

Number 6 February 2014

Anne Summers Reports

Sane | Factual | Relevant

The demise
of Detroit

Small-screen
swearing

Getting away
with rape

Triumph of the
common man
party

WALKING WITH TIM FLANNERY

The high price of being a climate warrior

Anne Summers Reports #6

ASR ISSUE 6 / FEBRUARY 2014



IT IS WITH GREAT PRIDE that I welcome you to the first issue of our second full year of publishing the *Anne Summers Reports*. We intend to continue with our quality reporting, presenting material that is “sane, factual and relevant” and plan on publishing six issues in 2014.

We marked the end of our first year with a small party for our team and our contributors. For the first time, our editorial team was able to meet each other (see photo). As a “lean startup” we have no offices, we connect only via email and—occasionally—telephone and we live in different parts of Australia. It was great to arrange a physical get-together of the people who make *ASR* happen.

I am pleased to be able to announce the second in our Anne Summers Conversations series, this time with acclaimed and admired science writer Tim Flannery. One of the first acts of the Abbott government was to shut down the Climate Commission that had been established by the Gillard government to inform the public about climate change, and to axe Tim, its chief commissioner.

As you will read in my profile of Tim in this issue, his response was to set up an alternative body, the Climate Council. I am really looking forward to talking with Tim at events in Melbourne and Sydney. We will talk about the climate, but we will cover other subjects as well. Until I started researching his life, I had no idea what an amazing person Tim is. He is truly an important and unique individual and we are lucky to have him.

THE CONVERSATIONS are an integral part of what we are trying to do here at *ASR*. They are a means of bringing the magazine to life, enabling you to come and hear in the flesh or via broadcast people you have read about in *ASR*. They are also an important means of funding the magazine. We do not ask you to pay a subscription to *ASR* so we need to find other ways of funding what we do.

Another way is through donations. Many of you have contributed generously in the past year and I am going to be so bold as to ask you to “renew” your donation if you possibly can. Some of you have already hit on the idea of sending us regular monthly amounts via PayPal and I want to

encourage more of you to do this. There is nothing like having a regular cashflow to give certainty to a small venture such as *ASR*.

I hope you will enjoy the varied contents we have put together for this, our sixth issue. We are increasing the range of the subjects we cover and the people who write for us. We are pleased to cover some business subjects this time, as well as our regular and much-appreciated coverage of politics, social issues, art, books and—it’s becoming a habit with us—television. We are also glad to be able to increase our coverage from Asia, this time with a report about the Common Man Party, the new Delhi-based Indian political party that has swept the ruling Congress party from power in the national capital.



The *ASR* editorial team of Anne Summers, Ricky Onsman, Stephen Clark, Ashley Hogan and Foong Ling Kong.

We are increasing our *Feedback* section. We want to encourage you to respond with letters or longer pieces about our articles. We also want to give readers ongoing information about subjects we have covered in the past when there are new developments. Too often the media covers subjects but does not return to them. We are going to try to change that.

We grew from zero to 11,000 subscribers in our first year, and we now have around 30,000 readers (defined as people clicking through to the magazine). In 2014 we are going to try to double these numbers. With your help, I know that we can do it.

ANNE SUMMERS
EDITOR

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Tiffany's best friend

A tiny mine in the Kimberley has landed a lucrative contract with the legendary New York jeweller.

A CONTRACT TO SUPPLY the exclusive New York jeweller Tiffany & Co with rare yellow diamonds has been a financial bonanza for a small West Australian mine. Its new developers, Kimberley Diamonds Ltd, has seen its value increase over sevenfold since it bought the remote mine for \$14.5 million a year ago from the UK's Gem Diamond Co. It recovered its investment in six months.

The financial mastermind behind the Ellendale deal is Kimberley Diamonds chair Alex Alexander, a Russian-born engineer/economist and former stockbroker who now calls Sydney home. He was in Europe doing more business and unavailable to *ASR* before deadline, but his awesome diamond scoop has stunned the local mining world, as well as some of WA's sharpest entrepreneurs.

Though Alexander's company denies rumours that it plans more diamond-mine acquisitions, this is still seen as a distinct possibility. The yellow diamond resource was discovered in 1977 by the Ashton consortium two years before the mighty Argyle diamond deposit in far northern Kimberley. Argyle drew interest away from Ellendale, which is located deep in the distant desert, 120 km east of the small port of Derby and 2000 km north of Perth.

High praise at the time from Belgian–Australian diamond industry legend Albert Joris failed to interest investors in the area, even though local geology suggested significant commercial diamond potential. Initial exploration recovered some beautiful stones from two areas of just over 100 hectares. Famous worldwide for his six decades of diamond expertise, Joris was called in by explorers to appraise their find.

"These diamonds impressed me greatly; they rank among the most beautiful I have ever seen, with



Audrey Hepburn wore the Tiffany Diamond to publicize *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Last year the diamond, weighing 128.54 carats, was shown around the world in a new setting. SOURCE: [HTTP://SCHULZDIAMONDS.COM](http://SCHULZDIAMONDS.COM)

some really bright fancy colours among them," he told journalists at the time, including this writer.

Yet Joris's authoritative comments were largely ignored.

Today, the Ellendale mine is the largest known world source of yellow diamonds, the finest and most radiant known in the trade as "fancies". It also produces many high-quality white diamonds, with details commercially confidential. Tiffany pay more than \$5000 a carat for the golden stones, adding value with their distinctive cuts and unique designs.

Coloured diamonds are valuable because they are rare. But comparing their worth with white diamonds is tricky, since size, quality and cut determine value.

The finest fancy golden gems glow with the beauty of a great cat's eye, luminous and mysterious. Tiffany & Co call them "sun diamonds". They come in all the colours of sunlight, from bright canary yellow to deepest orange, rarest of all.

GOLDEN DIAMONDS have made Tiffany world renowned for over a century. One of the biggest ever discovered is still proudly displayed in their Fifth Avenue store: the enormous yellow-orange gem worn by Audrey Hepburn to promote her classic movie *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

This dazzling diamond, weighing 287.42 carats when it was unearthed in South Africa in 1877, was cut down to just under 128.54 carats to optimize its brilliance.

(Five carats weighs one gram.) Charles Louis Tiffany, the founder of the legendary store, bought the diamond for an unknown sum; it is literally priceless, because the company he founded says its signature stone will never be sold.

Their rarity has always made them a costly luxury, reserved for royalty and celebrities such as Mae West and Marilyn Monroe, both of whom wore canary-coloured gems. Now they are worn by Jennifer Lopez and a host of other rich entertainers, male and female. Paris Hilton wore a 21-carat yellow diamond during her brief engagement to a Greek shipping heir.

The more intense the colour, the higher the value of golden diamonds. They are high fashion jewellery today, with a burgeoning market in Asia. The Chinese love the yellow gems, believing the sunny colours especially auspicious.

An anonymous buyer paid US\$31 million for a great "vivid orange" diamond at an exclusive Geneva auction last year. This impressive 14.82-carat gem came from South Africa. The industry hopes there could be more like it hidden in West Australia's Kimberley diamond province.

"Golden diamonds radiate life and happiness. My

golden collection is vibrant and lovely," said Perth-based diamond jeweller Craig Rosendorff, who travels the world to select all the gems sold in his chain of upmarket stores, where they make and design their own jewellery.

After fifty years in the trade, he knows his diamonds. "A diamond has to have life, it has to talk to you," Rosendorff said. "I love whites, but I love yellow diamonds too. They are really big overseas now, and we're now selling a lot as well as traditional whites. Our business is booming today."

Because Tiffany takes all the yellow diamonds Ellendale produces, now around half the known world output, Australian jewellers must buy from other sources on the world market.

The Ellendale diamonds reminded Australia's diamond pioneer expert Joris of the diamonds Canadian geologist John Williamson found in Tanzania. Williamson's mine made him one of the world's richest men in the 1950s. It produced spectacular diamonds of all colours, including the 23.6-carat pink stone he gave the Queen as a wedding gift.

The Ashton joint venture that discovered the Ellendale diamonds was an alliance of Western Australia's Northern Mining and CRA, now Rio Tinto. By 1977, the explorers had defined 30 potentially diamond-bearing pipes but many diamond geologists believe they were never fully explored. This is Kimberley Diamonds' great hope for the future. Alexander has announced plans for an aggressive exploration program.

The late Joris's many friends in the diamond business wish he had lived to see his Ellendale predictions come true.

Jan Mayman



The "vivid orange" diamond that sold for US\$31 million. WWW.CHRISTIES.COM





Srihari Mohan from Glen Waverley Primary School was Spellmasters 2013 Junior Champion. SOURCE: SUPPLIED

Difficult as ABC

Competitive spelling is one way to bring out the best in our kids—and help them learn at the same time.

SPELLING BEES, where students demonstrate their ability to spell difficult words, are not yet in the same league in Australia as they are in the US. This is something Lili Hampel, a former teacher who lives in Melbourne and who is a self-proclaimed lover of words and all things English language, is hoping to change. Hampel is coordinator of the Victorian initiative Spellmasters which, she concedes, has a way to go before it can hope to rival its American counterpart. But she is determined to help it along as much as possible.

The Scripps National Spelling Bee is as interwoven into American society as the Big Mac. Every year since 1925 one child is catapulted into celebrity

status, taking home a gigantic trophy and financial reward for his or her hard work.

Spelling bees are big business in America and in recent years the national competition has recorded an increased rate of participation. The appeal of the spelling competition has become so large that the “Nationals” event is broadcast live on television by ESPN.

Last year’s event saw thirteen-year-old Arvind Mahankali rise to fame, stealing the show with the correct spelling of German word *knaidel*. Mahankali was one of the estimated millions of students who represented their schools or cities in spelling bees that year, and one of 281 registered participants in the 86th Scripps National Spelling Bee.

Obviously, there are many advantages in being crowned master of spelling in the US. Apart from being able to confidently declare one can spell words such as *logorrhea* (meaning: wordiness) or *succedaneum* (substitute) and know the definition, the competition propels winners into the spotlight,

where they are respected for achieving academic greatness.

On the surface, large spelling competitions in the US appear to be a celebration of intelligence, personal triumph and determination. However, it is worth acknowledging their darker side. Overbearing parents, an obsession to become number one, relentless training and studying, isolation from one's peers and being labelled a "geek" or "nerd" are some of the struggles that past winners and members of the current spelling elite have publicly acknowledged.

In 2002, the world was exposed to the trials and tribulations of competitive spellers through the Academy Award-nominated documentary *Spellbound*. The powerful film captures the story of eight young children trying to reach the top. Audiences watched the subjects overcome some form of hardship, be it poverty, non-English-speaking backgrounds or the stigma associated with being a high academic achiever instead of a sports star.

The film enlightened and horrified audiences, who saw exactly what hard work, dedication and a willingness to embrace learning can achieve—and the brutal nature of the competition.

But it had an unexpected bounty in Australia.

[Spellmasters](#) was born from the first screening of *Spellbound* at the Melbourne Film Festival. When the film finished, Hampel recalled a standing ovation in the packed-out theatre. It was then the former English teacher decided that she wanted to create something similar for Australian children. Hampel could see no reason why there should not be a spelling bee in Victoria.

NOW IN ITS ninth year, *Spellmasters* has offered an opportunity for Victorian children to improve their understanding of the English language, their spelling techniques, and their comprehension and communication skills through regular spelling competitions. It is one way for children who might not be successful in other fields such as sport or art to be recognized.

From its conception, membership has increased to the point where each monthly competition is now booked out in advance. Children from NSW have been



Anand Bharadwaj from Trinity College was *Spellmasters* 2013 Senior Champion. SOURCE: SUPPLIED

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***Spellbound* enlightened and horrified audiences, who saw exactly what hard work, dedication and a willingness to embrace learning can achieve.**

known to attend as there is no state equivalent yet.

Originally with grandiose ideas of having something on a similar scale to the Scripps competition Hampel realized that for children to get the most out of spelling, she had to stick to basics and first instill a love of words and an overall interest in literacy.

The reality was, once the initiative had begun, she soon concluded there was no way Australian children were at the same level as those competing at Scripps. Hampel says that while the competitors have been fantastic, she is still yet to encounter a student



Former English teacher Lili Hampel was inspired by *Spellbound*. SOURCE: SUPPLIED

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For children to get the most out of spelling, she had to stick to basics and first instill a love of words and an overall interest in literacy.

with the capabilities necessary to attend the prestigious competition.

At the same time Hampel has also observed that the junior competitors are much better spellers.

“In primary schools children learn spelling and the basics, such as patterns, but by the time they get to a senior level, they forget,” she told *ASR*.

“I see the juniors that I work with getting better and better—they are really growing, but it’s just about always going back to the basics.”

Hampel believes that anyone can be a great speller if they are taught the fundamentals such as patterns, prefixes, the general spelling rules and even the word’s origin.

“Spelling should not be just a mundane thing that you have to do,” she said. “And it should not be

rote-learning either. There are definitely gaps in the education system,” she said.

As Australia comes to terms with a decline in its literacy, science and numeracy achievements compared to other OECD countries, the pressure is on to improve student outcomes. The issue of a perceived decline in the quality of Australian education has become a focus for politicians. Federal education minister Christopher Pyne essentially suggests a return to more traditional teaching methods and implementing a new “orthodox” curriculum.

This issue of reforming the national curriculum has gained traction, spurred on by substandard results in the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) release of the [2012 Programme for International Student Assessment](#) (PISA) national report in December 2013. The report identified worrying figures about the literacy, numeracy and scientific achievement of Australian children. While it found students assessed were still performing above the international average, there was a significant decline: participating Australian students were found to be the equivalent of three school years behind the average student in Shanghai, China.

These statistics followed equally disappointing results from the previous year where it was reported in the [TIMSS & PIRLS 2011 national reports](#) that Australian children were not meeting benchmarks and faced substantial literacy problems.

Hampel hopes *Spellmaster* will become a national competition, but there are problems with the model as well as interest.

“We try to make *Spellmaster* a friendly competition. It is brutal if you make a mistake but we try to be positive, we applaud and talk about the word after,” she told *ASR*.

“The thing is *Spellmaster* is literally spellbinding—everyone in the audience is behind the children. It is both nail-biting and agonizing. At the end of the day it is all just part of the spelling bee drama.”

Jade Ginnane



Nothing Ventured

Now that there is local “angel” money to encourage tech start-ups, maybe the next Facebook or Twitter will be developed in Australia

AUSTRALIA SPENDS \$4 per capita on venture capital and \$7 per capita on the Melbourne Cup, according to a 2012 Spike Innovation report. We are not a country known for being at the pointy end of innovation.

The start-up story we all know is quintessentially American. It begins in a Silicon Valley garage and ends, after a string of near-fatal but entertaining setbacks, in a Wall Street IPO. The burst of the dot-com bubble of the late 1990s has been replaced in our collective memory with the success of companies such as Facebook, Twitter and others whose stockmarket debuts attracted eye-watering valuations.

The US is still a clear leader in technology but the technology venture capital industry in Australia is making some great strides forward. The number of technology start-ups in Australia is growing. [Square Peg Capital](#), a company based in Melbourne’s South Yarra that invests in online and technology ventures, now hears from around 150 of them each month.

In the US, teams of entrepreneurs and engineers—based mainly around San Francisco and Silicon Valley, but increasingly also in New York, Los Angeles and Boulder—are building software that will disrupt industries from ecommerce to biotechnology.

To build such businesses entrepreneurs need capital and support. In the US these have tended to come neatly packaged in the form of start-up incubators and accelerators. These seek to mentor start-up founders “to greatness” (to use the industry jargon), alongside a range of investors from angels—the early-stage investors that help companies prove their concept—to venture capital and private equity firms that help companies grow.

Those involved in the start-up world are quick to point out that support can be even more important than capital; involving the right people such as

skilled and experienced angel investors early in the life of a business can help direct attention and capital where it is most needed to give the company the best chance of success.

And this is increasingly happening in Australia.

“2013 was a pivotal year for technology investing in Australia,” says Gavin Appel, a partner at Square Peg. “Until 2013, technology investing by Australian venture-capital firms was under the radar.”

“Around that time,” he told ASR, “a number of venture firms popped up to meet the needs of entrepreneurs wanting to grow global technology businesses based in Australia.”

These firms include Tank Stream Ventures, Scale Investors and Blackbird Ventures. They are backing businesses such as [Canva.com](#), an innovative online-design platform based in Sydney’s Surry Hills. The company hopes to enable people to “create their own designs without spending thousands of dollars on frustrating desktop software that takes years to learn”, according to their CEO, Melanie Perkins.

Sydney Angels, Melbourne Angels and other networks of angel investors are springing up to meet demand for early-stage funding and investors looking to diversify into technology companies.

“2013 was a pivotal year for technology investing in Australia.”

Gavin Appel, Square Peg Capital

This can partly be attributed to a lower barrier to entry than ever before. The cost of establishing a technology business has reduced rapidly over the last decade, in part because of the “lean” methodology favoured by many start-up entrepreneurs: minimizing waste by testing new features and services with customers even while under development. In 2014, initial start-up capital of between \$50,000 and \$1,000,000 is often sufficient to get technology companies to a point where they can prove the elusive “traction” that venture capital firms look for in viable businesses.

Venture capital firms claim to offer more than just



In December Gavin Appel spoke in Melbourne at Startup Grind, a global startup community designed to educate, inspire, and connect entrepreneurs, backed by Google for Entrepreneurs.

[Watch the video here.](#)

money. In many cases their partners are themselves entrepreneurs who have experience building and growing businesses. One of Square Peg Capital's partners is Paul Bassat, co-founder of [SEEK.com](#), the world's largest employment business and now worth more than \$4 billion. Like many of its more established counterparts in the US, it has influential backers in the form of James Packer and members of the Liberman family. The value of a venture capital firm should be that it provides strategic guidance and operational expertise and useful introductions to potential partners and customers.

Richard Celm, the Manager of [Accelerator](#), an innovation centre in London, says it's remarkable how many Australian entrepreneurs are building great businesses away from Australia's shores. Over 100 Australian entrepreneurs turned out last June for a presentation attended by Australia's Governor General Quentin Bryce at an event in Tech City, a start-up hub developing around the Old Street Roundabout in London's Shoreditch. According to Celm, a central consideration for most of these entrepreneurs when deciding where to locate their start-ups is funding, and historically these opportunities have been far better overseas.

"The development of a start-up ecosystem is essential—not just making it easier for people with money to invest in start-ups and incentives like tax breaks to do so, which are still missing in Australia. Start-ups also need infrastructure like co-working spaces where entrepreneurs naturally

bounce ideas off each other, lectures and meet-ups and a community that values and embraces entrepreneurship. Providing enterprise education at schools and universities and promoting entrepreneurship as a viable career choice is also a big part of it. These few changes could make all the difference to start-ups in Australia."

While we are still at the early stages of a real start-up community, even in Sydney and Melbourne, there is reason for Australian entrepreneurs to be optimistic. Telstra recently launched a start-up incubator in Sydney offering young companies \$40,000 in funding. [Commercialisation Australia](#), an Australian government initiative that aims to accelerate the business-building process for Australian companies and entrepreneurs, is offering funding grants to early-stage businesses as well as larger grants up to \$2 million for businesses looking to take new products and services to market.

