

QUADRANT

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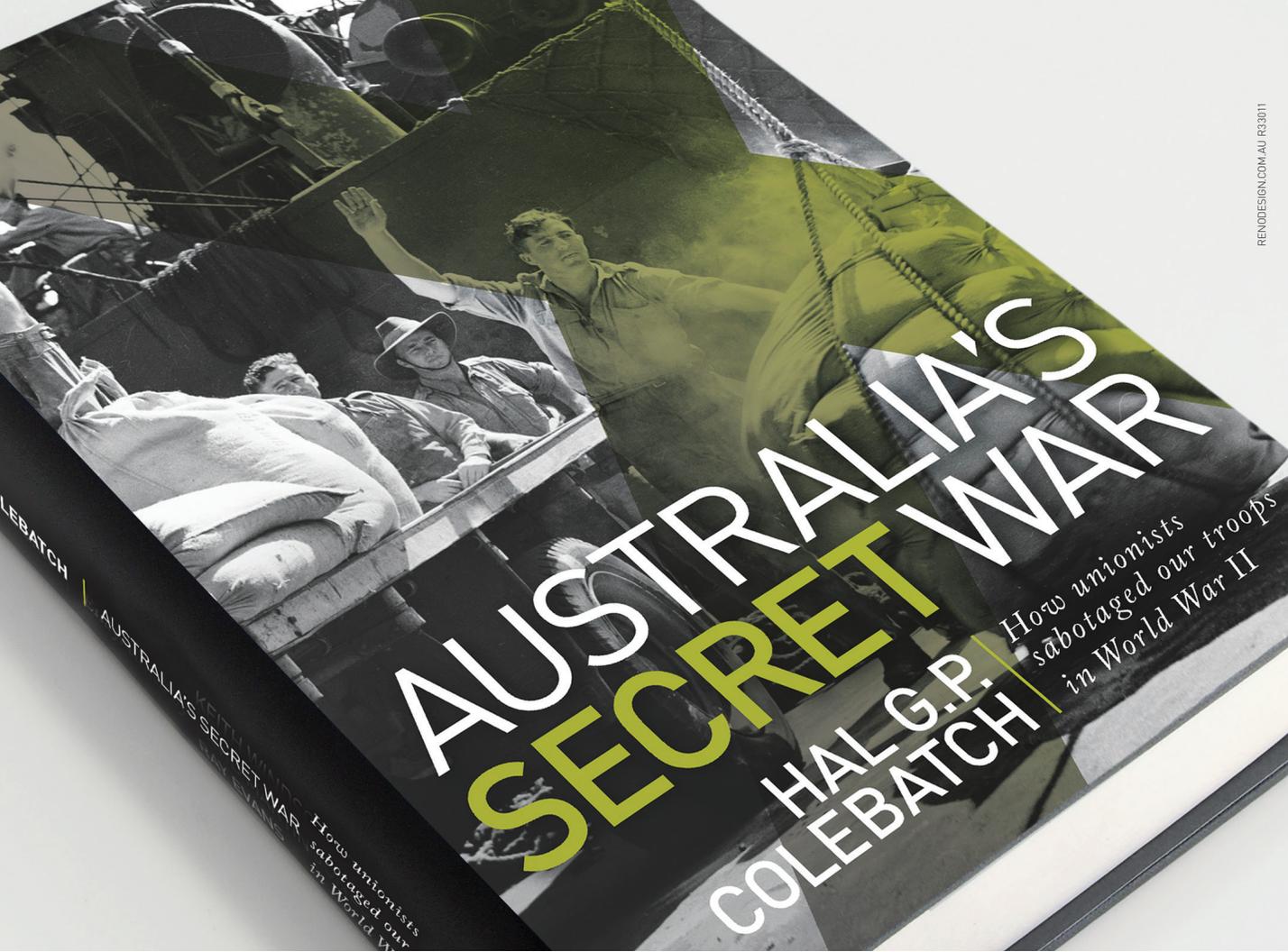
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QUADRANT

