation of Christian leaders appear to have lost their moral compasses, engaging in a deification of money-making, and a reduction of the human person to nothing more than an economic asset; those that can't 'earn or learn' are liabilities to be exploited, marginalised or abandoned.

How else but by a complete moral deficiency can one explain the brutal attack on foreign aid in the budget, cloaked in the pathetic excuse that 'we can't give away borrowed money' (only one country in the world has no debt, meaning under Hockey's normative conception of foreign affairs, no one but Norway gives to the starving)? How else but with a Faustian pact with the god of capital could one explain the attacks on pensioners, disability support recipients, the unemployed, and the sick, while negative gearing, mining super profits and the big banks are left untouched? The poor scream and suffer, while Pilate washes his hands and laughs. Sure, the rich can only enter the Kingdom of Heaven on a loaded camel through the eye of the needle, but who needs the Kingdom of Heaven when money reigns as deity supreme?

Inequality remains the greatest danger of our century, both in Australia and overseas. Again according to Oxfam, as of June 2014, sixty-six 'devils' control the same amount of wealth as three and a half billion people, half the world's population. Such staggering global inequality is not only morally unjustifiable, it is unsustainable. An estimated 1.3 billion people living below the poverty line cannot, must not, be allowed to continue.

But what is the alternative? Revolt? Revolution? Democracy? I have neither the time nor economic expertise to delve into the need and means to effectively tax wealth and the trillions in tax havens and offshore accounts, and to open up economic and political opportunity to the marginalised. Instead, I hope to highlight that somewhere we have gone dramatically wrong, and created a world that on the dawn of the 21st century is inherently immoral. A world in which a sixth of the population subsists on less than $1.25 per day, in which over 3 billion manage on only $2 per day. Forty-five years ago we put a man on the moon yet today 1.5 billion people do not have access to clean drinking water. It is only when the economic inequality at the core of our social organisation is recognised as a moral problem that we can properly eliminate extreme inequality, and all the dangers it brings.

Yes, there is hardly a straightforward solution, and the gods of money and power stand directly in its way, but the alternative is dire. If inequality is allowed to continue its

meteoric rise, against the backdrop of the desperate voices of pensioners, students, and the unemployed rising in lament, the GFC and the inequality budget may only be the pre-tremors in a devastating earthquake precipitated by our inequality. Exactly a hundred years on from when greed, wealth and inequality plunged the world into thirty years of catastrophic conflict, disregard history at your peril.

Harry Maher is a second year Arts/Law student at Sydney University. His interests include politics, liberation theology and Russian literature. This essay is the second prize winner in the 2014 Margaret Dooley Award for Young Writers.

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Ricky's job search

AUSTRALIA

Margaret McDonald

Ricky was intimidating at first sight. He was tall and very broad shouldered, his blonde hair wispy, and dishevelled. His eyes were distorted by thick glasses: those that give the impression of being made from the bases of wine bottles; to combat glare he had clipped dark lenses over them which were now flipped up because of the kinder interior light. Ricky was a very strange and frightening person.

He moved awkwardly towards the enquiry counter glancing furtively from side to side. People stare. He seems to demand far more space than is his due and they hurriedly move aside. Watching him approach, counter staff sensed this would not be an easy customer to help. They all suddenly became deeply engrossed in computers, reached into a filing cabinet, or picked up a phone.

'You talk to him.' My workmates whisper: in theory I am their supervisor - we rarely remember. He towers over me and leans uncomfortably close as we try to sort out his needs. He is excited and his speech becomes faster and faster as the tension grows. His concentration often wanders, distracted by any movement. Information has to be repeated: gently, carefully, until at last he understands. Constantly he checks over his shoulder; to have someone stand behind him unsettles him. If another student comes, he insists I deal with them first, when they have gone we have to start again from the beginning. Slowly I learn his needs. I try to work out ways to accommodate them. It is impossible for him to attend a class, even a special class, the only answer is off campus which brings its own set of difficulties.

If an employer could be found who would give him work, it is unlikely he would ever be able to earn. His desire to learn is genuine. Who am I to say this is impossible? His

modest dream is a Certificate 1 in Information Technology. People have told him this is the first step in a career in computers. He is convinced.

A group that helps disabled people has given him a computer. His problem as he sees it; is that our disks won't work in the computer they have given him. After careful questioning, I establish that the donated computer has been stripped of everything - including the operating system. He doesn't understand what I am telling him.