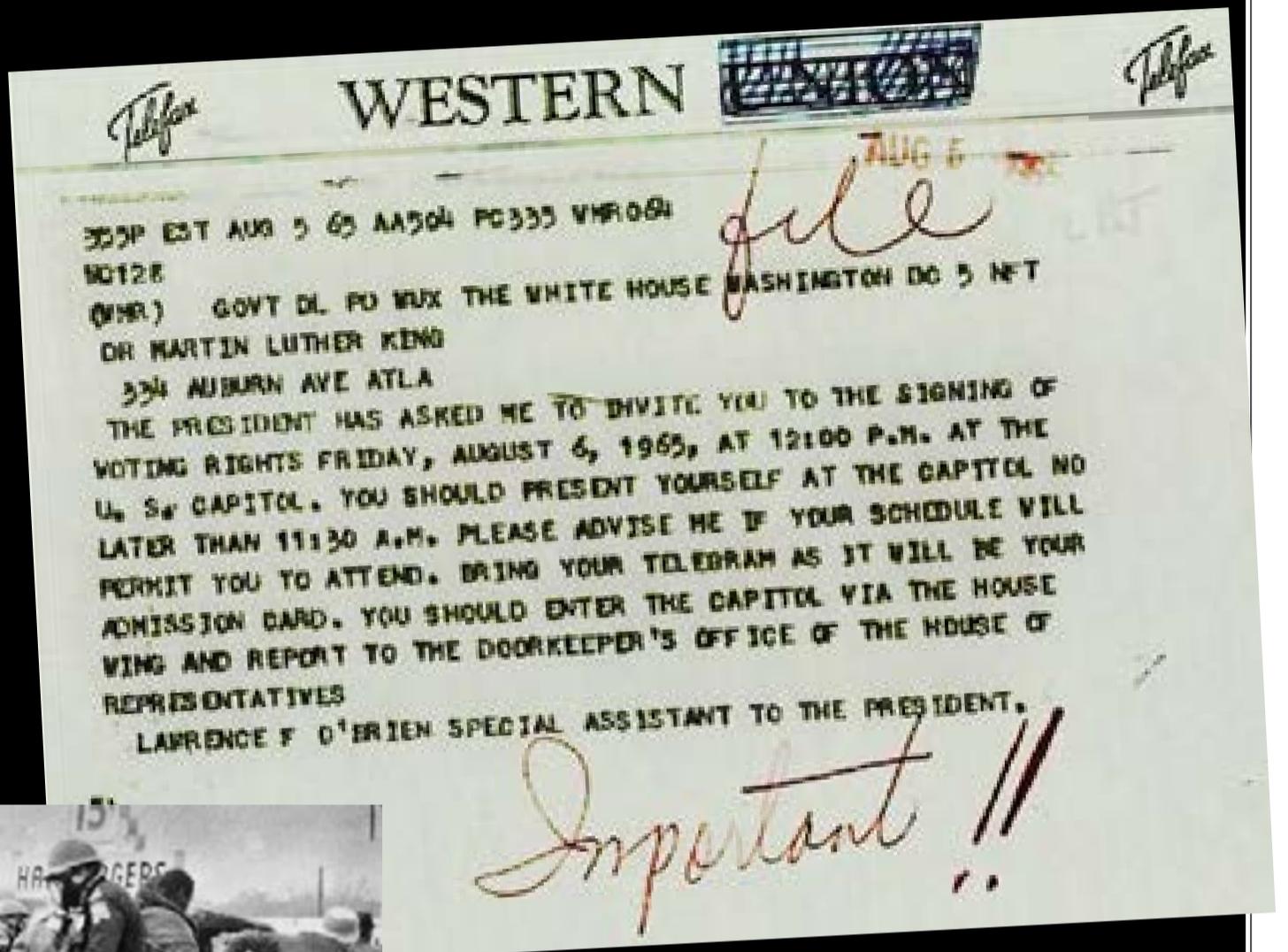
Young Australian entrepreneurs are noticing the changes. "For the first time it feels like there really is a tech venture capital industry in Australia," says Ethem Comlekcioglu, co-founder of [Fabri.qa](#), an online marketplace for 3D printing. "There are clear avenues to funding now that are viable and competitive with the United States. That can only be a good thing for Australian entrepreneurs and businesses."

Mark Bakacs



Images of civil rights marchers in Selma being beaten by Alabama police (below) horrified many Americans, and prompted President Lyndon B. Johnson to propose Voting Rights legislation.

SOURCE: WWW.BLACKPAST.ORG



I said I would and I did

As Robert Caro reports in *The Passage of Power*, the fourth of his powerful biographical series about Lyndon Baines Johnson, the only time Martin Luther King Jr.'s staff ever saw him cry was not on 7 March 1965 when a group of marchers, many of them children, were set upon by state troopers wielding billy clubs, tear-gas and bullwhips in Selma, Alabama. No, the tears came a week later on 15 March 1965. That was when Johnson, responding to the violence in Selma over voter registration and the rabid refusal of the southern states to conform to the 1964 *Civil Rights Act*, promised that Voting Rights legislation would be sent to Congress immediately and enacted in August. King cried when he heard Johnson use the civil rights activists' refrain, "We shall overcome", in his speech.



Scorecard

The Modern Spice Route

Cross-border online shopping: what it's worth

In six key markets—the US, the UK, Germany, Australia, China (ex-HK) and Brazil—cross-border online shopping was worth US\$105 billion in 2013. This is projected to increase nearly 200 per cent to US\$307 billion by 2018.

\$105bn

\$307bn

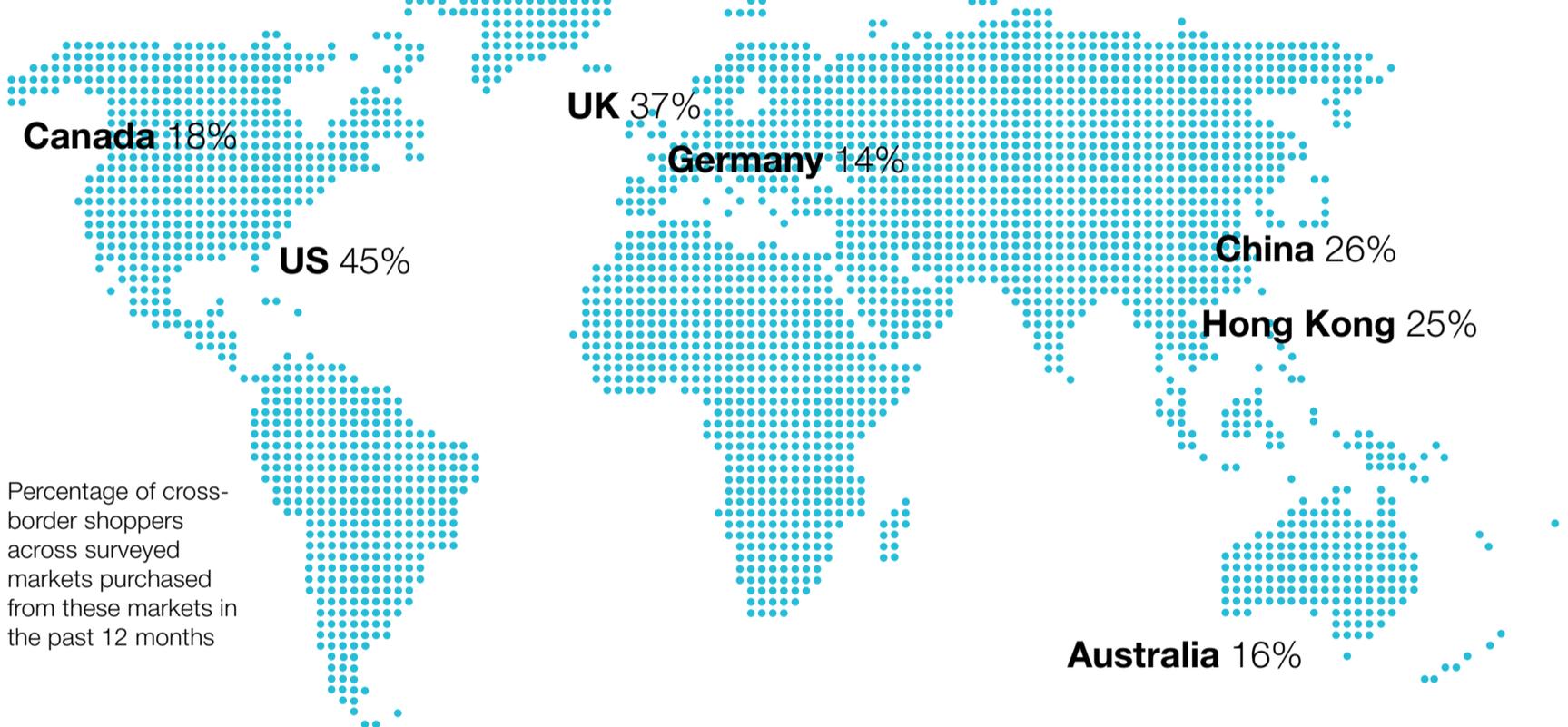
Who's buying?

Today 94 million consumers regularly buy from overseas websites. By 2018, it is expected to rise to 130 million cross-border online shoppers.

94m

130m

Most popular overseas online shopping destinations



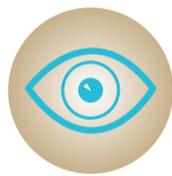
What's selling

Top purchase categories for cross-border shoppers across these six markets in 2012–13 (in US\$)



\$12.5bn

clothes, shoes and accessories



\$7.6bn

health and beauty products



\$6.0bn

personal electronics



\$6.0bn

computer hardware



\$5.8bn

jewellery, gems and watches

What Australians are buying

Top purchase categories in 2012–13 (in AU\$)

Clothes, shoes and accessories

\$890,000

Books

\$527,000

Airline tickets

\$467,000

Health and beauty products

\$368,000

Personal electronics

\$302,000

SOURCE: PAYPAL, WITH RESEARCH CARRIED OUT BY NIELSEN

TIM FLANNERY

*In conversation with
Anne Summers*

WITH AUDIENCE Q&A



**IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT OUR CLIMATE,
YOU WILL NOT WANT TO MISS THIS.**



In his first major public appearance since the government abolished the Climate Commission, Tim Flannery will join me in a wide-ranging and frank conversation about the climate and other pressing issues.

One of the first acts of the newly elected Abbott government last September was to axe the Climate Commission, the body appointed by the Gillard government to provide objective information about climate change, and sack Dr Tim Flannery, its Chief Commissioner. Tim responded by appealing to the public to support a new body, the Climate Council. In just one week, 15,000 people signed on as founding friends and donated \$1.3 million, in what is the largest and most successful crowd-sourced fundraiser in Australian history.

Best known for his ability to explain science and, especially, climate change in everyday language, Tim's impressive résumé also includes writing (and talking) about history, geology and—his first love—

mammals. His hugely bestselling book *The Weather Makers* changed the conversation about climate change in Australia.

Please join me for the second of my series of Conversations with prominent individuals (the first was with former Prime Minister Julia Gillard last year) with Tim Flannery, one of Australia's most original thinkers.

We will cover a lot of ground, including the recent unprecedented heatwaves in southern Australia and his views on whether it is too late to save our planet. Tim will then answer questions from the audience.

It is bound to be an enthralling and informative evening.

ANNE SUMMERS

EDITOR & PUBLISHER, ANNE SUMMERS REPORTS

Danie Mellor



DANIE MELLOR, *THE SANCTUARY (SAVAGE LEGENDS OF LIFE IN THE RAINFOREST)* 2013
MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER 80.0 x 153.0 cm

THE WORK I MAKE is influenced and informed by a visual narrative that comes from recognizing that the play of history takes place in and on the landscape. People share history—some of it tragic, some of it challenging, some of it inspirational, and all of it all together, always.

I live and work in the Southern Highlands of NSW with my wife Joanne, and we have found since moving here that the surroundings provide the peace needed for contemplative and intensively focused pieces—it's an all-consuming approach.

There is a continual dialogue in my work between the seen and unseen, the material and immaterial

through an obsessive focus on detail and the minutiae of nature. I am fortunate as an artist that my work is well received by collectors, and shown in institutions in Australia and internationally such as at the Royal Academy and the National Gallery of Canada, which has provided a number of continuing opportunities to show my work here and abroad. This support and often-substantial patronage has enabled me to develop a visual language and approach that embraces different cultural perspectives, and to reflect on the complexity of cultural narratives that point to a deeper experience of the environment around us.



DANIE MELLOR, *BAYI GIJIYA (AN OTHER SAVAGESPIRITFANTASY)* 2013
MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER, 255.0 x 153.0 cm



DANIE MELLOR, *A SUPERNATURAL LANDSCAPE* 2013
MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER 206.0 x 153.0 cm



DANIE MELLOR, *SMOOTHING THE PILLOW*
2008 RECLAIMED STEEL, 74.0 x 37.0 x 6.5 cm

“

The rainforest shield or Balan Bigin (Jirrbal/Mamu dialect) is considered a feminine object (as distinct from a “female” one—the “quality” of a thing, not necessarily gender related). “Balan” is a feminine linguistic marker; “Bigin” is the language word for shield. I always found that interesting, as shields are objects made, painted and used only by men.

The shields I made ... related in ways to the dresses the women would wear in family photographs. One of my indigenous grans was a very dedicated *carte de visiteur*, so we have quite a collection of family portraits dating from early on in the twentieth century. The conceptual connection there is that my indigenous heritage is matrilineal, and incorporating that dialogue of identity into objects that were considered as feminine through language is where their power as significant objects is located. Shields are traditionally painted on their visible surface and used to show kinship connection, totem, country and language group. My shields respond with an obviously “western” material or surface, suggesting a transformed or changing identity—it is an indigenous object made with a postcolonial material. —*Danie*

”

It's time to renew your donation



We gratefully acknowledge your donations during 2013. All up, you gave us almost \$45,000. This helped us to pay the writers, artists, photographers and others who make *ASR* such a satisfying experience for both sides of the brain. Can we ask you to donate again?

If you can, please do. We offer two options:

1. A **one-off donation** of whatever you can afford.

We suggest \$100 if your budget allows it, but we are grateful for any amount. Every donation is important and every dollar helps keep us going.

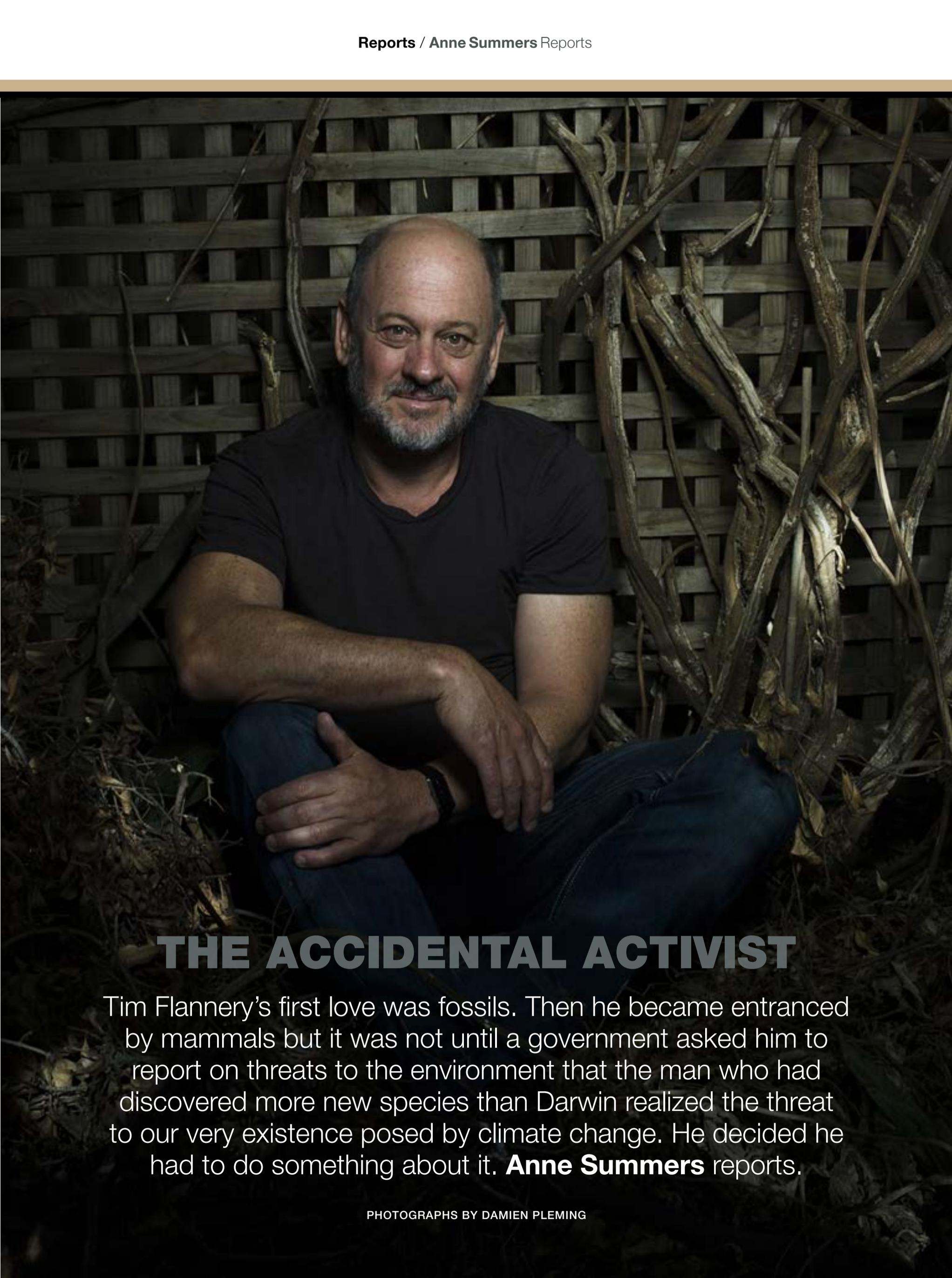
You can use [PayPal](#) (you don't need an account, just a credit card) or you can deposit directly into our bank account: Anne Summers Reports BSB 082991 Account Number 190360954 (Note: this is a UBank online account only. We regret you cannot make deposits via NAB branches)

2. A **regular monthly payment** of, say, \$20. You can easily do this via PayPal.

Log on to your account, then go to Profile, My Money and My Pre-approved Payments to create a recurring payment. This gives us the security of a regular cashflow, which means we can face the future with a bit more certainty.

Whatever you can afford, we will most gratefully accept. And if you are short of money at the moment, we understand and are glad of your company anyway.

WITHOUT YOU, THERE'D BE NO US.



THE ACCIDENTAL ACTIVIST

Tim Flannery's first love was fossils. Then he became entranced by mammals but it was not until a government asked him to report on threats to the environment that the man who had discovered more new species than Darwin realized the threat to our very existence posed by climate change. He decided he had to do something about it. **Anne Summers** reports.

TIM FLANNERY WAS ALWAYS GOING to be a teacher. It's just that he expected to teach English rather than be the person who would make complicated science comprehensible to laypeople.

Back in 1975 when he began his degree in Old Humanities he had never heard of climate change. Nor had he any inkling that Sir David Attenborough, arguably the world's greatest naturalist, would one day describe him as being "in the league of the all-time great explorers".

Yet something in Flannery's brain had already compelled him to try to understand how the natural world works and, as a schoolboy, to begin foraging on Melbourne's beaches.

"This kid kept coming in with fossils that he'd want to compare with something we had in the collection," Dr Tom Rich, the senior curator of vertebrate palaeontology and palaeobotany at Museum Victoria, told me. This was in 1974. Even before he was out of his teens, Flannery "had an incredible knowledge of natural history", Rich recalled. "I had a PhD and he knew more than I'd ever know."

The older man took a shine to the eighteen-year-old. "We just clicked," he said. The kid and the curator began a partnership, hunting for dinosaurs.

Today Flannery describes Rich as a "mentor" who "set me on a course that showed I didn't have to be a teacher". When he finished school at St Bede's Christian Brothers College in Mentone, Flannery signed up at La Trobe University for an arts degree; he did not have the maths required for science. After he graduated in 1977, Rich and his wife, Patricia Vickers-Rich, also a renowned palaeontologist, made it their business to get Flannery out of his teacher's bond and arranged for him to do a Masters in geology at Monash.

"That gave him his science," said Rich.

In 1978 Flannery and his cousin John Long, now also a palaeontologist, travelled to Eagles Nest, a sandstone sea stack near Inverloch in Victoria where Australia's first dinosaur fossil was discovered in 1903. Within five minutes of arriving, Long told [Australian Geographic](#) magazine in 2010, they'd

found a rock that had a dinosaur bone running through it. They subsequently found another rock which, the magazine reported, "was the catalyst for the sustained hunt for dinosaurs in Victoria that continues today".