EDITOR

Keith Windschuttle
keithwindschuttle@quadrant.org.au

EDITOR, INTERNATIONAL

John O'Sullivan

LITERARY EDITOR

Les Murray

DEPUTY EDITOR

George Thomas

EDITOR, QUADRANT ONLINE

Roger Franklin
rjrogerfranklin@gmail.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Film: Neil McDonald
Theatre: Michael Connor

COLUMNISTS

Anthony Daniels
Tim Blair

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Phone: (03) 8317 8147
Fax: (03) 9320 9065
Post: Quadrant Magazine,
Locked Bag 1235,
North Melbourne VIC 3051
E-mail: quadrantmagazine@data.com.au

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LETTERS

Elizabeth and Danila

SIR: The article by Jane Sutton (July-August 2017) on Elizabeth Vassilieff's relationships to the major Australian painter and sculptor Danila Vassilieff encourages me to come out of my relatively quiet corner to rake over some of the old coals.

Like many another artist's wife, Elizabeth was also a target of his sometimes vindictive brush. It was fine during the honeymoon years (when her theatrical cousin Dr Robin Sharwood attended their parties) but devastating when their marriage split. Sutton's article is equivocal about the facts of this split but, quite apart from the archive, the split is also confirmed by the swag of vicious wedding paintings that tell a different story. Her third husband, William Wolf (the German linesman who was taking the power out to Warrandyte), was in fact her *de facto* husband at the time of Danila's death and the loss of the house he had built with his own hands embittered him in his last years and damaged his pride. His estranged widow wasted no time in challenging his will, which gave his copyright to the Museum of Modern Art and Design.

If Betty's cousins had dug deeper they might have discovered her July 1955 letter to Vassilieff when he was in Mildura teaching: "I have told everyone the same thing; that you are up there for your health and that you are

teaching and quite liking it." This letter, written from 106 George Street, East Melbourne, is over-scored, "CONFIDENTIAL. This is privileged to you. Info to my legal people."

In the same file of legal correspondence, written when she was again trying to get his copyright back from MOMAD, she quoted his denunciation of her political life: "I see that you are really a Red, after all I am really a White Russian. I ought to go to the Security Police and tell them all about what you are doing."

Her political activity was a key factor in the breakdown of their marriage and it makes nonsense of the political implication of Betty's claim that he was intending to join her in Moscow. Sutton takes her words at face value in a way that implies criticism of my research. It also undercuts the important influence of Vassilieff's apolitical stance on the creative freedom of Melbourne Expressionism in the 1940s and beyond.

The subject of my research was Vassilieff's art, about which his estranged widow could not have written because she was not qualified and had insufficient understanding of it. Besides, her marriage took place only five years before his first heart attack and her own interests were primarily literary and political. Betty's naive artistic judgment is well exemplified by her exchanging his remarkable *Expulsion from Paradise* screen with a collector friend in Warrandyte.

As John Bayard later explained it:



Arts
NSW

Betty and Pat (Red) Mackie brought them around and gave them to me in exchange for a painting by a Warrandyte painter she admired. (Pat later gave me a bull-terrier puppy he brought down from Mt Isa in a small car) ... Felicity could not have known they were extant, as at Betty's request, I would neither speak to or allow Felicity to see or examine my Vassilieff paintings and sculptures.

That double-sided screen was the spark for Nolan's *Ned Kelly* series including *First Class Marksman* (Art Gallery of NSW), which was painted at Vassilieff's house the year before the Cossack Australian's marriage to Betty Sutton-Hamill-Vassilieff-Wolf-Mackie.

As a much later head prefect of Tintern CEGGS I remain shocked by Betty's aggression and censorship. I was also traumatised by her mean hounding of Oxford University Press and myself to the point that they settled for commercial reasons in 1986 which obliged me to apologise (through clenched teeth); and that Elizabeth's costly defamation case, which they had to defend and had never even been to court, hastened their departure from Australia.