'Our shop stocks student versions at a good price. It won't work unless you buy those programs.'

'I'll go to the library - they've got things.'

'No, talk to the shop. Programs you have to buy yourself.'

The TAFE library can't help him - computer programs don't come within their scope. The expectation is that a student will have a working computer, or make use of those set aside for students in a lab which contains fifteen or twenty highly sought after computers. There is rarely one free. He is not able to concentrate in such a situation. He has no money, his pension is barely sufficient to survive, there isn't sufficient to cover any extras, especially extras whose importance he doesn't understand. His family has given up on him.

He begins a round that involves several agencies, none of which can help. In the weeks we have been searching for a solution we have come to care for this young man who is so determined to learn. Our disability people eventually manage to provide the operating system and word processing program and he can finally commence work.

Over time we hear of a father now disappeared, who often in his frustration resorted to violence. Of constantly being told that he was useless, that he would never be any good for anything. For a little while things are quiet, until he arrives at our enquiry desk once again agitated and afraid.

'You've got to give me a statement of results or I'll lose my benefits.' We know he has been working, but as yet there is nothing we can assess. Where does this man go now? I finally locate his case worker and talk to him. I assure him Ricky is working and is doing the best he can. The caseworker is based in many kilometres away from us. They have never met. Fortunately we found a tutor who has endless patience, and enjoys working with people like Ricky. We arranged what amounted to individual tuition within our off campus program. We didn't ask anyone's approval.

Eighteen months or so later my retirement date arrived. It was sad to say goodbye to several students like Ricky. He hadn't really progressed very far in that time, but he hasn't given up. I moved to the city and it was almost two years before I received an e-mail from one of my former workmates telling me that this tenacious man had finally achieved his Certificate 1 in Information Technology. This man had given his simple one year course the time and effort many devote to their PhD.

Ricky was one of the lucky ones. He happened to be in a time and place where he was able to get the support to achieve his modest goal.

Where to from here? Learn? Earn? Homelessness?

Margaret McDonald is a Melbourne writer who contributed to And the Dance Goes On*, an anthology of women's spirituality produced by the Council for Australian Catholic Women. Searching man image by Shutterstock.*

Our Lady of the Trap Door Spider

CREATIVE

Paul Scully

Passages from a Modern Bible

I The Syro-Phoenician Dog-Woman

Mark 7.25 - 30, Matthew 15: 21-28

In a diacritically Greek region of Palestine
a woman bled from Syria, seethed into
flesh on Phoenician sand, hung around Jesus
like worry beads strung with locusts. A spirit
had gaped her daughter's pagan insides, tore
her throat with bestial remonstration, sawed
her eyeballs rancid red. The apostles
wanted to shunt the woman away. Jesus
caught sight of her profile in his periphery,
scowled, &'Would I take bread from the mouths
of (Israel's) children to feed a mere dog?&'
She responded, &'But even a dog feasts
on the scraps that fall from the table&' -
&'Your retort is bound in faith.
Your daughter is now released.&'

A pericope fed by mouth into the ear
of an illiterate Mark, adapted later by
the untutored Matthew. Still, they say
it is the word of God. That a quick wit
sundered a baying spirit, drew a crow's heart
into the margin of salvation; that Jesus had
two hymnals, could be so mete of mercy.

II The Faithful Road

After http://www.kevin-scully.com/blog.html

Brick Lane a jawline in a face daubed with noon-sweat
and clamour though barrowless at this time of the week
a young man with a hillock-shaped head humping
a crucifix along the street a woman in a shop doorway
kneads her hands with a towel a cloth-capped onlooker
darkened by a stranger's reluctance nevertheless offers
help if the destination is close at hand another observer