Flannery then enrolled at the University of New South Wales to do a PhD in Zoology and began what his publisher, Michael Heyward, who runs Text Publishing, refers to as his "Joseph Conrad period". He made fifteen field trips to the most remote imaginable parts of Papua New Guinea and, later, Irian Jaya. During these visits, Flannery discovered 29 new kangaroo species, including two new species of the very rare tree-kangaroo, sixteen new Melanesian species and many subspecies, and was able to describe a number of megafaunal species that were previously unknown.

Tim Flannery thus acquired the qualification that in 1984 saw him appointed as principal research scientist in mammalogy at the Australian Museum in Sydney, a job he would hold for fifteen years.

He still found time for side trips back to his primary passion: fossils. In 1985, Flannery was one of the four men who discovered the first Cretaceous mammal fossils ever found in this country, at Lightning Ridge in New South Wales. That discovery, which made the cover of *Nature*, [pushed Australia's the mammal fossil record](#) back 80 million years. The country was a lot older than we'd ever imagined.

In 1990 he published *The Mammals of New Guinea*, still the only guide to the country's mammal fauna. This extraordinary research feat led the British explorer and writer Redmond O'Hanlon to describe Flannery as "one of the world's great zoologists ... who's probably discovered more new species than Darwin".

It was Flannery's reputation with rocks and mammals, together with his growing fame as a writer—in 1998 he had published *Throwim Way Leg*, a rollicking read about the tribespeople and the ecosystem of the places he'd visited in PNG—that led in 1999 to him being appointed Director of the South Australian Museum.

Unlike the other boys at his school, whose middle names would most likely have been John or Francis

or Kevin, Flannery's is Fridtjof. His mother is from Norwegian stock, and somewhere back in the line was Fridtjof Nansen, the celebrated polar explorer and humanitarian who helped resettle millions of refugees after World War I, and who was also an eminent zoologist. Flannery, described in the late 1990s by his publisher as "a writer, scientist and explorer", was about to become, if anything, more famous than his illustrious namesake.

Within a decade, you needed to add to Flannery's résumé Chair of Australian Studies at Harvard University in the Department of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology; and, among the many ways in which he became a defender of the earth's ecosystem, co-founder and chair of the Copenhagen Climate Council, a body comprising global business leaders and scientists that achieved far more in the 2009 international meeting than the world's political leaders were able to manage.

In his own country, Flannery was Australian of the Year in 2007 and sat on various bodies advising on climate, culminating in February 2011 with his appointment as Chief Commissioner of the Gillard government's Climate Commission.

With the credentials came celebrity, and its natural companion, controversy. Today Tim Flannery is well known, widely admired and, almost in equal measure, despised and pilloried by those who choose to ignore that our planet is in peril.

THE VERY FIRST ACT OF THE WHITLAM government in December 1972 was to end conscription. The Abbott government's was to abolish the Climate Commission.

"We knew it was coming," says Professor Will Steffen, an eminent climate scientist and one of the six commissioners who lost his job on 19 September last year, "but we were a bit surprised by how quickly it happened—the day after they were sworn in."

The Climate Commission had been set up to "provide an authoritative, independent source of information for all Australians", as climate change minister, Greg Combet, put it when announcing the Commission on 10 February 2011. The Commission would also have an outreach role, "to build greater



Today Tim Flannery is well known, widely admired and, almost in equal measure, despised and pilloried by those who choose to ignore that our planet is in peril.

understanding and consensus about reducing Australia's carbon pollution".

Two weeks later, on 25 February, Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced a plan to put a price on carbon, reversing a pre-election promise, and unwittingly unleashing a torrent of vituperation. On 23 March, at an anti-carbon tax rally outside Parliament House in Canberra, anti-Gillard hatred was first revealed with signs that said "Ditch the Witch" and "Bob Brown's bitch".

The "carbon tax" became a crucible for the irrationality, fear and hatred that the discussion about climate change generates in this country and in the United States although not, Steffen told me, in Britain or Europe, where people tend to be much more focussed on addressing the problem rather than denying its existence.

The Commission's public education activities collided with the frenzy of vitriol whipped up by opponents of the carbon tax and the normally

equable and easy-going Chief Commissioner Tim Flannery was thrust into the firing line.

For the next year, Flannery as much as Gillard became a magnet for those who opposed the tax. He endured abuse and even threats as he travelled around the country trying to explain why we needed to reduce our carbon emissions. It wasn't until July 2012, after the carbon price came into effect and the world did not end, that the sound and the fury abated somewhat.

Until then, Flannery had a very rough time.

"I've seen him a little bit fearful," says Steffen, referring to 15 May 2012 when, in order to get into the Parramatta RSL in Sydney's west for a public education forum, they had to push through a wall of people yelling "death to Flannery".

"They were saying, 'Come over here, cunt, we're going to fucking kill you'," recalled Flannery. "I had to get escorted out with a security contingent."

That first year of the Commission was, Flannery tells me, "a terrible time for me". He was under vicious attack from the sceptics, he needed constant police protection, his marriage fell apart.

So when the Abbott government made getting rid of the Commission one of its top priorities, Flannery was understandably upset. Not so much that he was out of job, but that precious knowledge, which was used extensively as a resource by the media as much as by the general public, had been obliterated.

On 19 September 2013, as part of abolishing the Commission, the Abbott government took down its website. "We had taken two and half years building it, and it was purely factual," Flannery told me. "That was it for me."

I WAS QUITE STARTLED WHEN I MET TIM Flannery for the first time in mid-January at the house he shares in Melbourne with the memoirist [Kate Holden](#) and their six-month-old baby. I guess I had been expecting an archetype, a kind of thinking person's Steve Irwin, the Flannery from *Two Men in a Tinnie*. He'd be wearing a khaki shirt, if not an Akubra. Instead, I barely recognized the urbanite in black T-shirt and jeans who greeted

me at his front gate.

We think we know Tim Flannery because for years we have been watching him on television. We have seen him talking about mammals, explaining climate change. We've watched him paddle down a river in a "tinnie" with his good friend John Doyle, the writer and the "Roy" of the iconoclastic sporting commentators Roy & HG. The two have known each other since the early 1990s when Doyle, who hosted an ABC afternoon radio show, gave a regular spot to the mammal expert from the local museum.

Two Men in a Tinnie, a four-part series where Flannery and Doyle travelled the drought-stricken Murray–Darling River system, and its follow-up series, *Two in the Top End* and *Two on the Great Divide*, have attracted audiences of around 800,000 per episode. A new series where the two travel around China will go to air soon.

But while Flannery's public face is familiar, less is known about the man himself. There were no lengthy media profiles, for instance, as I discovered when I began researching this article.

"I don't like talking about my private life," says Flannery. "I believe that you should be known for your ideas and not what you are personally."

Ask Flannery what he is and he tells you he's "an ecological historian" in the mould of Jared Diamond, someone who takes "a big picture view of evolutionary processes and ecological processes and tries to make sense of them at some larger global level".

"Palaeontology and history are just separated by time frames," he tells me as he explains the worldview that ties together everything he does. He attempted to set it all out in *Here on Earth*, his 2010 book subtitled "A Twin Biography of the Planet and the Human Race" which, he tells me, "is the framework that I look at the world through".

It asks the fundamental question—what is sustainability? Not how we achieve it, "but what it is". What is that state of equilibrium—Flannery uses the word "love"—that human beings must achieve with our planet if we are to have a future?

Ask Flannery who he is and the answer is rather more complicated. He is no longer a Catholic. "I

can't believe in an old man in the sky but neither can I call myself an atheist," he says. "I think, who knows? My son believes the universe is the result of a computer program from some previous civilizations, and that's not as silly as it sounds; he's got a PhD in astrobiology."

Perhaps surprisingly, Flannery is "an individualist" who "considers his positions carefully", and often ends up out of step with the conventional wisdom of the broader environmental movement. Thus he joined his hero James Lovelock (who made famous the concept of Gaia to describe the earth) in supporting nuclear power, a position he has modified somewhat since, on economic grounds.

He disagrees with the efforts of *Sea Shepherd* in the Southern Ocean to save the Minke whale, which he says is not an endangered species.

"There we are, fixated on the Southern Ocean, and no one is giving a thought for the Baiji, the white-fin dolphin in the Yangtze River, which is the only member of the whale family to go extinct as a result of human interference," he says. "That was in 2002."

Or Flannery would be "regulating the krill take in the Antarctic Ocean, krill being the foundation of the entire ecosystem of the Southern Ocean".

Nor is he a left-winger.

He is not just unaligned, "I'm a Benthamite," he says with conviction.

Jeremy Bentham was the eighteenth-century English philosopher, lawyer and social reformer whose ideas laid the foundations for much modern thought and practice. He is regarded as the father of international law (he coined the word "international") who established the legal foundations for the League of Nations and, later, the United Nations. He laid down principles of equality of the sexes, of animal rights, decried discrimination against homosexuals, invented the word "multicultural" and, his signature achievement, he came up with utilitarianism, an ethical philosophy that holds that people live as to maximize happiness and avoid suffering.

He developed the "felicific calculus", a method



"He's one of the few people — apart from me — who has read the complete diaries of Samuel Pepys."

John Doyle

to determine whether an action was right; that is, would its outcome increase happiness. Bentham's views are reflected in the Canadian and United States Constitutions ("the pursuit of happiness") while his practical suggestions for prison reform was the panopticon, a "model prison" building that optimistically deployed architecture to the cause of criminal redemption, an example of which can be seen at Port Arthur in Tasmania.

You can see how a supposedly scientific approach to dealing with social problems would appeal to Flannery. At the same time, he seeks solace in literature and music—of the past.

"He's one of the few people—apart from me—who has read the complete diaries of Samuel Pepys," John Doyle tells me. (Pepys kept his famous diary daily from 1 January 1660 until 1669 and the diaries are regarded as an important source for the history of Restoration England.)

When we met, Flannery told me he was reading a history of the Popes. His favourite composer is

Henry Purcell, who lived at the same time as Pepys.

Flannery is that rare scientist who excels across a number of disciplines. He can't decide which he loves most: plants, rocks or animals. But rocks are definitely up there. His two adult children are both geologists, and "looking at rocks" is a hobby for him which "opens up a whole imaginative universe". Not to mention the clues they provide to our past—and our future.

FLANNERY TOLD ANDREW DENTON IN an *Enough Rope* television interview in 2008 that he can't even look at a fossil "without seeing evidence of past climate". And yet he came to climate change, and to activism, by accident. For a guy whose natural habitat is in the field or the museum, being thrust into the frontlines of the climate wars has been life-changing.

And very, very tough. It is not a fight he wanted to have but it was one he felt he could not walk away from, once he had seen the evidence.

"What changed me," Flannery told me, "was Mike Rann, who was premier of South Australia, asking me to chair two committees to advise the state government on environmental threats and on investments in science."

He talked to scientific colleagues for their views on the threats. "I talked to geneticists about genetically modified organisms and they said, well, we don't think the issue is as big as the public generally seems to think it is.

"But when I talked to the climate scientists they were just tearing their hair out, saying no one seems to take this as a serious threat and the public have grossly underestimated it.

"So at that point [which was 2001], I thought that if I, as a scientist, a trained scientist, hadn't understood the gravity of the issue, then what's the chance of somebody in the street doing it? So I wrote that book."

That book, published in 2005, was *The Weather Makers*. It sold around 140,000 copies in Australia, and has been translated into 30 languages and has sold almost half a million copies.

"It was a book that changed the conversation,"



Jeremy Bentham built a philosophy around the pursuit of happiness. SOURCE: [HTTP://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/JEREMY_BENTHAM](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremy_Bentham)

says Heyward. "It was a book by a highly acclaimed scientist that was deeply researched and clearly explained."

It was a book whose timing was perfect. It was a time of drought and water restrictions.

In 2005, according to a Lowy Institute Poll, 68 per cent of Australians said climate change was the second-highest worry for them, after unfriendly countries acquiring nuclear weapons.

The next year, the former US Vice President Al Gore came out with his documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. And a year later, Kevin Rudd made ratifying the Kyoto Protocol one of the first acts of his new government.

Once the drought broke in Australia, however, the consensus fractured, the urgency went out of the issue and the politics of climate change started to take on the toxicity that characterizes them today.

The Weather Makers became the book that catapulted Flannery into the cross-hairs of the

carbon industry and its many boosters.

“Billions of dollars are at stake here,” Flannery says in response to my question about why the politics of climate change are so, well, heated. “We are talking about the biggest industries on the planet losing influence. And if you are threatening a vested interested, you’ll get pushed back.”

He reminds me of what happened to Rachel Carson, whose 1962 book *Silent Spring*, which exposed the damage being caused by pesticides, was an international wake-up call.

“That was a book written by a scientist who had a great reputation in the marine area, who saw that there was a major problem with pesticides which had implications for human health and for ecosystems,” says Flannery.

“She suffered exactly the same pushback that scientists in the climate area suffer today. Rachel Carson was hounded as a lesbian, was called a communist, a left-leaning kind of loony. Every possible crime as it was known in the 1960s and 1970s was thrown at her.”

Yet if Carson had not written that book and the pesticide industry had continued to proliferate, says Flannery, “there would be no more Bald Eagles in the United States and illnesses and death right across the spectrum of things that are caused by those organic phosphates and chlorides would be many, many times greater than they are today”.

The politics are so heated “because they don’t have a scientific argument so they have to make it personal”.

MUCH OF THE PUSHBACK FLANNERY has experienced has been from those, often in the media, who say his claims are either hypocritical or just plain wrong. He has been attacked for his “failed predictions”, such as his claim that the dams would stay empty and that some Australian cities would run out of water. Perth, he had said, would become a ghost town.

Flannery flatly rejects these criticisms. “The inflow into the dams in 2012 was only 2 per cent of the volume of what it was in 1996,” he tells me. “And Perth today is 30 per cent dependent on desalinated



Rachel Carson was attacked as a “lesbian” and “communist” after *Silent Spring* exposed the dangers of pesticides.

SOURCE: [HTTP://WWW.ENVIRONMENTANDSOCIETY.ORG](http://www.environmentandsociety.org)

water. I was thanked by the Water Commissioner in Perth for raising the alarm because, he said, without public understanding of the issue we would not have had those two desal plants.”

Andrew Bolt, the tabloid newspaper blogger, has labelled Flannery “Alarmist of the Year”. Bolt maintains that global warming is not occurring because “atmospheric temperatures have remained flat for at least 15 years”. Flannery is contemptuous of the ignorance that overlooks the reality that 90 per cent of the heat captured by the atmosphere goes into the oceans (which make up 71 per cent of the earth’s surface).

“You are absorbing more heat into the oceans,” he explains to me, “so less of it stays in the atmosphere and you get this plateau effect in the atmosphere but the heat is still building—it’s building in the oceans and it will eventually come back into the atmosphere.”

You cannot, he says, look at what’s happening in



For Flannery it was all about “making sure that my children, your children and even the sceptics’ children have a decent quality of life into the future”.

PHOTO: DAMIEN PLEMING

the atmosphere and ignore the rest of the system. That's not science. Nor is it fact. Then again, as Steffen said to me, the sceptics are not influenced by facts. Something else is as at work here.

WHEN THE AXE FELL ON THE CLIMATE Commission Flannery and Amanda McKenzie, who had been the Commission's communications advisor, sprang into action. They had already talked about the possibility of setting up a not-for-profit body if the Abbott government did what it said it was going to do.

"We found out Thursday morning," McKenzie told me. "That weekend Tim and I met with a media company and a web company, and we launched on Tuesday morning."

On the evening of Monday, 23 September, Flannery appeared on ABC television's *Lateline* and announced that the Commission was being relaunched as the Climate Council, with he and the other commissioners donating their services. He appealed for funds to get the Council going.

"We had our first donation from James in New South Wales for \$15 at midnight," Flannery told ABC News the next morning. "We've been raising \$1000 an hour and that's through the night."

By the time Flannery held a press conference at 9.30 the next morning to formally launch the Council and a [video to appeal for funds](#), the money was already pouring in.

"We were getting \$30,000 an hour," McKenzie, who is now the Council's CEO, told me. "By the end of our first day we had \$500,000."

This was well ahead of her "stretch goal" of \$250,000. At the end of the first week, 15,000 people had signed on as founding friends of the Climate Council and had given \$1.3 million. It is the largest example of crowd-sourced fundraising so far in Australia and it broke all sorts of records.

Not only was it the first instance of crowd-funding of a previously government-funded body, but 50 per cent of the donations were made through Facebook, a precedent that will surely attract the attention of other fundraisers.

Now, five months later, the Climate Council has



You cannot, he says, look at what's happening in the atmosphere and ignore the rest of the system. That's not science. Nor is it fact.

30,000 people on its mailing list, 68,000 "likes" on Facebook and more than 9600 followers on Twitter. It has released [a landmark report on bushfires](#) and climate change, and published a table showing that 2013 broke all temperature records in Australia.

It was unlikely that all this could have happened without Flannery's contribution. He is a gifted communicator. "He has an amazing ability to take the complexities of science and bundle them into something that makes sense," says Robert Purves, the businessman turned environmentalist who is WWF Australia's president.

And he had the fortitude to see it through.

Was it worth the grief, the attacks, the high personal cost? Tony Jones asked Flannery on *Lateline*.

"Blood oath it was worth it," came the reply. For Flannery it was all about "making sure that my children, your children and even the sceptics' children have a decent quality of life into the future."

Back in 2008, Flannery made a distinction between “the tipping point”, which we passed in the 1990s “when we had built up enough pollution to potentially cause very large-scale problems”, and “the point of no return”.

The latter, he told Denton during his *Enough Rope* interview, is “the point where no matter what we do it’ll have no impact because by then you’ve started a runaway process and then we’re headed towards an ice-free world eventually”.

“I think the waters are too murky to see,” Flannery said when I asked him whether we had reached that point. “But what we can say on the negative side is that emissions continue to grow and, on the positive side, the last study done, which was released a month ago and related to 2012, showed that the rate of emissions growth globally has slowed—and that’s a good thing.”

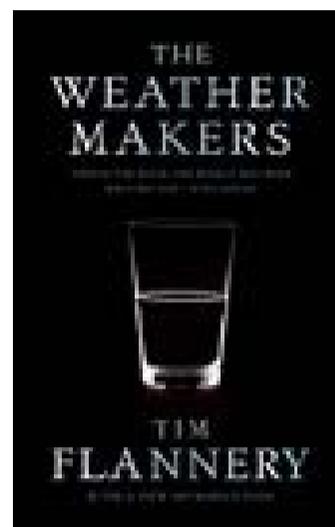
“There is still hope,” he says. “Right now we have gone down from around 3.4 per cent in 2011 to 2.2 in 2012. What it is in 2013 will be critical to our understanding of how we are doing. So I am waiting with bated breath for those figures.” Were the growth in global emissions still at the highest rate—and growing—it would be “game over”, he says.

Flannery is basically an optimist or, as Doyle expresses it, “He’s self-delusional. I tell him it’s too late, it’s all over, but he has an infuriating optimism in the face of reality.”

He trusts the “ingenuity of the human spirit”, says Heyward. He does not believe the human race is suicidal, which is perhaps why there is such urgency to try to understand what caused past species to disappear.

“He wants to go back to PNG,” says Doyle, maybe because of what they saw in China. “There were no mammals,” Doyle tells me, “And the forests near Tibet have the same blight that is affecting Canada. It’s not cold enough.”

THOSE WHO know Flannery well invariably speak of his calm demeanour, how he never loses his temper even under severe provocation and how he is, as McKenzie puts it, “very respectful of different people’s points of view”.



Flannery is a prolific writer. It is not just his sheer output that is impressive; it is the hungry reach of his brain and his imagination. There are the many books, more than 140 peer-reviewed scientific journal articles, frequent appearances in both the New York and London *Reviews of Books* and a forthcoming novel (yes, it is set in a museum).

A selection of Flannery's books

This was on show after another rowdy meeting, this time in Adelaide. When the formal part of the evening was over, Flannery sought out an audience member. “He was an older man who had abused Tim throughout the forum,” Steffen told me. Over a cup of tea Flannery listened to the man’s ranting, spoke to him calmly and while he did not necessarily win him over, the rancour ebbed away.