That she was simultaneously threatening bookshops for stocking my book on the grounds that it was *sub judice*, and putting pressure on art museums, such as the NGA Council, to buy her Vassilieff paintings, sculptures and watercolours, claiming the watercolours were her last batch (before offering another 270 at Niagara Galleries) was utterly shameful and indefensible.

Felicity St John Moore
(author of *Vassilieff and his Art*)
South Yarra, Vic

Why French Lost to English

SIR: In his article on the decline of the French language and the rise of English (June 2017) Christie Davies omitted some important turning points.

One of these was the loss of Canada. When Captain Cook was charting the Saint Lawrence River the British and the French were preparing to fight each other, and they left him alone because his charts would be invaluable to whichever side won Canada. Could it have been Cook who whispered to General Wolfe, the British commander, that there was a track on the steep river bank that would lead him up to confront the French army? Wolfe went that way. A battle ensued, both generals were killed, and Canada became part of the Anglosphere.

Louis XVI saw a great opportunity for revenge and profit at the outbreak of the American War of Independence. He directed the French navy to support the rebels and sent troops to fight for them. His soldiers fought at Yorktown, a decisive battle of the war. His investment did not pay off. The Americans did not change to the French language, as was suggested at the time, and furthermore they preferred to buy British goods rather than French.

Then there was India. The French had great hopes of India becoming a jewel of the French empire. It was not to be. The British army, bolstered by Indian sepoy regiments, but always outnumbered, defeated the European and Indian armies arrayed against them. Nehru once remarked that the civil service, introduced by the British, was the steel frame that held India together. Nowadays he could say the same of the English language.

Perhaps it is holding the world together.

Another clue to the plight of the French language may be found in the books of Jules Verne, a nineteenth-century French novelist who wrote tales of science and fantasy. His best known story is *Around the World in Eighty Days*. The central character, Phineas Fogg, is an Englishman who accepts a bet that he cannot go round the world in the time specified.

Verne was very popular in his day, but whether his adventurous characters were travelling across Africa in a balloon, or descending to the centre of the earth, or being shot out of a huge cannon to circle the moon, none of them were French. All these energetic characters were English, German or American. His French readers could not believe that their countrymen would get themselves into the adventures and troubles invented by Monsieur Verne. He recognised the shortage of French explorers, adventurers, successful generals, settlers and entrepreneurs. If you are lacking such people you are unlikely to spread your language around the globe.

Robert Lawson
Bentleigh, Vic

A North Korea Solution

SIR: There is one solution, and probably only one, to the current crisis over North Korea's development of a strategic nuclear capability. That is the initiation of a process leading to a peace treaty on the peninsula and an end to the frozen state of war, a war neither side won nor can win.

This process would involve the gradual bringing-in of North Korea from the diplomatic cold. The idea that North Korea will give up its nuclear deterrent is absurd, because as anyone can see, and certainly as North Korea sees it, nuclear weapons are the only

certain deterrent against external threats from other nuclear-armed powers.

This solution, which entails the tacit acceptance of North Korea as a nuclear-armed power, will appear humiliating to the West, and it is. However, it has now become the only feasible solution. I would bet that the process has already begun in Washington, behind closed doors, and that Pyongyang will be in the loop. We could do with a conversation on this topic in *Quadrant*.

Philip Ayres
via e-mail

An Open Confession

SIR: In recognition of the thirtieth anniversary of the publishing of Allan Bloom's justly famous book *The Closing of the American Mind*, and in the spirit of the Marxist tenor of the times in which we live, I here place on record my confession. I understand that, holding the views I do, and resisting the call to "be more open", I am no longer fit to be a citizen (notwithstanding thirty-five years in our armed forces).

In particular, I confess to not being open on some of the big issues facing our society. I confess to believing there should be limitations on our freedom to live as we choose. I confess to not being open to the idea that the unborn are without rights. I confess to not being open to the idea that men and women are the same (equal yes, but different). I confess to not being open to the idea that the state of marriage is indifferent to who joins it. I confess to not being open to the idea that the best interests of our children are indifferent to whether their biological parents are involved in their upbringing. Finally, I confess to not being open to the idea that the Christian faith is just a matter of opinion; indeed, I hold it

to be grounded in verifiable truth claims.