clicks his phone camera

The crosswise thief
is swamped by a twitterwave and its wake of Lenten
remorse and guilt hails a cab and directs the driver
of crushed leaves unheard despair had prompted his act A guardian of the chapel's morning wrapped in prayer Opens her shawl to welcome the return of the sacred object On the pages of a less well read book a trinity of crimes and crosses on a skull-shaped hill outside the town walls: two thieves of goods, the third of goodness and order so his Sanhedrin accusers said A face turned in faith or a wager in default of other options a promise of paradise Sometimes a story relived is a story believed Our Lady of the Trap-Door Spider Unpeopled paddocks, spindly tussocks, red earth horizons, space both companion and witness, drought, flood vie for conversation, laughter tinkles at curses' end, hopes unmouthed, stoic, like sheep. Crows sigh distance onto my desk, scripts, teachers I never see amplify the silence, meagre talents, sparser possessions packed and humped on rail car and train, noise, crowds, unsettled sleep until the city becomes home, watch-key women of the veil. Caring for life, arraigning death amidst the froth of the streets, sirens, soldiers, the chill of war, I meet a man of words, gusts and multitudes, rosary, prayer book in hand, the Ginger Jar. Married life, wage-bound absences that economise closeness. I remember the heaves and gasps of my dying father, crusts in the eye of fate, hewn months I carry babies in the womb who but glimpse the light then rejoin it - loss forever renews itself in fragile moments. The percussion of other lives taps at my attention. They tumble and grow into their own difficulties. I gaze at him, him the world, we at least share a lens of belief, a stolen shadow, somehow love survives these tidal years. Craftsman's tools, contemplative leather, heels snapped by the next cohort, tales to reprise, news to hear and relay, I fashion quietly the lines and shapes of the ties that bind. Just as the source of us begins to absorb me he departs with grace, his pain subsides into repose, eyelids cast godwards. Outside rituals, the salvation of small actions behind closed doors like the spider, my childhood friend, the silence returns, the woods of earlier times thin around me, my own tree shrinks back to its roots, consigns itself to the purity of space. My assertion on the earth less imposing, though no footnote to his military headstone, recital book-true and hushed, a slight insistence in your memory ever marks my place.

Paul Scully is a Sydney poet whose most recent collection An Existential Grammar *was published in April 2014.*
Trap door spider image by Shutterstock.

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Church congregations have role in healing abuse victims

AUSTRALIA

Neil Ormerod

On Monday (18 August), we are beginning Round 8 of the Royal Commission's investigation into the Catholic Church's handling of sexual abuse allegations. While some of these have passed without significant media attention, and in one case the Wollongong church came out looking not too bad, this upcoming round, like the Sydney based investigation into the John Ellis case, promises to be explosive in its content.

We received a preview of the matters likely to be investigated in the ABC's Four Corners on 11 August. The program aired material relating to the *Melbourne Response* established by then Archbishop Pell to be the Melbourne Archdiocese alternate response to the national protocols being developed at that time by the Catholic Bishops' Conference, *Towards Healing*. The program dealt with a number of specific cases of abuse including the case of Chrissie and Anthony Foster, whose two daughters Emma and Katie were assaulted by serial abuser Fr Kevin O'Donnell.

Their case was one of the first to be processed by the *Melbourne Response* process and has already been subject to investigation by a Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations. That inquiry involved some feisty, if not heated, exchanges between the parliamentarians and Cardinal Pell. His subsequent appearances at the Royal Commission on the John Ellis case were more circumspect.

At the closure of the Commission investigation of that case the Cardinal was asked to make himself available for this coming round into its investigation into the *Melbourne Response*, to which he agreed he would if possible. So we can expect another probing process of question and answer with Cardinal Pell the star witness. Once again we will have the spectacle of a cardinal of the Church humbled before a secular authority.

The Four Corners program also highlighted the prolonged suffering of a parish and school community at Doveton, Victoria, where it seems a number of paedophile priests were active over a period of decades. In one case, involving Fr Peter Searson, then Bishop Pell received a deputation from the local school making complaints against the priest. No action was taken to remove the priest from his position. In his evidence to the Victorian inquiry Cardinal Pell noted that he had spoken sternly to Fr Searson and told him to 'follow the protocols', though what protocols were being referred to was not made clear!