Tim Flannery, patiently engaging someone who does not want to learn, just like the teacher he is at heart. ❖



Come and hear ASR editor Anne Summers in conversation with Tim Flannery in [Melbourne on Monday 17 February](#) and in [Sydney on Tuesday 18 February](#).

Can MOTOWN *Regain its* MOJO?

The decay of Detroit has led to a spate of artist projects, which some have dubbed “ruin porn”.

SOURCE: THE RUINS OF DETROIT BY YVES MARCHAND & ROMAIN MEFFRE, WWW.MARCHANDMEFFRE.COM





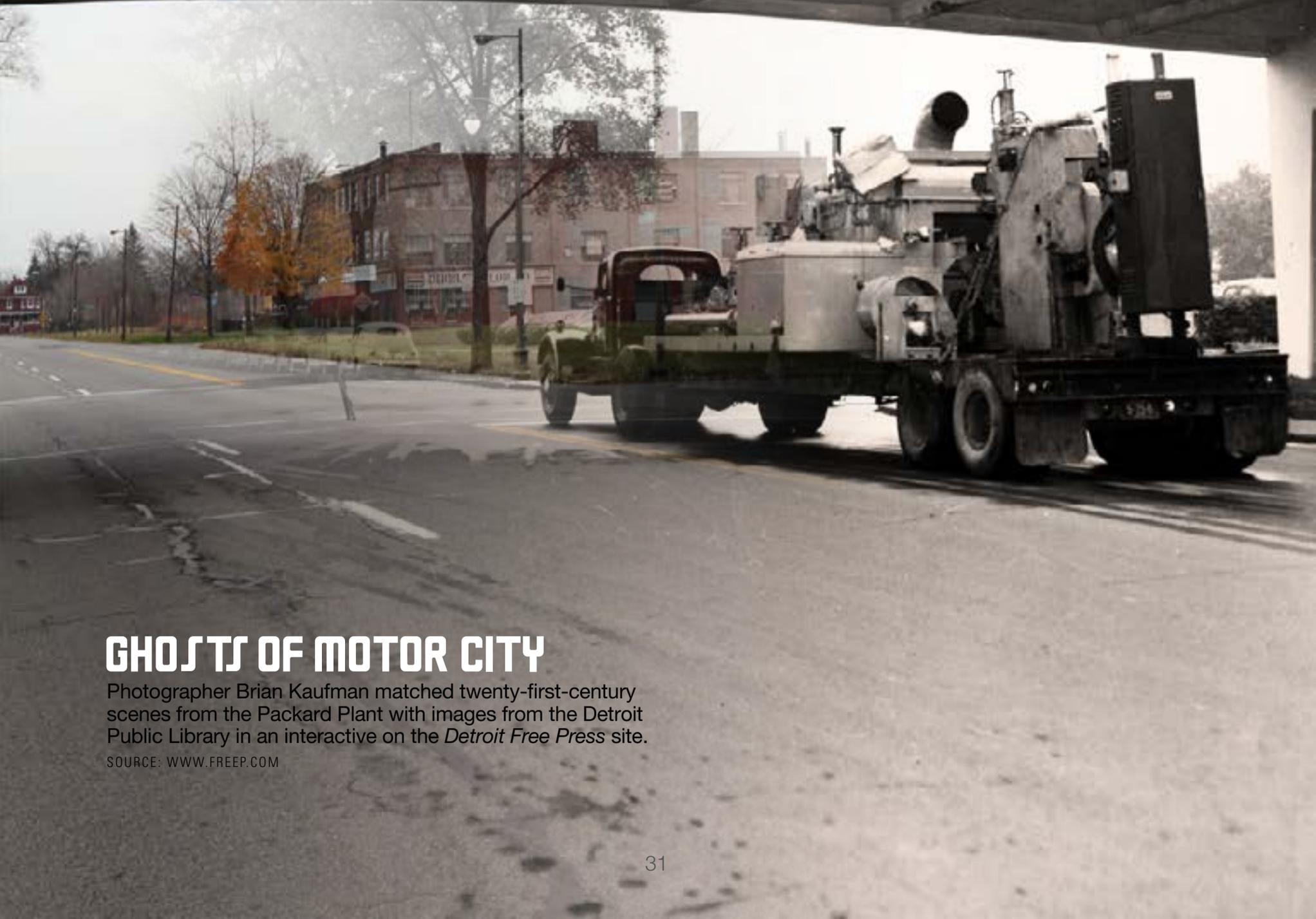
Andrew Moore, *Peacock Alley, Detroit*, 2008 from “Detroit Disassembled”. SOURCE: WWW.ANDREWLMOORE.COM

More than five decades of deindustrialization, white flight and gross financial mismanagement have bankrupted this once proud city and raised questions as to whether Detroit can rise again. **David Hay** reports.

Two years ago, I was driving out of Detroit when, without warning, the freeway was engulfed by brown and, what appeared to me, toxic, smoke. An ancient, brick-walled factory close by was ablaze. I was alarmed but, watching the cars rush by, I seemed to be the only one. No one else slowed down. In fact, nobody seemed at all curious about the inferno. Later, I understood why. Fires, even of this magnitude, are so commonplace in Detroit that its residents barely notice them anymore.

For five decades, many factors, fire among them, have conspired to reduce this city of nearly 1.9 million in 1950 to its current population of 700,000. What started this decline was the vast deindustrialization that followed World War II. Steel plants, ship-building yards and many other industries began their exodus to other cities.

This did not impact on Detroit alone, whose downward spiral was exacerbated first by the 1964 riots and then by generations of incompetent city leadership. The rule of thumb in Detroit was



GHOSTS OF MOTOR CITY

Photographer Brian Kaufman matched twenty-first-century scenes from the Packard Plant with images from the Detroit Public Library in an interactive on the *Detroit Free Press* site.

SOURCE: WWW.FREEP.COM

always to address the city's problems by raising taxes and borrowing rather than adjusting to straitened circumstances. (According to the city's largest daily, the *Detroit Free Press*, the total assessed value of Detroit property—a good gauge of the city's tax base and ability to pay its bills—had fallen 77 per cent over the past 50 years in today's dollars. But through 2004, the city cut only 28 per cent of its workers.)

If all this wasn't enough, there was the phenomenon of "white flight" to the newer, much smaller cities such as Bloomfield Hills and Birmingham outside city limits. They offered more space, better schools and, importantly, lower taxes. The process of "red lining", using race as a reason to deny a home loan, prevented many of Detroit's African-American population from making the same move, even if they wanted to.

THE RESULT today is a city that has fewer than 50 per cent of its former population. Most of the buildings from those earlier, more prosperous times are still standing, even if they're abandoned.

On an earlier visit to the city, I was shown a model for new inner-city housing built by some forward-thinking architecture students. Constructed out of cinder block—more expensive materials would have been stolen from the building site—it sat in the middle of the wide, empty, heavily weeded, green belt that rings much of downtown. Thirty years ago, neighbourhoods like this boasted streets lined with two- and three-storey clapboard houses. Detroit's poorest lived here, but when the decay brought on by years of economic decline set in, and since neither the city nor its renters could afford to keep them up, many houses were set ablaze. On Devil's Night, 30 October 1984, 800 fires were lit. Since then most of the remaining houses



Michigan Central Station by Daryl Alexsy. SOURCE: DEVIANTART.COM

Michigan Central Station now serves as a desolate symbol for an industrial age that once brought prosperity.

were simply knocked down by the city, graded directly into their basements, and covered with soil.

According to the *Detroit Free Press*, 78,000 buildings are currently either vacant or abandoned. Perhaps the most spectacular is Michigan Central Station, a Beaux Arts colossus eighteen stories tall, designed by the same firms that dreamed up New York's Grand Central Terminus. Surrounded by chain-link fence, its vast forecourt full of weeds and its once glorious interior covered with graffiti, it now serves as a desolate symbol for an industrial age that once brought prosperity to this region of America.



“Words Fail Me” by Martin Creed, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, 2008. SOURCE: WWW.MOCADETROIT.ORG

Interestingly, the policy of razing vast areas of decayed Detroit is supported at all levels of government. Just last September the Obama administration awarded the city US\$52 million for additional “blight removal”. Not only are there too many buildings left to be reused even in the best of times, abandoned structures are a potential drain on fire-department resources. In addition, the official argument goes, they frequently house criminal elements and are yet another factor in declining property values. Better to bulldoze history and start again with a clean slate.

That said, there have been countless efforts to revitalize downtown Detroit. A new baseball stadium, [Comerica Park](#), was built in 2000 to house the consistently winning Tigers, replacing the creaky but much loved Tiger Stadium. (Comerica Bank was founded in Detroit but its headquarters are now in Dallas.) The convention centre was revamped recently to make it more palatable, particularly to

members of the auto industry who still flock here every January for the Detroit Auto Show. Apart from those who work at General Motors’ corporate headquarters downtown, the auto show is probably the only time most of the auto industry comes to the city.

Although Chrysler’s current advertising campaign touts the tagline “Imported from Detroit”, the company’s headquarters is in Auburn Hills, a city of 21,000, 33 miles (53 km) to the north. Once home to twelve auto assembly-lines such as the vast, still-standing Packard plant, Detroit now has only one factory within city limits: [Chrysler’s Jefferson North](#) plant where the hugely profitable Jeep Grand Cherokee is built. [Chrysler pays US\\$12 million](#) a year in property taxes to the city once known lovingly as Motown.

OUTSIDE DOWNTOWN there are many pockets of small-scale urban renewal. For the



Auto Assembly Line fresco in the Detroit Institute of Arts, Diego Rivera, 1927 (detail).

SOURCE: FLICKR.COM

adventurous and unmonied members of Gen Y America, the city has truly become a mecca. I went to visit Florida-born artist and a rising star on the international art scene, [Hernan Bas](#), who moved from Miami to Detroit some years ago with his boyfriend, a local. They bought a three-storey, five-bedroom house in Indian Village, a small but historic, tree-lined neighbourhood full of wonderful Colonial Revival houses. It's a mere ten minutes from downtown. Having bought this expansive house for a mere US\$150,000 the pair have restored it beautifully. (In Jeffrey Eugenides's award-winning novel *Middlesex*, the Stephanides family begin their slow climb up the economic ladder from Indian Village. This fictional family later moves to the more affluent town of Grosse Pointe—which is where Eugenides was born.)

Closer to the city, in a row of brick storefronts near the famed Eastern Market, Bas has his studio, which set him back US\$40,000. Along from Bas's studio there is a coffee shop, a musician's studio and some clothing stores—pockets of urban life, but a far cry from a renaissance.

Another friend, the contemporary modernist architect [William Massie](#), bought a small abandoned spare-parts factory outside Detroit in Pontiac. He paid a song for it, and builds prefab houses inside.

"When I need a plumber or a carpenter," he told me, "I put a call out and the next day I'll have five or ten highly qualified applicants. This happens nowhere else in America."

It is a shaky time for the [Detroit Institute of Arts](#), which houses one of the most significant art collections in the United States. Famous for its [Diego Rivera murals](#), commissioned by Henry Ford, as well as for works by Van Gogh, Matisse, Monet and Bruegel, the museum is battling a plan by the state-appointed city manager to offload its entire collection at Christie's, and to use the projected US\$400 million in proceeds to offset Detroit's pension obligations. Late last year, a Christie's consultant was brought in to value the collection. But recently a number of foundations announced grants totalling US\$300 million that will allow the collection to remain the property of the museum.

“Transitioning” Detroit into a smarter, smaller and highly functional urban hub has many backers.

🔗 [Read more here](#). Whether this will be acceptable to those guiding Detroit out of bankruptcy remains to be seen.

THE PLIGHT of Detroit has so tugged at America's heartstrings that a vast cottage industry has sprung up, offering visions for the city's future. Many envision a charming, green oasis on the shores of the Detroit River. While it makes good sense to turn areas where houses and factories once stood into community parks and bike paths, the economic engine that can draw large numbers of people back to live—or keep those now in Detroit wanting to stay—has not materialized.

On the other hand, when you drive around the comfortable, small cities north of Detroit's city limits, the affluence is palpable. Bloomfield Hills, nearly 90 per cent white, is perhaps the richest, with a median household income of well over US\$200,000 a year. All of its neighbouring townships, laid out in mid-twentieth-century fashion, with its reliance on the automobile, appear to be thriving.

Michigan is gorgeous in summer, and, as evidenced by the numerous country clubs, golf courses and tennis courts, the residents take full advantage of it. Massie is designing the [Wesson Lawn Tennis Club](#) in Pontiac, a membership-only facility that boasts more grass courts than anywhere else in America—26—along with an Olympic-sized swimming pool.



Artist Tyree Guyton has decorated houses as part of his Heidelberg Project since 1986. SOURCE: WWW.TYREEGUYTON.COM

It's this divide—the sprawling suburban designed cities of the mid- to late-twentieth century versus the once proud inner city a product of the decades before—that makes me cautious about the many plans for the “New Detroit”. Whereas in many other areas in America—New York City, for example—the increasingly white, inner cities are booming and the more minority suburbs are having a harder time of it, this is simply not true here.

Detroit, once the fifth largest city in the US, still has many unique and lively institutions such as Wayne State University with its wonderful modernist campus and its quirky [Museum of Contemporary Art](#).

But the Republican-dominated state government has little interest in urban renewal. The city is working its way through bankruptcy.

The idea of “transitioning” Detroit from a once proud metropolis into a smarter, smaller and highly functional urban hub that befits its status as the country's eighteenth largest city has many backers. As yet, no major developers or other business leaders have talked about investing in a significant way. Without this, the idea of something substantial rising once again on the banks of the Detroit River remains very much a dream. ❖



HOW TO BANKRUPT A CITY

A Case Study

In Detroit's case, it took years of political denial, with leader after leader refusing to accept that their hallowed city was shrinking, thus avoiding the tough decisions to reduce the size of government accordingly.

Instead, what Detroit's mayors did was raise taxes. They instituted an income tax, a tax on gas and electrical use and, more recently, a casino tax. They raised the rate of the only tax the city levied before 1962, the property tax. A resident of Detroit now has the highest municipal tax rate in Michigan.

And still the city's revenue (all figures in 2013 dollars), which includes money from the state of Michigan, came to 60 per cent less than in 1960.

A succession of mayors added all these new taxes because the property tax base has been eviscerated. In 1958, Detroit took in US\$45 billion from property taxes. Last year, this return was US\$9.6 billion.

Shockingly little has been done to curtail expenses. Spending on retiree health costs have gone up 48 per cent in the last twelve years. Over US\$1 billion was paid out in bonuses to retirees and city workers between 1985 and 2008. (Detroit has almost double the number of pensioners to active workers.)

Not that city services were maintained. Average waiting time on a 911 call is 58 minutes. The second, and now fatal, move made by these mayors was to take out bank loans to offset rising deficits and to help the cash flow. Wall Street was only happy to oblige, given the onerous terms that were highly profitable to the banks.

The most spectacular of these deals was engineered by now disgraced Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, who signed off on a complex series of loans to pay the city's pension obligations in 2005. But with the 2008 stockmarket crash, Detroit's bond status plummeted, forcing it to pay higher interest rates. The city began to miss interest payments altogether and now owes US\$2.8 billion on this deal alone. Unable to service the debt, Detroit, its bond rating plummeting to the high Cs (it's now in the Ds), declared bankruptcy on 18 July 2013.



The ***Detroit Free Press*** has a full investigation of the city's bankruptcy.

Getting Away with Rape

A small number of perpetrators are responsible for most rapes and very few of them are ever charged, let alone prosecuted or convicted. **Ashley Hogan** reports on the myths about rape that stand in the way of justice.

ILLUSTRATION: SAM BENNETT



JUST BECAUSE She isn't saying no", say the words printed over the image of [an unconscious woman](#) surrounded by a litter of empty bottles, "doesn't mean she's saying yes. Don't be *that* guy."

Widely praised for putting responsibility for stopping sexual assault on the offenders, not the victims, the "[Don't be that guy](#)" campaign by SAVE (Sexual Assault Voices of Edmonton) in 2010 was reportedly responsible for a 10 per cent drop in sexual assaults when it was picked up in Vancouver (although in [Edmonton](#) itself sex crimes rose by 14 per cent in the two years around the campaign).

The story we like to tell ourselves about the type of sexual assault targeted by SAVE's campaign—sometimes called "date rape", or "acquaintance rape", or "relationship rape"—is that "*that* guy" could be just about anyone. [Reports](#) of [young men](#) considering rape "okay" if the victim had been flirting, or wearing revealing clothing, or if her attacker had paid for dinner, and the belief that misunderstandings and mistaken assumptions, fuelled by alcohol, are at the root of most of these crimes, contribute to the idea of rape without intent: the result of poor impulse control, mixed signals and confused cultural messages about consent.

It's a powerful idea that ties into moral panics of the left and right, into fears about promiscuity, alcohol consumption, the independence of women and the backlash of misogyny. Depending on the political barrow you're pushing, anyone, everyone and no-one in particular can be given the blame.

It's also wrong.

"That guy" isn't just about anyone. He's not an otherwise okay bloke who made a terrible drunken error. He isn't confused, he isn't mistaken—and he isn't going to stop at one.

Between 1991 and 1998, [David Lisak and Paul Miller](#) asked 1882 male students at a mid-sized American university if they'd had, or tried to have sexual intercourse with an adult when they didn't want to by using or threatening to use physical force (twisting their arm, holding them down, etc.) if they didn't cooperate, or because they were too



He's not an otherwise okay bloke who made a terrible drunken error. He isn't confused, he isn't mistaken—and he isn't going to stop at one.

FABLE

There is also a strong link between alcohol and violence, including date rape.

- *Resident Handbook, Sydney University Village*

Miscommunication also contributes to date rape. A man may misinterpret a woman's flirtatiousness as being interested in having sex. Men may also interpret a woman's protests incorrectly; he may translate her "no" to mean "maybe" or even "yes".

- *Florida Institute of Technology Counseling and Psychological Services Student Resource: Date Rape*

There are big problems if you think you are having sex with someone and they have consented, but they think they have not. It is called rape.

- *The University of New South Wales Student Factsheet: "Safety In Sydney"*

...consent is not always communicated clearly, and because consent is sometimes wrongly assumed for a range of reasons.

- *Laura Russo, "Date Rape: A Hidden Crime", Australian Institute of Criminology: Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, no. 157*

"I didn't know exactly what rape was."

- *Evan Westlake, witness in the Steubenville rape case, explaining to the court why he made no effort to stop the defendants digitally penetrating the unconscious victim.*

FACT

- More than 90 per cent of rapes where the victim was a friend or acquaintance of the criminal are committed by a small number of serial sex offenders.
- These offenders know that their victim is not consenting.
- They average more than six rapes or attempted rapes before the age of 30.
- They are motivated by anger against, and need to control and dominate, women.
- They are also far more prone to violence against women and children.

- *2002 "Understanding the Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence"*

Undetected rapists:

- are extremely adept at identifying "likely" victims.
- plan and premeditate their attacks
- exhibit strong impulse control and use only as much violence as is needed.
- use psychological weapons—power, control, manipulation, and threats—and almost never resort to weapons.
- use alcohol deliberately to render victims more vulnerable to attack, or completely unconscious.

- *2002 "Understanding the Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence"*

"She is so raped right now."

"That's not cool bro."

"That's like rape. It is rape."

They raped her."

- *Male voices on a video of Steubenville students reportedly filmed the same night, hacked and posted by Anonymous*

intoxicated to resist. The questions, without using the word “rape”, are nonetheless specific: a “yes” answer means the respondent knew that he didn’t have consent.

Across the 1882 surveys, Lisak and Miller found 483 separate incidents of rape or attempted rape—or 25 for every 100 men surveyed. Lisak and Miller describe their questionnaire as a “conservative instrument”, more prone to under-reporting than over-estimation, and when Stephanie McWhorter and her colleagues published the results of a similar [survey of 1146 military recruits](#) in 2009 they identified 865 incidents—75 per 100 men surveyed.