And so I await a knock on the door.

Michael A. Swan
Hughes, ACT

A Crisis of Contemplation

SIR: Dr Michael Giffin (July-August) mentions many of the symptoms of the demise of Christianity in our day but does not identify the disease. The crisis Christianity is undergoing today is the same crisis it has undergone in previous ages and presumably will undergo in the future. It is a crisis of contemplation.

There are two types of churches in Christianity at present, as there have ever been: those that are dying and those that are growing. Those ecclesial communities that are dying are led and made up of people who, when a situation presents itself—whether it be defining if Christ is truly present in Holy Communion or not, marrying same-sex couples or renovating the parish hall—stack synods, are on the blower trying to convince people of their arguments and opinions, proclaiming what is and isn't the will of God and generally behaving as if they are politicians.

These people have forgotten, if they ever knew, that the primary task of every disciple of Jesus Christ is worship. The church (and the world for that matter) is not made up of *Homo sapiens* but *Homo orans*—the praying person. We are made in "the image and likeness of God". In other words, we are created, unlike the rest of creation, capable of having a relationship with God made possible through prayer. The worldly model of politically correct Anglican synods and Pope Francis stacking his curia with like-minded mates would have us think that we are

made in "the image and likeness of the world".

On the other hand, ecclesial communities that are attractive to thinking people and provide a challenging and sustaining spiritual basis for their lives and a distinctive worldview that demands a generous and informed response, while at the same time are making an impact in society, are those who, when confronted with a situation, "gather together as a community of believers with their pastors, subject to the Gospel" (all those words are important) and, in prayer, ask, "What is it God wants us to do in this situation?" No politicking; no networking; no getting up the numbers. Just waiting patiently on the Lord.

It's a crisis of contemplation, as it always is, because, contrary to the widely held opinion of many church leaders, church bureaucrats and lay people, you do run the church on Hail Marys. Many simply haven't tried it or, because prayer is a problem, don't want to.

I recall many years ago a popular Sydney Anglican bishop discussing prayer on a television forum. He said all the usual things expected of a Christian pastor. A week later he wrote a column where he admitted that the discussion had pulled him up short because, actually, he never prayed. He presided at church services, but he had no personal prayer life; no time for contemplation. He had no personal relationship with God. And he was involved in running the church! He was doing an important job affecting the lives of many people and he didn't even communicate with his Boss! Needless to say he was quite a political mover and shaker on the Sydney Anglican scene.

As for the church's future being revitalised by going back to a marginalised, persecuted catacomb community? The church can never go back but only exist in the present, because the God of

Christianity is “I AM” not I was or will be. And He speaks today and can be heard if only we have the humility and courtesy to listen. As St Benedict says in his Rule, “Listen to the precepts of the Master and turn the ears of your heart to hear ...” That’s not possible if your local church, or your universal church, is simply a noisy extension of Apex, or the Masonic lodge, or Argentinian culture, or the gay movement, or any “ism” with a bucket of holy water thrown over it.

*Phillip Turnbull
Cornelian Bay, Tas*

The Thriving History Department

SIR: Does the truth matter? Perhaps never more than now in our “post-truth”/“fake news” age. The traditional virtues of objective commentary—avoiding *ad hominem* argument, rhetorical flourish, and quoting out of context, getting the facts right and reading what one is criticising first—take on new urgency. What a pity then to see Mr Windschuttle (“A Disaster of the Active Kind”, May 2017) betray these virtues in pursuit of his old nemesis, the History Department at the University of Sydney (reiterating previous attacks over the years) and his two main bogey men, Dirk Moses and myself.