While the program focussed on the inaction of the relevant Church authorities, I was somewhat aghast that at no time did it seem to occur to the teachers at the school to approach the local police concerning the abusive and criminal actions of the priest. This may have been prior to the era of mandatory reporting, but surely they would have known that the priest's actions were criminal. Why then have recourse to a purely internal Church process, particularly when it proved so ineffective? Unfortunately the

program did not explore this question.
However, it did highlight for me that the problem of cover-up is not just one for the hierarchy, in particular the senior leaders of the Church. There is a 'co-dependency' issue here in that the laity look to the leadership to solve problems 'in-house', problems which really should be dealt with by civil authorities. Time and again the Royal Commission has heard Church leaders defend their actions by noting that victims did not want to go to the police, that they wanted the matter dealt with through internal Church processes. Even the laity, and at times the victims themselves, can be caught up in a culture which seeks to protect the reputation of the Church over and against the need to protect present and future victims. And when victims do seek to break through this conspiracy of silence, they are the ones who are ostracised by their communities.
Undoubtedly the Royal Commission will propose countless policies and procedures, but these will not touch the heart of the issue. Similarly the recent announcement by the Truth, Justice and Healing Council proposing an independent redress scheme for survivors, while to be welcomed, does not address the depth of the problem. So long as the culture whereby both the hierarchy and the laity spontaneously seek to 'protect the church from scandal' as a first option, there will be no major change in the situation.
We can see a more creative response in the recent actions by the Anglican Church in Canberra and Goulburn. A public apology to sexual abuse victims was either read out to congregations at Lamentation Sunday services, or a video of the apology delivered by the local bishop was played in each parish church. Congregations need to be brought into the process of finding a solution to our mess, to see that they too have a role to play in healing of and reparation to the victims. As a community we need liturgies of lamentation, of repentance, of reparation and healing if the church is to become a safe place for victims of abuse.

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Compassionate Jews weep for Gaza

AUSTRALIA

Michael Trainor

In Australia and around the world, in recent weeks and months, places of Jewish worship have been tagged with graffiti. One tag reads, 'Weep for Gaza'.

In the face of the tragic loss of innocent civilian lives in Gaza we express our anguish and call for an end to hostilities. We weep for Gaza. We pray that a just, lasting and durable peace can be found by the Palestinian people and Israel.

We acknowledge that the people of Palestine experienced deprivation and expulsion from the place they called home in the wake of the founding of the modern state of Israel and we call for full recognition of the right of Palestinians to self-determination and their right to have a state of their own in which to live normal peaceful lives in freedom, living alongside the State of Israel in peace and recognition of the State of Israel.

We also acknowledge the right of the Jewish people to a place of sanctuary and home in the place their ancestors called home and which their prophets and rabbis held out as a beacon of light in the midst of despair. We call for full recognition of the right of the State of Israel to exist and be a homeland for the Jews and for Israelis to live normal, peaceful lives within that State or anywhere they might travel.

While acknowledging the right of the Jews to have a home in Israel, we weep with anguish for the loss of men, women and children, the civilians who are victims in Gaza. Similarly we weep for the senseless loss of Israeli lives both civilian and military sacrificed in war. We weep with Gaza and we weep with the inhabitants of Israel.

We hope that ultimately there will be an end in a negotiated peace to hostilities, mistrust and enmity between Israel and the Palestinians.

We deplore episodes of tagging in Australian cities and we say to those who weep with Gaza that we weep with them, but we also say to those who are passionate for self-determination for the people of Gaza that attacks on Jewish synagogues, much less Jewish children in school buses are not a way to open up a dialogue with the Jewish community, and they are not a way to influence change in the Middle east.

The sentiment expressed in the tag, 'Weep for Gaza,' is one that all of us, Christian or Jew, would agree with. Indeed we need to weep with what is happening around our world and within our nation. We need to continue to develop a spirit of compassion for all who struggle and suffer, especially unjustly.

But tags that target Jewish religious sites should not be part of anger that many may feel about the terrible loss of human life in Gaza. Compassionate Jews will be weeping for Gaza as well. Attacks like these are only one step away from anti-Semitism, a rejection of Jews by non-Jews, making them culpable for the evils and tragedies of our world. Whatever one's beliefs about the causes of the current situation is Israel/Palestine, the Jews living peaceful lives in Australia should not be the target of one's anger and despairs.

We pray that ultimately there will be an end in a negotiated peace to hostilities, mistrust and enmity between Israel and the Palestinians. Indeed, let us weep for Gaza. Let us also weep for religious or ethnic prejudices, wherever and whenever they appear in our midst. But let us reject the hatred directed towards Jews in Israel and elsewhere in the world by those who misguidedly or intentionally invoke anti-Semitism in all its ugly forms.

 *Michael Trainor is an Adelaide Catholic priest and Christian Co-chair of the SA Council of Christians and Jews.*

Image: dailystormer.com

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