Even knowing that one in five women is sexually assaulted at some time in her life, and those aged between 16 and 26 (likely over-represented in the social milieu of both groups of respondents) are the most at-risk adult age cohort, those [figures](#) are shocking. They certainly leave little room for the idea of the “accidental” rape based on mistaken assumptions of consent.

But Lisak and Miller found 483 *rapes or attempted rapes*, not 483 *rapists*. In fact, only 120 men (6.4 per cent) answered yes to those questions. And 76 of those 120, 4 per cent of all the men surveyed, had committed more than one rape. Those 76 men had between them committed 439 rapes or attempted rapes, 90 per cent of all the incidents identified. McWhorter found pretty much the same thing: 96 men, or 8.4 per cent of all the respondents, were responsible for 95 per cent of the rapes and attempted rapes self-reported by survey participants. None had been prosecuted.

What’s more, Lisak and Miller asked their subjects about other acts of violence. The 76 serial rapists were also responsible for 49 sexual assaults, 277 acts of sexual abuse and 66 acts of physical abuse against children, and 214 acts of battery against intimate partners. Including their rapes and attempted rapes, they were on average nine times as violent as the 93 per cent of men who had never raped or tried to rape anyone.

“Their violence and predatory behavior,” [Lisak notes elsewhere](#), “mirrors precisely that of the sexual predators who have been incarcerated and



8.4 per cent of all the respondents were responsible for 95 per cent of the rapes and attempted rapes.

studied, except that by targeting non-strangers and by refraining from gratuitous violence, they have escaped prosecution.”

Most preferred to use drugs or alcohol to incapacitate their victims (80 per cent of Lisak and Miller’s subjects; 83 per cent of McWhorter’s) and most preferred to target someone they knew (92 per cent of McWhorter’s subjects). Zoë [Morrison, in a 2008 study](#) of the outcome of rapes reported in Victoria between 2000 and 2003, found that while only 2.1 per cent of reports were considered false, only 15 per cent resulted in charges being laid. Since [fewer than 20 per cent](#) of women report a sexual assault to the police, a rapist has only a 3 per cent chance of facing charges. Factor in that, despite the fact that 87 per cent of women who have been sexually [assaulted have been so by someone they know](#), police are much [less likely to act](#) when the victim of a sexual assault is even slightly acquainted with the offender, and when the victim is a young adult who was intoxicated.

The myth of “that guy” ... rewards misogyny by suggesting that lack of consent is a difference of perception.

McWhorter also found that the rapists in her survey group had clear preferences of methods and targets: their crimes were planned and practised, not impulsive or opportunistic. Lisak, drawing on decades of interviews with “undetected” (that is, never prosecuted) sex offenders, described criminals who “plan and premeditate their attacks, using sophisticated [strategies to groom their victims](#) for attack, and to isolate them physically”. [Compared to the overwhelming majority of men](#), these rapists “are measurably more angry at women, more motivated by the need to dominate and control women, more impulsive and disinhibited in their behavior, more hyper-masculine in their beliefs and attitudes, less empathic and more antisocial”.

As long as our idea of rape by a known, rather than unknown, assailant is clouded by the myth of “that guy”, we’ll still see things like a university giving students a [longer suspension for stealing a laptop](#) than for sexual assault, women making [complaints to university administrations](#) being told they are at least partly to blame, and Sydney

University Vice Chancellor Michael Spence, former master of Wesley College, David Russell, and then principal of the Women’s College, Jane Williamson, all referring to [alcohol consumption](#) in their responses to the revelations in 2009 of a pro-rape Facebook page set up by past and present residents of one of the university’s colleges.

The myth of “that guy” is an attractive one: it promises that we can stop sexual violence with more education, or less drinking, or both. It rewards misogyny by suggesting that lack of consent is a difference of perception, and it rewards misandry by implying that all (or almost all) men are potential rapists.

By classing “acquaintance rapes”—[the overwhelming majority of all rapes](#)—as an endemic cultural problem, rather than as particular criminal behaviour, our public policy response focuses on general attitudinal reforms rather than specific institutional responses. Far more than we need another set of public awareness posters, we need policing protocols that investigate alcohol-facilitated “acquaintance rape” as part of a potential series of offences by one criminal. And far more than another television campaign about the dangers of binge-drinking, we need educational and military organizations to treat sexual assault as a serious crime to be referred to the police, and not as a drunken “misunderstanding” for internal disciplinary action.

Concrete changes are always more challenging than handwringing about “youth culture”. Shifting the focus from lecturing young men and women about alcohol consumption to giving them the tools to identify, and prevent, sexual predation in their social circles will require a level of genuine engagement that few government campaigns achieve. But unless we’re willing to come to grips with the difficult reality, too many will keep getting away with rape. ❖

A detailed discussion of the methodology used in the studies cited can be found in the original article.



When a brand new political party comes from nowhere and displaces the ruling Congress Party in India's capital, political leaders in democracies everywhere have reason to be worried about disaffected voters.

By **Purnendra Jain and Peter Mayer**

Fanfare for the Common Man



Delhi's seventh chief minister, Arvind Kejriwal, may be a political novice but he is by no means an unknown figure. Source: supplied

VOTERS IN DELHI HAVE ushered in an unconventional leader of a new party, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP, the Common Man Party), to the top political position in the National Capital Territory.

Delhi's seventh chief minister, Arvind Kejriwal, may be a political novice but he is by no means an unknown figure. A graduate of the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology and a former senior official in India's Income Tax Department, Kejriwal became known nationally in 2011 through his association with the anti-corruption movement led by Gandhian Anna Hazare. Mass demonstrations in Delhi against widespread corruption, and their coverage through national television, made Kejriwal one of the country's most prominent faces.

Kejriwal was responsible for drafting an anti-corruption Jan Lokpal Bill and played a key role in implementing the *Right to Information Act* at the grassroots level. But at the end of 2012, Kejriwal parted company with Team Anna, as the latter did not support Kejriwal's proposal to form a political party and contest elections.

When the AAP was formed in November 2012, most commentators were pessimistic about its future. But one year on, Kejriwal surprised many after his party won 28 of 70 seats in the Legislative Assembly, thrashing the long-ruling Congress Party. It's the first time in Delhi's history that a party other than the Indian National Congress and the Bhartiya Janata Party has taken the helm. Delhi's previous chief minister, Sheila Dikshit, belonged to the Congress Party, and after three five-year terms she became the longest-serving chief minister in Delhi and the longest-serving female chief minister in India.

Of course, the emergence of political leaders from social movements is not a new phenomenon. In India, however, while many regional parties have emerged and their leaders served as chief ministers, most parties have been developed on the basis of caste, religion, language or regional issues. And none has managed to cultivate the same profile as Kejriwal.

Although Kejriwal and his team have fought



against corrupt Congress rule, his party's minority status in the assembly has led him to accept "outside support" from the Congress Party on policy issues—but he will not include any of its members in his cabinet. This makes the government dependent on a party that it has opposed, having accused it of corruption and bad governance. But the AAP has taken this decision based on wide-ranging and open consultations, and with the approval of Delhi's ordinary voters—a true melting pot of people from almost all regions, castes, languages and religions.

IN ASKING how the AAP and its associated movement are likely to develop in the future, some useful hints can be found in a parallel political movement that emerged in the United States a century ago. The Progressive Movement was primarily based on America's middle and

professional classes. Its origins lay in a rising anger at the end of the nineteenth century at the political corruption and economic concentration found in the United States. In the political realm, boss-rule in major American cities and “back-room” control over political parties and the nomination of candidates were prime targets.

Crusading journalists who probed and exposed abuses played a major role in setting the agenda for the Progressive Age. The Progressives had their principal successes at the city and state level. They fought for and secured major democratic reforms, which helped to reduce endemic corruption. Among their enduring reforms were the direct election of members to the US Senate (a reform with possible relevance to India’s indirectly elected Rajya Sabha, the upper house of India’s Parliament); the initiative, which allowed citizens to propose that certain laws be enacted, and the referendum, which gave citizens the right to directly enact such laws; and the recall, by means of which citizens could remove an elected official before the end of his or her usual term. Yet not all Progressive reforms were successful, with Prohibition the most conspicuous failure. The unpopularity of Prohibition and the onset of the Great Depression both worked to end the Progressive Age.

THE ROAD FOR Kejriwal is undoubtedly a long and winding one, and given India’s entrenched corruption at all levels, Kejriwal’s desire to rid India of corruption and to work in the interest of the ordinary people will be just as difficult as the task faced by the American Progressives. His emergence on Delhi’s political landscape is a welcome development, and if he succeeds in his mission it will be revolutionary. What began in Delhi may soon spread to the rest of India after the recent decision by the AAP to contest a large number of seats in the coming national elections.

Even if he succeeds only partially, Kejriwal will have a significant impact on the Indian polity and society. One thing is clear: Kejriwal has changed India’s political discourse, and the two main national parties—and others—will sit up and take notice of



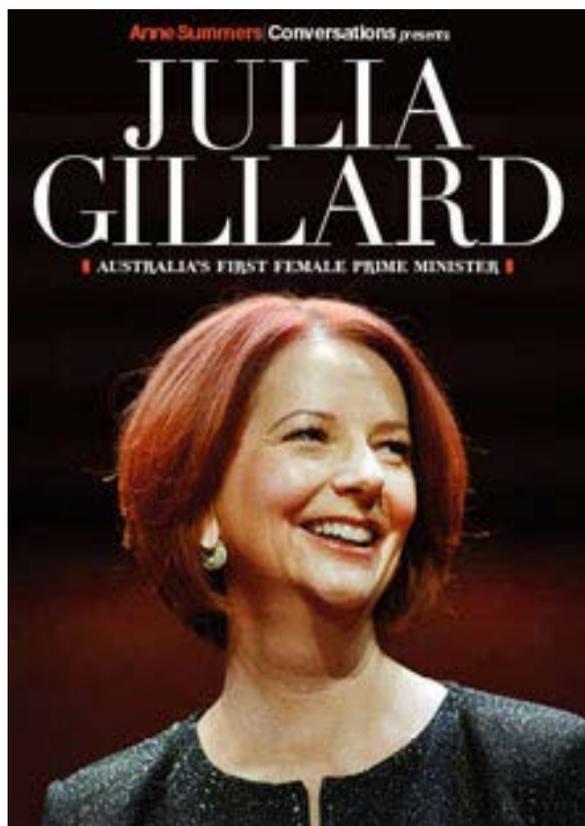
Kejriwal has changed India’s political discourse.

His emergence on Delhi’s political landscape is a welcome development, and if he succeeds in his mission it will be revolutionary.

the AAP and its leaders. He may or may not survive long, but Kejriwal’s impact is not going to fade any time soon, unlike others in the past, such as the JP Movement of the 1970s. India’s voters have become more sophisticated and politically demanding than ever before. ❖

This article first appeared in [East Asia Forum](#), 14 January 2014, Reprinted with permission.





Julia Gillard in Conversation with Anne Summers. **Now on DVD exclusively available online from the ASR website.**

Own a piece of history

On September 30 2013 in Sydney and the next night in Melbourne Julia Gillard, Australia's first female Prime Minister, engaged in a long and candid conversation about her time in office, her removal from the job, current political issues and her plans for the future.

It was the first time a Prime Minister has taken part in such a conversation so soon after occupying Australia's top job. Equally unprecedented was Julia Gillard's willingness to engage in a totally unscripted half-hour QandA session with the audience at each event.

The conversations were highly praised for their warmth and spontaneity, and for revealing aspects of Gillard's character and personality that few people had previously had the opportunity to see. Many people have asked me to make them available for permanent collection and I am very pleased that we have been able to do so.

The DVD includes the full conversations and Q&A from the Sydney and Melbourne events.

You can order the DVD [here](#) for \$29.95.



Anne Summers

Editor and Publisher
Anne Summers Reports

Across the shining lake

Three thousand years of Colombian history are represented in this dazzling display of golden objects that have tantalised both sixteenth-century Spanish invaders and today's museum visitors.

By **Paula Weidger**



RAFT TUNJO (VOTIVE OFFERING),
MUISCA, GOLD ALLOY, AD 600–1600
© MUSEO DEL ORO, BANCO DE LA
REPÚBLICA, COLOMBIA

The British
Museum

**Beyond El Dorado: Power
and Gold in Ancient Colombia**

The British Museum London,
17 October 2013 – 23 March 2014



ARTICULATED NOSE
ORNAMENT, YOTOCO, GOLD
ALLOY, 200BC–AD1200.
© THE TRUSTEES OF THE
BRITISH MUSEUM

PRE-HISPANIC ARTWORKS MADE IN Latin America before the Spanish Conquest always seemed opaque to me. I am a sucker for images of animals, wild and tame, but I would look at an ancient jade jaguar mask, for example, and all I would feel is numb—and dumb.

“Beyond El Dorado”, now at the British Museum, opened my eyes and mind. This honey of a show is dazzling and instructive. Most of the 300 objects on view are made of gold, nearly all of them on loan from the 50,000-piece collection of the Museo del Oro in Bogotá, Colombia. These technically sophisticated and aesthetically imaginative pieces include helmets and nose ornaments, earrings, headdresses, bells and drug-taking paraphernalia.

The fact that they are made from gold matters: it mattered to those who made these objects, to those who wore them and, as it turned out, to me as a viewer.

Gold is beautiful and seductive. Alone among metals it is yellow. When polished, it shines like the sun. Gold is rare and does not tarnish or rust. A small figure made from gold in 1000 B.C. will remain unchanged forever, unless someone melts it down. Its immutability led Europeans to use gold as currency. It was not used as money in ancient Colombia; there its importance was spiritual and political.

The objects chosen by curator Elisenda Vila Llonch for “Beyond El Dorado” are extraordinary not only because they are technically sophisticated and

crafted of gold. They were associated with rulers and rituals. The splendour of some helped chiefs impress their subjects and enemies. Others aided spiritual leaders in their effort to create harmony between the heavens, the underworld and man. The objects in this exhibition, although far removed from the realm of pots and baskets for storing beans, once were utilitarian, in fact or symbolically.

Art need not have a purpose to have an impact. Yet, once I had a glimpse of how these pre-Hispanic objects were used, I no longer felt remote from the culture. I could connect with the often fantastical beauty of what ancient Colombian artists produced.

The visitor enters the show and comes face-to-face with a moody photomural of a round lake ringed by steeply rising hills. The landscape is densely forested; it looks unpopulated. Lake Guatavita in the Muisca region of Colombia was a holy place, a

Early Spanish explorers of Colombia saw lots of gold. Even tree branches on burial mounds were hung with tinkling gold bells.

pilgrimage site. In ancient times a Muisca leader would be powdered from head to foot with gold dust. He and his attendants then would drape themselves with gold headdresses, earrings, nose pieces and collars (pectorals) and step onto a raft. As the craft moved across the lake they radiated light. When they got to the centre of the lake, the men threw in offerings of gold and emeralds. (A superb gold representation of such figures, shown on our opening page, is so treasured in Colombia that it is barred from leaving the museum.)

Early Spanish explorers of Colombia saw



PECTORAL, EARLY TOLIMA, GOLD ALLOY, 1 BC–AD 700. © MUSEO DEL ORO, BANCO DE LA REPÚBLICA, COLOMBIA



FIGURINE RATTLE, LATE QUIMBAYA, CERAMIC, AD700–1600. © THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM



HELMET, QUIMBAYA, GOLD ALLOY, 500BC-AD600. © THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM



FUNERARY MASK, CALIMA-MALAGANA, GOLD ALLOY, 100BC-AD400. © MUSEO DEL ORO, BANCO DE LA REPÚBLICA, COLOMBIA



CROCODILE-SHAPED PENDANT, LATE QUIMBAYA, GOLD ALLOY, 700BC-AD1600. © MUSEO DEL ORO, BANCO DE LA REPÚBLICA, COLOMBIA

lots of gold. Even tree branches on burial mounds were hung with tinkling gold bells. The men learned about the rituals performed on Lake Guatavita: this was the genesis of the myth of El Dorado, the lost Kingdom of Gold that incited the greed of their countrymen when they went home.

By the 1580s, the Spanish conquerors had cut a notch through the Guatavitan hills. They wanted to drain the lake and claim its bounty. They failed—crater lakes are very deep. Elsewhere, they succeeded all too well.

After this introduction, the exhibition moves away from Europe and towards the art and culture of Colombia before the Spanish arrived. The display is thematic, not chronological, because ancient gold cannot be dated with precision.

Broadly, pieces are as early as a funerary mask with

Coca was one of the plants used to affect spiritual transformation, its absorption increased by adding lime.

sunbursts decorating its puffy cheeks, circa 1600 B.C., and as late as a pendant in the form of a man with lobster-claw arms and a lobster tail from about 1600 A.D. Themes include “Power and Gold”, “Life and Death” and “Power and Transformation”. I will concentrate on the latter here.

In ancient Colombia spiritual leaders saw their role as working to re-establish a balance between man, nature and the supernatural. One way they tried to do this was by transforming themselves into creatures that have powers men lack. On view are representations of crocodiles and frogs that move easily between earth and the underwater world as well as macaws and bats that leave the earth for the sky. Among the many captivating representations of such creators are a pair of bird earrings that have



NECKLACE WITH CLAW-SHAPED
BEADS, ZENÚ, GOLD ALLOY, 200BC-
AD1000. © MUSEO DEL ORO, BANCO
DE LA REPÚBLICA, COLOMBIA



ANTHROPOMORPHIC BAT PECTORAL, TAIRONA, GOLD ALLOY, AD900–1600. © MUSEO DEL ORO, BANCO DE LA REPÚBLICA, COLOMBIA

very long, flat-hammered tails. Sculpturally pared and dramatic, they could have been designed by Georges Braque. (Elsewhere in the show are pieces that prefigure Alexander Calder, Picasso and, in the case of that lobster-man, Salvador Dalí.)

Coca was one of the plants used to affect spiritual transformation, its absorption increased by adding lime. Among the drug paraphernalia in this show are several lime and coca containers of marvellous sculptural simplicity, technical accomplishment and abstract beauty. They, too, have an astonishingly modern look.

One of the show's many charms is that

pre-Hispanic goldsmiths were not fearful that humour would undercut power. Presumably this view was shared by those to whom these objects originally belonged. A number of pieces have small moving parts—earrings dangle, heads have flapping eyelids. When worn, such a piece would flash in the sunlight and chime. Visitors can get a taste of such effects by standing close to the display case and shifting, heavily, from foot to foot. This exhibition is not only aesthetically and intellectually exciting, it is also fun. ✚



WARNING: LANGUAGE GALORE

Is small-screen swearing just an attention-grabbing fad or part of a developing authenticity that reflects the way we (or many of us) actually talk?

By **Matt Thompson**



ILLUSTRATION: STEPHEN CLARK

VEEP, THE US COMEDY SERIES in which the lead character is the newly installed US Vice President Selina Meyer, played by wholesome *Seinfeld*-alumnus Julia Louis-Dreyfus and a cast of generally chirpy Americans in a brightly rendered Washington DC, is one of the most recent entrants into television's profanity arms race. *Veep* was created for America's HBO by Armando

Iannucci, the Scottish writer and director responsible for *The Thick of It*, the BBC show that introduced the filthy-mouthed tyrant of a prime ministerial adviser, Malcolm Tucker (played by Peter Capaldi, a fellow Scot and the latest Doctor Who). This is Tucker's way of advising a departmental aide to keep something quiet: "You breathe a word of this to anyone, you mincing

fucking cunt, and I will tear your fucking skin off, I will wear it to your mother's birthday party, and rub your nuts up and down her leg whilst whistling Bohemian-fucking-Rhapsody, right!"

In *Veep* there are none of those pasty Brits in drab UK interiors and the tone is lighter than *The Thick of It*, but it is still frequently obscene. A senator says that convincing the senate to reform itself "would be like persuading a guy to fist himself", while Meyer says that the DC after Washington stands for "District of Cunts".