Professor Moses can answer for himself. For my part rebuttal is not difficult. There are simple factual errors. Mr Windschuttle claims I am the author of four books; actually, it’s seven, when one counts co-authored books. Selecting facts

to suit the argument. He cites two books he believes are inspired by Foucault, one on madness and another on the history of sexuality. True, but I’m also the author of a book on poverty and social policy, a book on returned soldiers, and co-author of one on the history of Harlem, another on the impact of the Dawkins reforms on the University of Sydney and one on New South Wales and the Great War for the New South Wales government—all topics of little interest to Foucault.

But has he actually read the two books he cites in support of his case? My book on madness acknowledges the importance of Foucault but is actually a sustained critique of his failure to examine the patients in institutions and their socio-economic, religious and cultural characteristics. And my history of sexuality, while also acknowledging the critical importance of Foucault’s work in this field, canvassed the arguments of as many fierce opponents of Foucault as supporters.

There are also regrettable exaggerations for effect—quoting David Stove, he claims the “complete capture of the Faculty of Arts by the Left” and other rhetorical flourishes that, surely, he knows are exaggerations but can’t resist the temptation of a “good line”. A quick glance at this year’s Faculty Handbook, if he bothered to look at it, might disabuse him of these preconceptions—he will undoubtedly find many things that offend to support his case, but where is the dangerous leftism in “Foundations of Ancient Greece”, “Greek Philosophical Texts”, “Introduction to Economic

Statistics”, “Comparative Public Sector Management”, “Descartes”, “Locke”, “Shakespeare” or “The Victorian Novel”? The maligned History Department has courses on genocide and sex and other topics that repel him but there are also courses on Medieval Women, Renaissance and Reformation, the Middle Ages and Modern China’s Wars 1895–1953, studies that would not have been unusual when Mr Windschuttle was a student, in its heyday, when presumably the Faculty was not captured by the Left.

Mr Windschuttle is an old sparring partner of the Department, especially myself and Dirk Moses. We have crossed swords in public and in print. But the History Department is thriving and doing remarkable work despite these slurs and it sits in one of the few faculties in the world that can genuinely claim to some reasonable coverage of both the Western canon and the Eastern. Mr Windschuttle’s perceptions seem set in aspic. One only wishes that he would get his facts right and read what he criticises so he can get the story right, instead of recycling old enmities.

*Stephen Garton
(Provost and Deputy Vice-
Chancellor, University of Sydney)
Camperdown, NSW*

*Quadrant welcomes letters
to the editor. Letters are subject
to editing unless writers
stipulate otherwise.*

GENDER DIVERSITY IN KHAKI

KEITH WINDSCHUTTLE

How did we ever get to the position where women are being preferred to men for recruitment to combat positions in the Australian Army? Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* reported on August 11 that, in order to meet gender diversity quotas, Army recruiting officers had been instructed not to process applications from males for combat roles over the next twelve months, but to fast-track females through the system for the same front-line positions.

The real implications of such a policy were immediately demonstrated by the *Telegraph's* online site which posted, without comment, a CCTV video of events at Paris Orly Airport in March this year. It shows an Islamic terrorist capturing a female member of the French Army on counter-terrorism patrol at the airport. He is much larger than her, and easily seizes her from behind. He disarms her of the assault rifle she carries and takes her hostage. Using her as a shield, he frogmarches her along the terminal shouting he wants to die in the name of Allah and "whatever happens, there will be deaths".

For three long minutes he and his captive are followed by two male French soldiers, rifles at their shoulders but without benefit of cover. When the terrorist adjusts his grip on his hostage and turns to fire her weapon at his pursuers, they react first and shoot him dead. The female captive crawls away and the two male soldiers rush over to help her.

It is patently obvious from this incident that women are not strong enough or quick enough for this kind of front-line duty. They are bound to be a weak link in any chain of force needed in counter-terrorism situations. Indeed, their presence could well be a positive incitement to terrorists seeking to confront armed forces and die in a blaze of publicity.

Hence, it is irresponsible of the Australian Army to attract young female recruits with promotional material showing them on patrol in camouflage gear in simulated combat zones, bearing the latest automatic assault rifles, doing the same as male recruits and looking assured they can handle whatever arises. For the French Army, in its

long, drawn-out war against Islamic terrorism, foot patrols like that at Orly Airport *are* the front lines of their combat zone and it could not be clearer that women should be kept out of them, to protect not only their own lives but those of their male colleagues and any civilians in the vicinity.