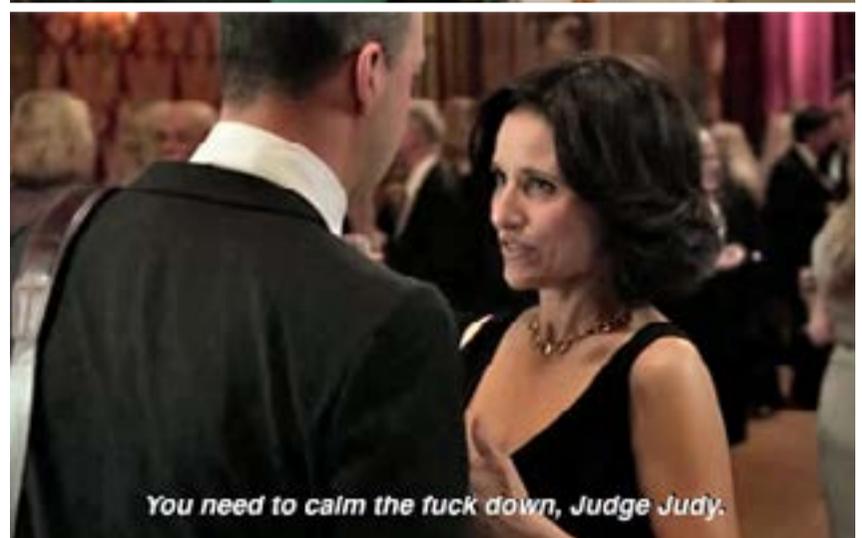
Much of *Veep's* edge comes from this dash of deep-culture frisson: of hearing the "wrong" kind of people swearing their heads off, characters who, part of us assumes, should know better: those in high office, professional women, and—to the legions of former

Much of *Veep's* edge comes from hearing the "wrong" kind of people swearing their heads off, those in high office, professional women, and Dreyfus herself.

Seinfeld fans—Dreyfus herself. Similarly, Comedy Central's *South Park* gets its buzz of "wrongness" by placing adult humour in a child-centred world.

While swearing has been part of cinema since the late 1960s through to the current "fuck"-frenzy of Martin Scorsese's *The Wolf of Wall Street*, small-screen dialogue remained relatively clean until the 1990s when US cable networks started a revolution in television. Now, the medium seems to be reaching new heights of profanity and it is worth asking: what's going on? Is the embrace of vulgarity by the scriptwriters just a play for thrills and laughs, or is it a reach for authenticity?

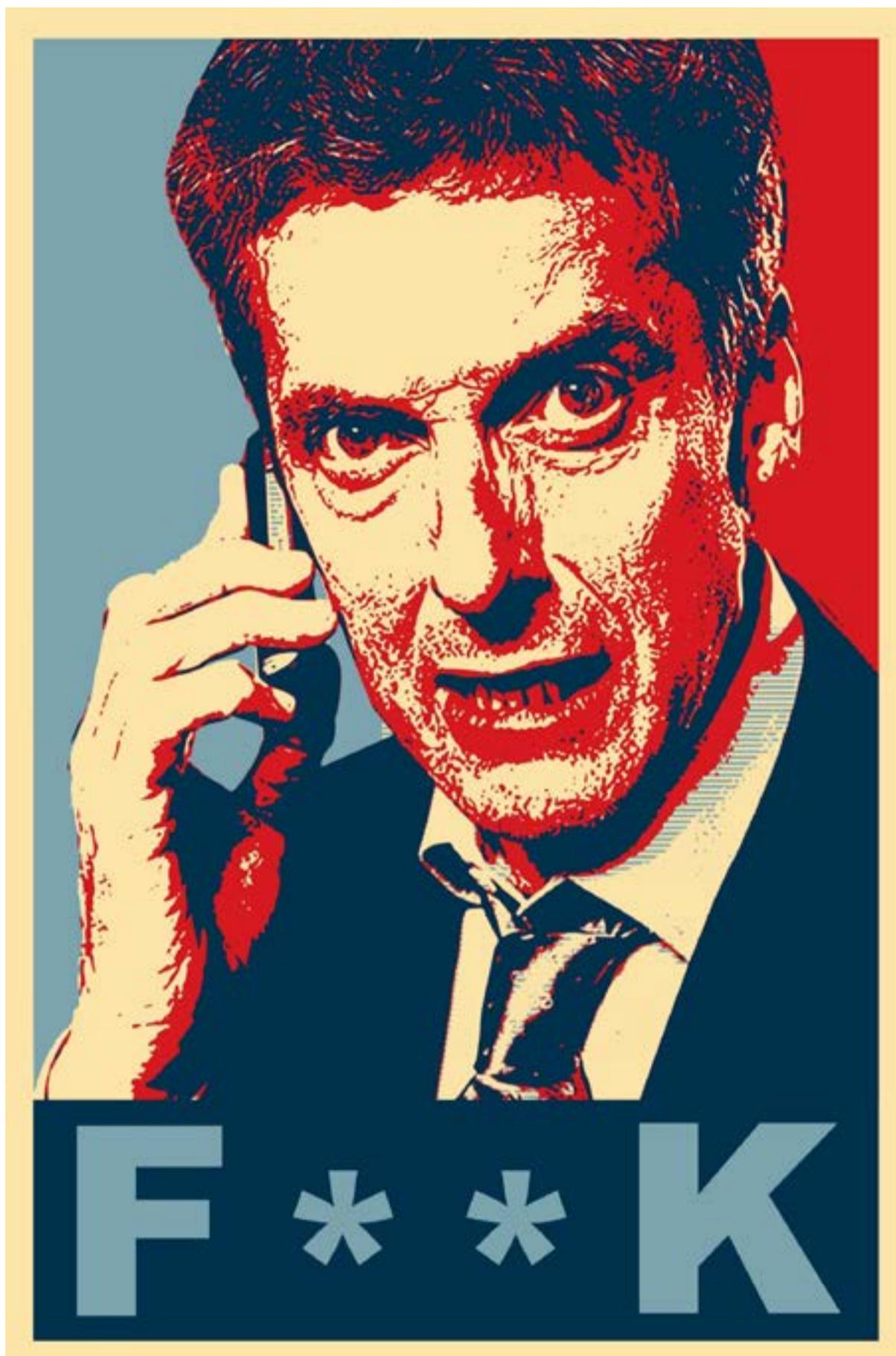
Profanity itself does not necessarily reduce a work's depth or complexity, but when it is deployed as the reason for watching, as violence or special effects might be in an action movie, the program can become that



Seinfeld's Julia Louis-Dreyfus is playfully profane in *Veep*.

genre's verbal equivalent: sound and fury signifying perhaps not nothing but certainly less than could have been delivered by a more complex vision.

Tucker's wildest excesses are often worked up by scriptwriter Ian Martin, a profanity consultant hired by Iannucci. The outrageous vitriol certainly supercharges the show, but the result can feel more simplistic than its antecedent *Yes, Minister*, much in the way that Don Siegel's *Dirty Harry* is less substantial than Roman



Peter Capaldi is the poster boy for swearing in *The Thick of It*.

SOURCE: WWW.AGUIDETOGEEKDOM.WORDPRESS.COM

Polanski's *Chinatown*. Like *The Thick of It*, *Dirty Harry* is an action-centred portrait of a singular brute will at work, whereas the central character in *Chinatown*—another lone-wolf investigator—is ultimately less important than his revelation of society as complex and comprehensively compromised.

Yet “the beautiful thing about obscenity on TV [is]

it gives us the chance to bring a specific time and place to life”, observes philosopher Chris Fleming of the University of Western Sydney's Writing and Society Research Centre. He points out that the 1995 ABC true-crime miniseries, *Blue Murder* (which won a 1996 Logie for Most Outstanding Achievement in Drama Production), gave us the sound of 1980s inner city



Every individual obscenity in the 1995 ABC true-crime miniseries *Blue Murder*, starring Tony Martin (left) and Richard Roxburgh, was debated and weighed for its dramatic worth.

Sydney or Melbourne: “You get brilliant expressions like: ‘Pull my dick, mate, get fucked.’ That’s how people talked; it has the ring of authenticity, and that’s what swearing can give you.”

Blue Murder was made in television’s twilight era between the bowdlerized past and the profanity revolution. It is interesting to consider a time when individual obscenities were debated and weighed for their dramatic (in a fuller sense than shock) worth. While developing the screenplay, Ian David interviewed many of the criminals and police to be depicted and said that after listening closely to them, he had to include swearing or he could not tell their stories.

“That was part of their communication and a lot of their humour was punctuated by it,” he told *ASR*. “Particular words became essential, like when Neddy Smith is holding someone over [the edge of] a boat and says, ‘See ya later, cunt.’ No other word would have done.”

David had to negotiate every “cunt” and “fuck”

with the ABC’s then Head of Television Drama, Penny Chapman, who wanted each use to be justified and not gratuitous.

“We started off asking for 24 ‘fucks’ and three ‘cunts,’” he told me. “She said we could keep two ‘cunts’ but had to cut the ‘fucks’ back. After the negotiations she sent a letter, which I have framed, saying we could have twelve ‘fucks’ and two ‘cunts’.”

REGARDING THE pull-my-dick line, David says that “as much as I wish I could claim it as my own”, its existence is a result of the actor (Robert Morgan) being so deep in character that it just popped out during a take. “During the rehearsal process, the deeper the culture got hold of them, the more the actors came out with their own lines.”

When the actors start to embody richly researched and rehearsed material, the drama and language get an authenticity that no script alone can provide, says David, who sees most of the Nine Network’s *Underbelly*

series—which won a swag of AFI and Logie awards in 2008 and 2009—as comparatively shallow. “The use of profanity to provide credibility rather than coming from it doesn’t work.”

It’s commonly said that television—chiefly thanks to cable—has finally overtaken cinema as the great mass medium, taking on many of its best qualities and talents, and extending them through a much longer and more satisfying timeframe than a movie’s couple of hours. There’s much truth to that, particularly if we are comparing what’s on the box with contemporary mainstream cinema. But perhaps the Hollywood that television is roundly thrashing these days is a Hollywood that has forgotten what can make a couple of hours a lasting work of art. The qualities of

In 2013 a well-meaning remake of *Yes, Prime Minister* fell flat. “You just can’t pretend that *The Thick of It* never happened.”

embodiment and naturalness that David so rightly praises were in film in spades four decades ago when Jack Nicholson owned the screen in masterfully written and directed films such as *Five Easy Pieces* (1970), *The Last Detail* (1973), and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1975). His characters said “cunt” onscreen back then, too, but the profanity oozed out of their souls, not just their mouths. There was little glitz in these films, a high point of US cinema—that was saved for the after-parties.

If it’s psychotic intensity you want in profanity as well as an emotional core, cinema’s been there too: try Dennis Hopper’s ferocious use of “fuck” in *Blue Velvet* (1986) or R. Lee Ermey’s blistering verbal assaults in *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). In contrast, David says that in 1995 the ABC softened the sound of his four-letter words in post-production to keep it more palatable to a



Dennis Hopper’s ferocious use of “fuck” in *Blue Velvet* had a psychotic intensity to it.

television audience.

“Now I think they turn it up,” he says.

So what lies ahead for television’s arms race of profanity, where scriptwriters compete to ring the gong for the bluest dialogue and the Internet shoots the results through every barrier of classification, age and distribution?

Things have certainly changed since “Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television”, a monologue that got the late US comedian George Carlin arrested in 1972. In our time, Carlin’s once-dangerous list (shit, piss, fuck, cunt, cocksucker, motherfucker and tits) is just another night on television, whether it’s the *Sopranos* (“leave the fucking cocksucking cheese where it is”), the *Wire* (which has a scene getting towards five minutes in which the only word spoken, and spoken a lot, is “fuck”), *Deadwood* (“agitation brings a slight bump up in whiskey sales, but sale of cunt plummets”), *Entourage* (“your love of cock is a huge asset to this company”) and *Game of Thrones* (“fuck them in their arses”) or numerous other shows, including *Veep*.

In 2013 a well-meaning remake of *Yes, Prime Minister* fell flat. “You just can’t pretend that *The Thick of It* never happened,” pointed out *The Independent*, while a critic from *onthebox.com* wrote that “the show seems out of time. It’s just too polite”. As David Shields writes in *Reality Hunger*, his 2010 manifesto for an impatient, and perhaps illiterate, era, “Forms serve the culture; when they die, they die for a reason: they’re no longer embodying what it’s like to be alive.” ❖





Books A random assortment of good books chosen by the *ASR* team and friends

Piano man

A very busy editor makes time for a whole lot of Chopin.

Reviewed by **Virginia Lloyd**



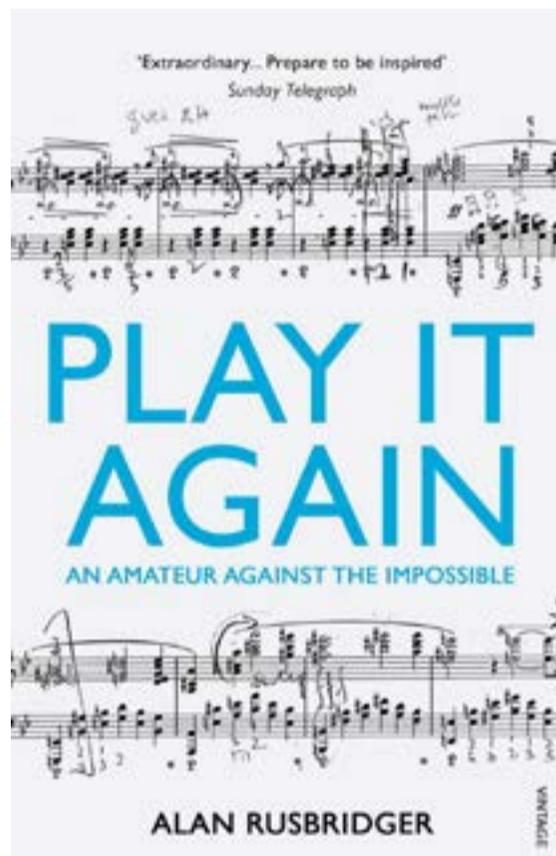
Play it Again: An Amateur Against the Impossible

Alan Rusbridger, Vintage, London, 2013, 416pp.

IN AUGUST 2010, at the age of 56, Alan Rusbridger set himself the challenge of learning to play Chopin's Ballade No. 1 in G minor, and to perform it in public within one year. The Ballade, perhaps best known as the work Adrien Brody's character performs in Roman Polanski's film *The Pianist*, is one of the most beloved and difficult works of the piano repertoire.

"Day job or no day job, I'd carve out the time to practice the hell out of Chopin's Op. 23," Rusbridger writes of his decision. No small undertaking when you consider that when he's not practising the piano, he's editing the *Guardian* newspaper. I was exhausted just reading Rusbridger's description of a typical working week.

But the ambitious amateur's timing could not have been worse. While studying Chopin, Rusbridger found himself steering the newspaper through one of the most dramatic years in its



history: the Wikileaks revelations and the *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal were two of the period's most important stories, occurring within a media environment rapidly transformed by technology.

"The test would be to nibble out twenty minutes each day to do something that had nothing at all to do with any of the above," he writes.

Using the diary he kept throughout the experience as a kind of middle C, Rusbridger has composed an engrossing, digressive and thoroughly entertaining account that balances his musical journey with his insider's view of what it's like to run a major newspaper during a sustained period of intense global scrutiny.

Rusbridger's list of "a dozen immediately obvious reasons why the piece is unplayable ... by me" illustrates the technical challenge ahead of him while illuminating Chopin's complex work to those unfamiliar with its component parts. Writing about music is notoriously difficult, but musicians and non-musicians alike can empathize with his dread of



the run of notes in bar 33 he calls “squashed flies on a page” and the “death-defying trapeze artist leaps in mid-air” demanded in the coda.

“**I**N MOUNTAINEERING terms, it would be akin to a middle-aged man deciding to climb the Matterhorn—something a few obsessive and foolhardy amateurs do, indeed, attempt, but fraught with peril.”

Rusbridger’s clear-eyed descriptions of his weaknesses as a pianist keep the tone on the side of the amateur, even as his broad knowledge and deep love of the classical music repertoire is evident on almost every page. In fact, he’s a little disingenuous about his level of technical facility. Not for a hundred pages or so do we learn of Rusbridger’s return to the piano in his early forties



On the mornings Rusbridger could practise before going to work ... he was intrigued by the “powerful sense that the chemistry of my brain had been altered”



after abandoning lessons and interest as a teenager.

It’s been quite a musical renaissance: *Play It Again* documents the regular meetings of the chamber groups of which he’s a member, including the Spider Club, a group of four pianists who meet to play duets. His active participation in domestic music-making is startling for highlighting how much this leisure activity, commonplace throughout the nineteenth century, has become a niche hobby by the early years of the twenty-first.

One of the richest seams of the book is Rusbridger’s exploration of the value of amateurism in both music-making and journalism. Agreeing with “digital guru” Clay Shirky that the rise in amateurism online will improve culture over time, Rusbridger argues that we “need professional



Chopin’s hand. Postmortem cast at Polish Museum, Rapperswil. SOURCE WIKIMEDIA

musicians and journalists—but we should celebrate this rebirth of an amateur tradition, alongside the professional world”.

When he began studying the Ballade, Rusbridger considered his daily practice had nothing to do with his day job. *Play it Again* demonstrates several ways in which this turns out to be anything but the case. On the mornings Rusbridger could practise before going to work, for example, he was intrigued by the “powerful sense that the chemistry of my brain had been altered”, that on those days, “my brain felt ‘settled’ and ready for whatever the next twelve hours would bring”. By asking neuroscientists to explain what’s going on, he learns that “it was not a chemical reaction, but a literal rewiring of the neural circuitry”.



As a piece of music-making technology, the piano has been eclipsed in the past century by newer technologies for the creation, performance and consumption of music. Through Twitter, for example, Rusbridger discovers a community of other pianists attempting the Ballade, and links to YouTube recordings of performances. It's a fascinating example of his argument that new media platforms bring global distribution to old-fashioned communities of interest.

Play It Again is worth reading alone for his views, scattered throughout the book like a composer's markings, of the reality and implications of digital technology in the newspaper and music businesses alike. But part of the book's charm and insight is how the work towards his pianistic goal reflects the interdependence of old and new technologies.

As a journalist, Rusbridger speaks to a range of sources—in this case, concert pianists, scientists and piano teachers—about the Ballade and

his struggle to master it. Their tips on his main challenges, of fingering and memorization, open the world of professional practice to the amateur musician in a way that applies to anyone who has ever felt she's bitten off more than she can chew. One clear inference of Rusbridger's approach, whether he's coordinating the global sharing of the Wikileaks revelations or deciding the best fingering for the coda, is that teamwork is essential to a successful outcome.

In the end it took him eighteen months, but Rusbridger performed the Ballade at The Arts Club 1901 in London for a small audience of family, friends and the two teachers who coached him.

"The real point," he concludes, "is not that I can play it to concert standard: it's been part of a much broader experiment in how to use your time, how to relish—and revel in—being an amateur." ❖



Legendary lava

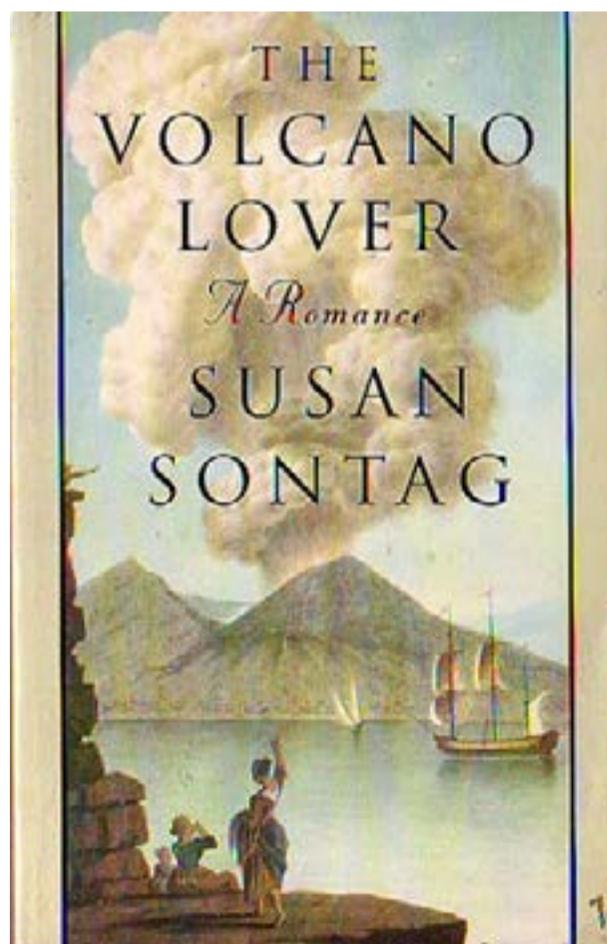
Susan Sontag's book about the scandalous Emma Hamilton is a primer for seeing Naples in a unique light.

Reviewed by **Anne Summers**

The Volcano Lover: A Romance

Susan Sontag, Anchor Books, New York, 1993, 422 pp.

IN PREPARATION for my first visit to Naples in December 2013, I read a novel. Author and editor Hazel Flynn had suggested it would give me a better picture of Naples than any guidebook, and she was right. One cannot use a work of fiction to obtain the addresses and opening hours of a city's great museums, nor can an historical novel





Emma Hamilton by George Romney, c.1785 and by Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, 1790.

SOURCE: WWW.NPG.ORG.UK, WWW.CLARKART.EDU

guide you through the complexities of a teeming, modern metropolis. What Susan Sontag's book did was ready my mind and my imagination not just for Naples, but for a European holiday that was largely dedicated to inspecting some of the world's greatest art.

On the face of it, *The Volcano Lover* is the story of Sir William Hamilton ("the Cavaliere"), the British consul to Naples during the late-eighteenth century, his second wife Emma ("the Wife") and their intriguing *ménage à trois* with the great British naval conqueror Lord Nelson ("the hero"). Hamilton was a great collector and looter of Italian antiquities (he sold dozens of Etruscan vases to the British Museum) and a man consumed by the volcanic Mount Vesuvius whose brooding presence helps define the city of Naples.

Hamilton is the volcano lover, the man whose benign exterior conceals explosive passions. He is

a collector and Sontag's book is also an exploration of what Werner Muensterberger called "the unruly passion" that drives the collector. He or she—Sontag herself was a collector—will do almost anything to acquire the object of their desire. Hamilton, she writes, "got better at removing treasures from the excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum under the very eyes of the King's archaeologists". Willing to break laws to have whatever his eye landed on, he defied convention by actually marrying and thereby conferring a title on Emma, the bawdy and rambunctious former prostitute.

Just before Naples, I had seen one of [George Romney's portraits of Emma](#) in the National Portrait Gallery in London. Emma was Romney's muse and before she decamped to Naples, he painted her a number of times; Hamilton acquired many of these portraits. Romney depicts Emma as a fragile English



When they returned to England in November 1800, Emma was seven months pregnant with Nelson's child. This caricature by James Gilray, 1801, depicts Emma as an immensely fat Dido awaiting her Aeneas. SOURCE: WWW.RMG.CO.UK

beauty, but by the time Nelson came into her life she was obese and alcoholic. He was mutilated: he had lost an eye and an arm and, according to Sontag, most of his teeth.

This unlikely couple was the scandal of the era. Nelson defied orders to remain in Naples, and took it upon himself to order show trials and the execution of many Parthenopaeian Republic rebels in Naples in 1799, including Eleonora de Fonseca Pimentel, the poet and journalist whose newspaper chronicled the shortlived rebellion and who was clearly someone Sontag admired.

The Naples Sontag writes about can be visited today. The great palace of Capodimonte, now one of the world's great museums, was originally intended as a hunting lodge for King Ferdinand IV, whom

Nelson helped restore to the throne after the rebels were put down. Sontag describes how the king was too lazy to engage in actual hunting: "The beaters corralled endless columns of wild boar, deer and hare, and then rove them past the King who stood in a roofless sentry box of solid masonry in the park at his country palace ... Out of a hundred shots, he never missed more than one".

And at Naples' astonishing [National Museum of Archaeology](#) you can walk through the Farnese collection of marbles, cameos and other treasures, the product of a lifetime of collecting by Ferdinand's family. Then there is Vesuvius and Pompeii, stripped of its marble by the rulers of Naples.

To see Naples through Sontag's eyes is to understand, and to rage against, the absence of



Judith and Olophernes by Artemisia Gentileschi, 1612–13. SOURCE: WWW.POLOMUSEALENAPOLI.BENICULTURALI.IT

women in art and in history. *The Volcano Lover* is surprising for its ferocious feminism. I had not pictured Sontag as a defender of women's rights but when Edward Hirsch asked if she thought of herself a feminist in an interview for *Paris Review* in 1995, Sontag replied it was "one of the few labels I'm content with".

Women are central to her story, and she ensures we think about why they are usually overlooked. She not only deals in considerable detail with the way "the Wife" and "the Queen" actually ran the affairs of state while "the King" was engaged in his debaucheries, but supplies such details as the Cavaliere commissioning Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, who had arrived in Naples post-Bastille in 1790, to paint Emma: "He already owned some dozen portraits of her. He could not have too many ... Probably he gave no thought to the fact that this would be the first portrait of her by one of the few professional painters who was a woman".

And even among so many incomparable treasures at Capodimonte, one must do more than pause before Artemisia Gentileschi's *Judith and Olophernes* (1612–13). As Germaine Greer pointed out in *The Obstacle Race*, "Artemisia represents the female equivalent of an Old Master". She also "developed an ideal of heroic womanhood", noted Greer. Nowhere was this more evident than in the several paintings of *Judith Slaying Olophernes*. (The Uffizi in Florence has one.)

Gentileschi painted her first Judith while she was enduring the trial of her rapist, an action brought to the court by her father who was less upset at the loss of his daughter's honour than by the rapist having stolen some of his own paintings. During the court action, Gentileschi was tortured with a thumbscrew to establish whether she was being truthful, and forced to put up with the indignity of being examined in court by two midwives to determine that she was no longer a virgin.

Her revenge was this painting. Unlike other artists who had painted Judith, even Caravaggio, who made do with showing the severed head, Gentileschi showed the act of murder in all its savagery. And being committed by women. Like Sontag, this artist does not shirk the bloody and often brutal business of what it means to be female.

Sontag concludes *The Volcano Lover* with four posthumous monologues, each by a woman. "I was his first wife" (Hamilton's first wife Catherine); "I'm her mother. You know who I mean: her mother" (Emma's mother and companion throughout the book, Mrs Cadogen); Emma herself ("There was some magic about me"); and, finally, Eleonora de Fonseca Pimentel (who wore a dark dress to the gallows to conceal the fact she had her period): "Sometimes I had to forget I was a woman to accomplish the best of which I was capable. Or I would lie to myself about how complicated it is to be a woman. Thus do all women, including the author of this book". ❖





The big question

An existential detective story.

Reviewed by **Hazel Flynn**

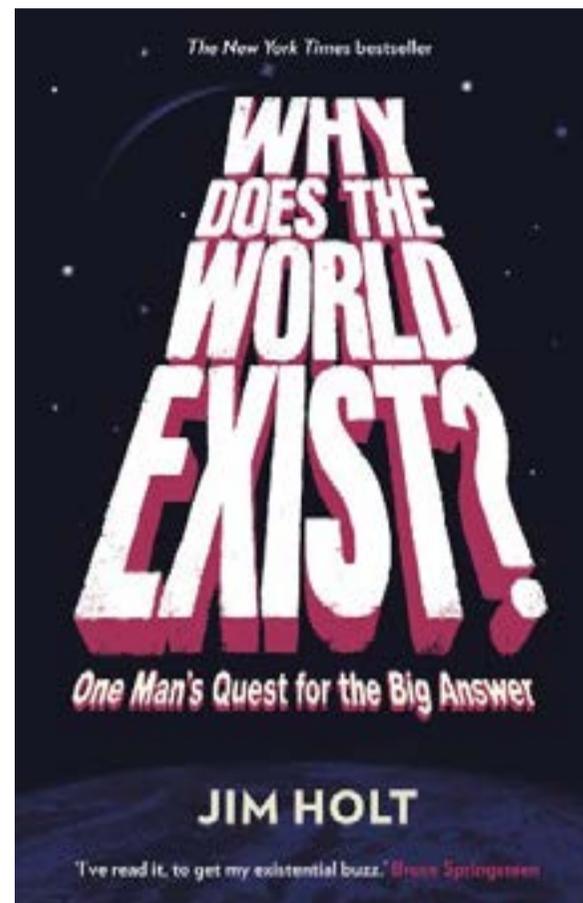
Why Does the World Exist?

Jim Holt, Profile Books, New York, 2013, 307 pp.

THE PHENOMENAL, surprise success of Dava Sobel's 1995 book *Longitude* opened the floodgates for popular science writing. Suddenly publishers could see a market for topics previously viewed as too specialized to be commercial. Since then, writers such as James Gleick (*Chaos, Faster*), David Bodanis (*E=mc², Electric Universe*) and Simon Singh (*Fermat's Last Theorem, Big Bang*) have consistently produced work for lay readers that is intelligent, informative and highly engaging. (I'd never have guessed that a book about the science of electricity could move me to tears, yet Bodanis's chapter on Alexander Graham Bell did just that.)

Jim Holt's *Why Does the World Exist?* throws the net even wider, taking in philosophy and theology as well as science and advanced mathematics. The subtitle for US edition is "an existential detective story". The UK/Commonwealth version, "One man's quest for the big answer", may be less glamorous but it better captures Holt's ambition to answer a question that first troubled him as a would-be teenage rebel: "Why is there something rather than nothing at all?"

For his deeply Catholic parents and the nuns who taught him, the question was a non-starter. God created the world and Himself, period. But when, as a philosophy undergraduate, Holt discovered David Hume and the idea of a hidden cosmic algebra—an explanation for existence able to be uncovered by reasoning alone—there was no going back. Decades later he embarked upon a survey of



He embarked ... to try find an answer. Not just "Why am I here" but "why is there a here?"

leading thinkers in theology, philosophy and science to try to find an answer. Not just "Why am I here?" but "Why is there a here?" As my literate local barista said with a raised eyebrow, noticing the book's title, "Bit of light reading, then?"

Holt, a critic and essayist for the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times* and the *London Review of Books*, spends the first 60 pages giving us the basics we'll need to accompany him on his quest. He runs us through the approaches taken by historical figures including Leibniz (the universe was created by God, a "necessary" being), Kant (don't be illogical, there is no such thing as a necessary being; anything we can imagine being, we can imagine not-being), Heidegger (someday, maybe, we'll know) and Spinoza (the world



is the cause of itself—*causa sui*—divine, infinite and responsible for its own existence). We get a primer on some of the mathematical and scientific concepts involved, including empty set theory and the difference between nothing (“there’s nothing left in the packet”) and nothingness (the opposite of existence).

These are weighty ideas that demand concentration. But Holt is writing for a general audience—intellectually curious but not necessarily versed in the latest developments in astrophysics. It’s his ability to communicate profound ideas in a witty, readable way that saw the book become a US bestseller. Even if not everything sticks, plenty will.

HOLT INTERVIEWS leading thinkers in theology (Richard Swinburne), quantum mechanics (David Deutsch), cosmology (Alexander Vilenkin and John Leslie), theoretical physics (Steven Weinberg), mathematical physics (Roger Penrose) and philosophy (Derek Parfit), all interesting encounters. Sometimes, as with Pittsburgh-based Adolf Grünbaum, “arguably the greatest living philosopher of science”, not to mention an enthusiastic drinker and terrible driver, they are funny and charming as well as enlightening.

“People have made arguments against the coherence of the concept of nothingness, but many of these arguments seem fallacious to me,” Grünbaum tells Holt, “... proving that the Null World is a genuine possibility is not my problem. It’s the problem of Leibniz and Heidegger and Christian philosophers and all the boys who want to make hay out of the question Why is there a world rather than nothing at all? If nothingness is impossible, then, as the medieval used to say, *cadit quaestio*—‘the question falls’—and I’ll just go have a beer!”

But a sameness creeps in. The interview chapters begin with Holt placing in context the great mind he is about to meet. The pair converse, Holt

questions, proposes and clarifies. He takes his leaves and then—and only then—details his reasons for rejecting the theory that has just been outlined. Early on, describing those he interviewed, he writes, “Sometimes they would say the most astonishing things ... But I also found it oddly empowering. When you listen to such thinkers feel their way around the question of why there is a world at all, you begin to realize your own thoughts on the matter are not quite so nugatory as you imagined.”

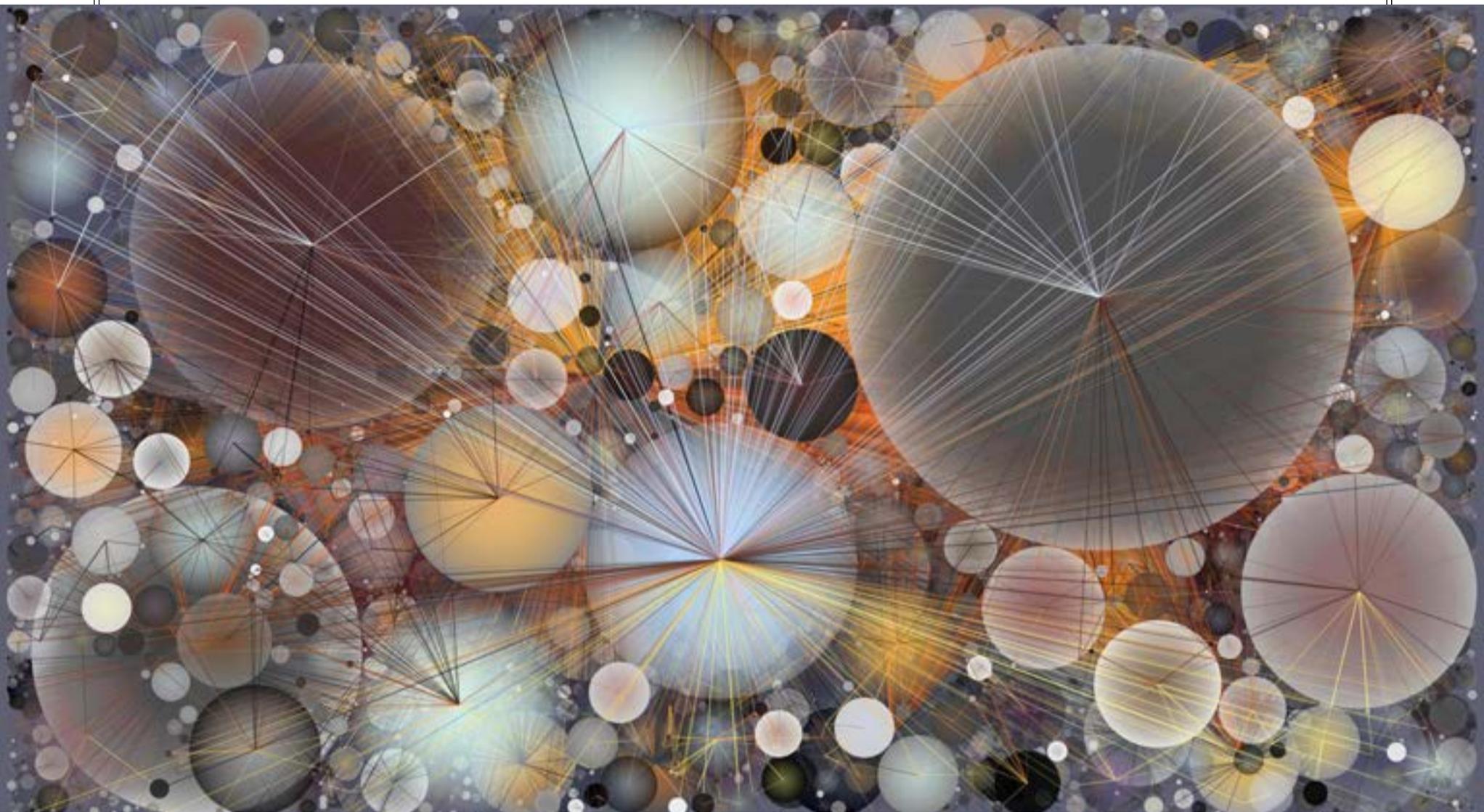
This strikes me as disingenuous, given the confidence with which he rejects their ideas. (“Richard Swinburne seems to have solved one mystery at the price of introducing another ... he concedes that he can find no explanation for God himself ... If this is the best that theism can do”;



They are united by one thing: they’re all by men (including the sole non-academic, novelist John Updike).

“Vilenkin’s calculations appeared to be sound. Yet ... I had to confess that my imagination bridled at his scenario of creation from nothing”; “I couldn’t help noticing what looked like a failure of nerve on Penrose’s part”; “Maybe Leslie is right ... about one thing. Maybe the world really does owe its existence to some sort of abstract principle. But it seems unlikely that this principle should be intimately bound up with human concerns and judgements”). So confident is Holt that, by the end of the book, he has developed his own theory, complete with a formal logical proof.

The theorists he meets offer a range of answers to his central question: it’s a manifestation of divine will; an expression of a Platonic mathematical essence; a fluke, a fluctuation in a quantum vacuum; it satisfies a cosmic need for “goodness”. The diverse views are often diametrically opposed, but they are



Generated by random fractal calculations, Holger Lippmann's art may echo the creation of life. SOURCE: WWW.LUMICON.DE

united by one thing: they're all by men (including the sole non-academic, novelist John Updike). Women get only passing mentions, as in the vet resembling "a young Goldie Hawn" who puts Holt's beloved dog to sleep.

Holt's choice of detail is sometimes odd. In context, walking through the colour and chaos of New York's Washington Square after interviewing the mathematical Platonist Roger Penrose allows Holt to ponder how such concepts play out in our everyday world ("I left his penthouse world of Platonic ideals ... These people! I thought, What do they know of the serene and timeless Platonic realm?"). But we could have done without the inclusion of Holt's meal choices, down to the amount, type and national origin of the wine.

For Nobel laureate Weinberg, "The effort to understand the universe is one of the very few things that lifts human life above the level of farce, and gives it some of the grace of tragedy."

Whether or not you agree with this rather stark view, Holt's book, while not perfect, is well worth reading. At worst you'll have boned up on enough state-of-the-art thinking to stand you in good stead for many dinner parties to come. At best you'll find a perspective that personally resonates.

For me it's that of physicist Ed Tryon who, in 1969, began to develop quantum fluctuation theory based on the idea that the universe has a net energy of zero—a concept so startling it had literally stopped Einstein in his tracks when he encountered the idea two decades earlier.

In answer to the ultimate "why" question Tryon said, "I offer the modest proposal that our universe is simply one of those things which happen from time to time." ❖





Primary Sources

The Go To Place for the words and images that define us, here and around the world

Abortion politics in the US and Australia

“The Texas law is part of the [surge of anti-abortion measures](#)—in the guise of health and safety protections or based on a scientifically dubious theory of fetal pain—approved in Republican-controlled states over the past three years. In 2013 alone, 22 states adopted 70 different restrictions, the Guttmacher Institute reports, including pre-viability abortion bans that defy Supreme Court precedent, unwarranted doctor and clinic regulations, limits on medication abortion by forbidding use of the most up-to-date drug protocol, and bans on insurance coverage. These restrictions make it more difficult for women in many regions to obtain an abortion.”

According to the [Spectator](#), “there is consensus among the north Americans that the battle against abortion has been ‘won’

by the pro-life side (unlike in Australia). All the opinion surveys point to this, but what is even more evident is the youth and diversity of the pro-life movement. Gone is the divide that saw the old Catholic pro-lifers versus the ‘progressives’. The movement in the US is incredibly diverse: women, men and gay and straight. It has taken long enough for people to see the obvious about killing the unborn, but science is on our side.”

In late January, the [US House of Representatives voted](#) to prevent abortion being covered by health insurance in the new Obamacare scheme.

In Australia, the story is very different. A poll conducted in Victoria in December 2012 found that 85 per cent of [people supported a woman’s right to choose](#).

Tweets All / No replies



Pope Francis @Pontifex 1h

I join the March for Life in Washington with my prayers. May God help us respect all life, especially the most vulnerable

[Collapse](#) Reply Retweet Favorite More

4,946

RETWEETS

4,566

FAVORITES



+ **Pope Francis lends his support to a march in Washington against a woman’s right to choose**



Boat arrivals in Australia since 1986

[Information](#) provided by the Parliamentary Library in Canberra

Displaced persons and refugees: a [global picture](#)



Equality watch

Q: Do male business leaders really believe in equality for women?

A: [Nup.](#) (Not only that, they actually admit it!)

And [where were the women](#) at this year’s World Economic Forum in Davos?

The Missing Picture

🕒 In 2013, Bill Crews founded the **Big Picture Film Festival** to highlight films that promote ideas of social justice. This year, it screens in Sydney from 19 to 29 March. Among the films being shown is *The Missing Picture*, a film that uses clay models to tell the story of what happened in Cambodia during the Pol Pot regime, rather than rely on propaganda images, which are all that survive from that era. The film has also been nominated for an Academy Award in the best Foreign Language Film category.



President Obama's interactive State of the Union address

You could watch it, listen to it, read it (in English or Spanish), on closed caption, or through a hangout. And

then there was the **content**: a promise to lift the minimum wage, to end tax subsidies for fossil fuels, to (finally?) end the war in Afghanistan.

ideapod

ASR readers are invited to join [IdeaPod](#), an exciting new global project (started by Australians) for sharing and developing ideas. Membership is by invitation only.

ASR readers can [join here](#). To get started, share an idea—expressed in no more than 1000 characters—around the following hashtags: #ClimateChange, #Journalism and #WomensEquality.

Share your ideas using Twitter mentioning @SummersAnne and @ideas. We look forward to continuing the conversation with you at [ideapod.com!](#)



One on one

Nobel-winning author [Orhan Pamuk](#) talks to Katherine Keating (left) about his Museum of Innocence in Istanbul, a museum to display the objects of the times he spent with the woman he loves.



IT'S MY OLYMPICS AND I'LL BAN GAYS IF I WANT TO

Putin's Russia's performance

- On 30 June 2013 legislation banned "[propaganda](#)" that made "non-traditional sexual relations" "attractive" especially to "minors".
- Russians face fines for violating the law; foreign citizens (including, presumably, Olympians) can be imprisoned and deported.
- Travel agencies have [warned tourists](#) to avoid same-sex kissing, hand-holding and not to wear or display any rainbow flags.

Putinesca

In January, Vladimir Putin said gay people will be not be harassed at the Winter Olympics in Sochi, as long as they [stay away from children](#).

The Olympic charter

"Any form of [discrimination](#) ... on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement."



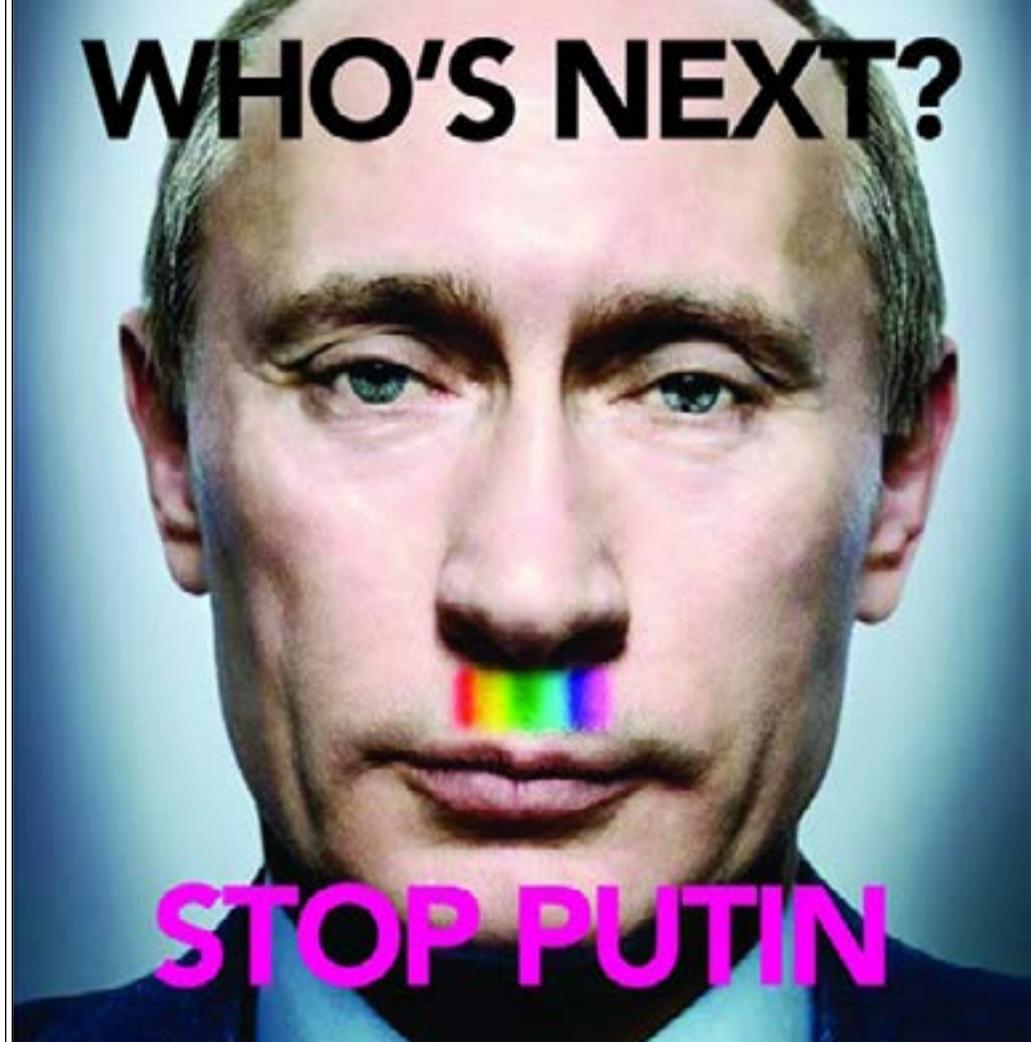
America's ABC News George Stephanopoulos [interviews Putin](#).

BBC "[I'm not prejudiced](#) in any way."

The US response

In response to the Russian laws, the US president selects [gays to be in the official US delegation](#) to Sochi.

- [Billie Jean King](#) can't join the presidential delegation.





FEEDBACK

Not dead yet ...

Theatre producer **Sam Levy** takes issue with David Hay's recent article on the decline of the Broadway stage.

THERE IS MUCH in David Hay's recent article ("Give my regrets to Broadway", ASR 5) about the current plight of the New York theatre scene that is both sad and true: the high ticket prices, the declining audiences, the poor work that makes it and the brilliant work that doesn't. His "anguish" as a playwright is shared by many of us in the industry, as we struggle to pay our rent and create better plays and try to figure out why we haven't moved into the television industry yet.

But that anguish is only part of the story. It's also worth taking a few steps back to provide some context, and try to understand why it's not quite as grim here in New York as David makes it sound.

A thriving commercial sector

New York has something that most places do not: a thriving commercial theatre sector on Broadway, for whom courting the limited theatre-going audience is a day-to-day necessity. Of course, much of the time, this competition results in less than satisfactory shows (and, even more often, less than satisfactory returns for producers and investors). But there's not a person I know who works in theatre who isn't relieved and delighted that Broadway still exists and, for the most part, prospers. In a world where we have an endless array of choices for how we spend our leisure time, isn't it amazing that an artform, changed very little for



New talent abounds in work by Josh Harmon (*Bad Jews*), Tarell Alvin McCraney (*American Trade*) and Annie Baker (*Circle Mirror Transformation*).

hundreds of years, still manages to pack them in? Who cares if they're going to see Daniel Craig or Daniel Radcliffe, as long as there's a chance that they'll come again? Theatre on Christmas Eve—what's not to like about that?

A robust not-for-profit sector

As David acknowledges, there are plenty of good, new plays in New York, even if they're most likely to be found Off Broadway (a distinction based on seating capacity and wage contracts, not quality or location).

David mentions Amy Herzog's and Nina Raines' works, and I'd add to those the plays of Annie Baker, Bruce Norris, Josh Harmon and Tarell Alvin

McCraney, among many others. The quality is usually high and, on a good day, the diversity is astounding. Although some do, most of the shows will never transfer to Broadway for a commercial run. Most probably shouldn't. In any case, a Broadway transfer is certainly not the standard by which we should be measuring success.

Yet I agree that there are plenty of grounds for disgruntlement. There's often a disproportionate focus at these not-for-profit institutions, for example, on administrators over artists, buildings over art, and fundraising over audience development.

But those subscription audiences that are willing to take (heavily subsidized) risks at the hands of our not-for-profit theatres are an invaluable and integral piece of the development trajectory for most plays and playwrights. As a result, these institutions, along with the thousand or so off-Off Broadway theatre companies, are essential players in the creative ecosystem that feeds the theatre—and film, television, fashion, design and even YouTube. Unfortunately, the indispensable role played by these companies and artists is rarely matched by financial reward. David's certainly right that no playwright—or actor or director or company or anyone else—is going to get rich from an Off Broadway production. (It's pretty unlikely that anyone will get rich from a Broadway one, either, although at least it's possible.) Indeed, the odds of simply earning a living in the theatre aren't very good, but the sad fact that so many artists of all disciplines are unable to survive without a “day job” is a perennial problem, and one that very few need not consider.

A highly unionized sector

Surprisingly, in a country that has decimated the power of trade unions over the past 40 years, Broadway and Off Broadway theatre is pretty much a closed shop. We have strong, powerful unions in this industry that bargain for wages, health benefits, overtime and other employment conditions—from the actors, musicians, choreographers and directors, to the press representatives, ushers, company managers and stage hands. This has kept wages, producing costs and ticket prices relatively high.

Of course, not everyone in the industry is unionized. There are hundreds of people who work in theatre at sub-par wages, or none at all. That is appalling, especially in a city as expensive and as wealthy as New York. But it's certainly not peculiar to this sector; it's a sombre reality across industries and regions in the United States, and it's going to take an enormous amount of political will to begin to fix it.

A sector without a formula

As part of his anguish, David decries the formulaic way by which we—that is, the producers—produce shows (a disclosure: my company produced the Nora Ephron/Tom Hanks play that he didn't like). If there's a formula to mitigate risk, my colleagues and I would love to hear it. The reality is that there is no blueprint for success on Broadway, or anywhere else in theatre. Musicals have long been based on other source materials, such as books (*Wicked*, *Oliver!* and *Cabaret*), comics (*Annie*), films (*The Producers* and *Hairspray*), songs (*Mamma Mia!*), and even paintings (*Sunday in the Park with George*). Plays have long employed movie stars in their casts, well before the rise of television, the DVD and the Internet.

And yet, despite these “formulas”, the vast majority (around 70 per cent) of shows on Broadway fail to win audiences or return their original investments. Some shows work, some don't. That's showbiz.

I don't make these points to belittle David's frustration, much of which I share. It would be unfortunate, however, to be left solely with the impression that New York's theatre world is in an inexorable decline induced by cynical capitalists, rather than a more complex landscape in which resides an incredibly vibrant and eclectic milieu of artists, audiences and art. ❖

Sam Levy is Literary Director at A.T. Productions, a theatrical production company producing theatre in New York and London since 1998, receiving over 80 Tony nominations and 34 Olivier nominations.



FEEDBACK



I REALLY enjoyed Robert Milliken's article ("Outside Agitator" ASR 5) and I learned a lot. I had no idea that Cardinal Pell had been courting union leaders, or that he had put so much pressure on the ALP government in NSW.

I must say I particularly loved the way Premier Kristina Keneally challenged him with the women's ordination issue! The other thing that struck me in the article was the number of Catholics in prominent positions; for instance, I didn't know that Nathan Rees was a Catholic!

What will be really interesting to see is just how Pell deals with Pope Francis' new agenda, which is very different from that of his predecessor, Benedict XVI. Francis is making it abundantly clear

that it is the church's primary role to promote the gospel message of love, justice and care for the poor and marginalized. He has no time for capitalism "in tooth and claw" and has withdrawn almost entirely from cultural warfare over issues like same-sex marriage, stem-cell research, contraception, abortion and influencing politics and politicians. He has no sympathy with a "boots and all" political style of Catholicism and promotes a very different approach to church government from that of many of the bishops.

Pell's style fits in much more with some of the US bishops than with his predecessors in Sydney. It will be a test of the Cardinal's ability to see if he can adapt to Pope Francis' approach.

Paul Collins Sydney



@mytwocentsandme @SummersAnne @JuliaGillard
Superb piece by Robert Milliken on the insidious lobbying of George Pell.

FOLLOW-UP

Stories don't end after we publish. Here we will update you on subjects we've covered in previous issues.

Our Climate Emergency (ASR #5)

- 👉 The Climate Council's [report](#) on bushfires
- 👉 China gets [busy](#)

E-cigarettes (ASR #5)

- 👉 E-cigarettes are [taking off](#)
- 👉 And given [celebrity endorsement](#) at the Golden Globe awards ceremony by Leonardo diCaprio and Julia Louis-Dreyfus

Women grab world economic levers (ASR #5)

- 👉 Some of the [female financial regulators](#) are attracting criticism for their post-government moves

Australian Honours criterion High Court challenge (ASR #2, 4)

- 👉 The High Court found against making public the criteria for awarding Order of Australia honours. [The judgment](#)
- 👉 [Commentary](#) by Peter Timmins, an Australian lawyer who writes *Open and Shut*, a blog devoted to Freedom of Information issues (and who is a regular writer for ASR)



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Those shades of grey

“ I have been a little bit bemused by those colleagues in the newspapers who have admitted that I have suffered more pressure as a result of my gender than other prime ministers in the past, but then concluded that it had zero effect on my political position or the political position of the Labor Party. It doesn't explain everything, it doesn't explain nothing, it explains some things. And it is for the nation to think in a sophisticated way about those shades of grey.”

Julia Gillard Statement upon leaving the Prime Ministership 26 June 2013

ASR welcomes contributions to Those Shades of Grey articles that explore or reflect on the role of gender in Australian political leadership. Please keep articles as short as possible. Send to annesummersreports@gmail.com with Some Shades of Grey in the subject line.

A New Political Weaponry

The treatment of Australia's first female Prime Minister by both sides of politics meant Julia Gillard never stood a chance, writes **Mary Delahunty**.

YES, AS JULIA GILLARD said, indeed it explains some things. The gender of our twenty-seventh Prime Minister created an anvil to hammer out a new form of political weaponry, a crude sexualized branding wielded to undermine legitimacy and tenure. It was the template for a political trifecta that hemmed Julia Gillard PM in and hounded her out. The immediate shock jock and opposition framing of her as “witch” and “JuLiar”, the internal Labor Rudd-led smearing of her as Lady Macbeth—amplified in the media echo chamber as the “untrustworthy woman”—compounded the challenge she faced with two political opponents and a hung parliament.

In this context Julia Gillard's power as PM was never fully formed. It signposted her leadership flaws and masked her achievements. She was never allowed to grow into power like Bob Hawke, Paul Keating or John Howard; her power was trimmed from the beginning.

Why? Because she wasn't any good, or because she was a woman? Neither. The answer is more subtle and subterranean. A corroding cocktail of sexism was given licence as the Opposition exploited minority government and an internal Labor saboteur who stopped at nothing. Gillard's trifecta.

JULIA GILLARD came to office at a time of high anxiety for many Australians, particularly older men. As manufacturing industries evaporated, scantily qualified men couldn't find work in the

brawn economy or the new brain economy. They blustered as their old jobs disappeared in industrial restructure while their wives and daughters sallied forth into the expanding services sector. This is a significant social change and it hurts. For radio shock jocks and conservative politicians it's easy to build a heaving constituency of these men who roil at the very sight and sound of a "sheila" in charge.

They were never going to give Gillard a go, and she knew it. "I always said that I didn't see myself as a woman doing the job, didn't aspire to be the first female Prime Minister, I always thought it was in my interests to park it and keep doing the job."

But they would have stayed in a corner of the canvas were it not for a coarseness creeping into political combat and public debate, what the Canberra press gallery's Michelle Grattan calls "deregulated politics, anything goes". Cultivating fears and harnessing rage, Tony Abbott, the most pugilist opposition leader in living memory, skilfully painted a patina of chaos over the hung Parliament and the media bought the story. "The 2010 election issue has never been settled," Grattan told me.

YET THERE was no mark of illegitimacy over the Victorian government I was a minister in, after Steve Bracks negotiated with independents to form a minority government in 1999 in the same way Gillard did in 2010. Nor was Premier Bracks branded a liar when he broke an election promise not to toll a new freeway. Indeed, he was given the room and respect to argue the changed budget circumstances that caused him to renege. It is a long way from due criticism of a broken promise to the personal slander of liar.

The third prong of this political trifecta Gillard had to tackle was unprecedented. Driven by a shallow myth of his own making, deposed leader Kevin Rudd created a court-in-exile in the caucus where mischief-making morphed into sustained treachery against their own government, aided and abetted by a compliant, keen-to-be-players media. (See the *Stalking of Julia Gillard* by Kerry-Anne Walsh, Allen & Unwin, 2013, for the excoriating detail.)

The saboteurs, such as the former Cabinet minister who regularly rang cartoonists urging them to

exaggerated ridicule of the Prime Minister, weren't averse to using sexism as a weapon.

PM Gillard had to devise a double defence strategy against two opponents: Abbott, who lanced her leadership from without, and Rudd, whose quest for revenge poisoned her from within. A male PM could have faced two such implacable political enemies, but would such corrosive sexualized weaponry be used against another man? I don't think so. By October 2012 Gillard had had enough and turned the blowtorch on Abbott. "I will not be lectured about sexism and misogyny by this man, I will not."

By March 2013 she definitely decided not to "park" her gender, but to use it politically. In Parliament with Rudd rampaging again, the media in a frenzy over the Labor leadership and Abbott exploiting the veneer of chaos, Prime Minister Gillard tried to

~~~~~

**Driven by a shallow myth of his own making, deposed leader Kevin Rudd created a court-in-exile in the caucus.**

reframe both the coming election and the internal test. Looking at Abbott but speaking to both opponents, both men, she hurled the challenge, "This contest will be between a strong feisty woman and a policy weak man, and I'll win it."

A winning political trifecta is purpose, policy and PR. In the year I closely observed PM Julia Gillard she spoke often about purpose in politics: why she was there; and policy, what she was doing, particularly in education. But effective public relations was denied her.

It seemed Gillard could not convince us of what was important. Branded from the beginning as a witch and framed as untrustworthy and constrained by her often leaden delivery, this Prime Minister's communications were contorted through the funnel of disrespect. Too soon, too many Australians had stopped listening. Yes, the reaction to being the first female Prime Minister does explain some things.



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◀ **Mary Delahunty** is a writer, author and a communications and governance consultant. She was the founding CEO and national director of Writing Australia Ltd; a former state government arts, education and planning minister; and award-winning television journalist and presenter. She is a director and volunteer for numerous not-for-profit organizations.

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**Jan Mayman** has reported on mining issues from Western Australia over several decades for Australian and overseas media outlets, including *The Economist*. Her interest in mining stems from her family background in the industry, which began 200 years ago in Wales. She is a winner of the Gold Walkley, Australia's highest journalism award.



◀ **Danie Mellor** is an artist whose work explores historical intersections and relationships between indigenous and western cultures. His work has sold for six-figure sums into public and private collections. [Exotic Lies Sacred Ties](#), a major survey of the last decade of Danie's work, is on show at the University of Queensland Art Museum until 27 April 2014.



◀ **Matthew Thompson** is the author of two books of literary journalism, *Running with the Blood God* and *My Colombian Death*. Areas of his reportage include shamanism, armed conflict, repression, libertarianism and mixed-sex boxing.



◀ **Paula Weideger**, a New Yorker based in London, writes regularly about art for *The Economist* and [other journals](#).



“



I have a fatal attraction for books. They are a hard-bound drug with no danger of an overdose. As Schopenhauer said: ‘It would be great if you could buy with the books the time to read them.’ ”

## **KARL LAGERFELD**

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