For the Australian Army, the latest revelations about the obeisance its recruiters now pay to radical feminist ideology, especially the notions that girls can do anything and women are the equal of men at everything, is simply the latest scandal in the so-called diversity revolution inflicted on the force by its former leader Lieutenant General David Morrison.

What is more disturbing is that it is now clear Morrison's programs were not just one-off experiments driven by his own ambition to please the Rudd and Gillard governments. The current Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Angus Campbell, has a much more impressive resumé as commander of a battalion in East Timor and chief of staff to both Peter Cosgrove and Angus Houston when each was Chief of the Defence Force. From 2013 to 2015, he was the commander of Operation Sovereign Borders, which ended the people-smuggling trade in illegal immigrants, the job that elevated him to Army chief under Prime Minister Tony Abbott.

But rather than adopt a different organisational culture, Campbell is going down the same gender-blender slope as his predecessor. Last year he announced: "The number one priority I have with respect to recruitment is increasing our diversity." He set a target to double the proportion of women employed by the Army from 12 per cent to 25 per cent by 2025.

In a *Telegraph* article in February about Campbell's program, Miranda Devine quoted one dissident whistleblower saying that since his target was set, Defence Force Recruiting has pulled out all stops to entice women into the Army. They run "female only information sessions, female only fitness assessments, female only job assessment days, have a dedicated female specialist recruitment team... [and] free fitness training".

In one speech to recruitment officers, Campbell said he would overcome any resistance to his policy. He mentioned an unnamed dissident who had informed Army Gender Adviser, Julie McKay, that he would resist diversity targets because he “needed to protect the Army from Canberra”.

However, it should now be obvious that the Canberra government and bureaucracy are far from the only influences on the diversity agenda. The Army hierarchy itself has plainly adopted it as a moral obligation. Our generals think this is a good thing to do, that it is a progressive, enlightened and up-to-date policy for the twenty-first century. If they did not accede to its demands, they believe, they would open the Army to accusations of being sexist and discriminatory on gender issues. In short, the Army has absorbed gender diversity as a cultural imperative, irrespective of any incompatibility it might have with the objective of providing Australia with the most effective fighting force possible.

How has it come to this?

The rot set in thirty years ago under the Hawke government’s Minister for Defence, Kim Beazley, the man who bequeathed us the Collins Class submarines. In 1986 Beazley approved the formation of the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) to provide university degree programs for junior military officers. Instead of providing higher education within Australian military traditions, Beazley outsourced the running of the Academy to the University of New South Wales, which has conducted it ever since. As a result, ADFA has been subject to all the fashionable trends in civilian academic education that have degraded the humanities and social sciences over the same period.

This has meant that, instead of a largely politically neutral education program based on scholarship but with the defence of the nation itself and its democratic and liberal principles as a central focus, the Academy has taken on board the same kind of identity politics that has infected the study of the humanities everywhere else. Although it has attracted some genuine scholars in military history, such as Jeffrey Grey and Tom Frame, the Academy has also provided plenty of scope for those academics who think their purpose in life is to denigrate Australia’s liberal democracy and demonstrate how crude and uncouth are the cultural values of mainstream Australians.

For instance, three of ADFA’s academics in history, Peter Stanley, Craig Stockings and John Connor, have contributed to books and articles designed to belittle the Anzac Legend, or

“Anzackery” as they call it. As Mervyn Bendle has shown in detail in *Anzac and Its Enemies* (Quadrant Books, 2015), they regard the Anzac Legend as a reactionary mythology that justifies the alleged class, gender and racial oppression inherent in Australian society. The campaign against Anzackery complements long-term efforts by academic feminists to indict Australian masculinity for both war-mongering and domestic violence, not to mention epidemics of date rape and imaginary forms of sexual harassment such as “inappropriate staring” on university campuses.

In ADFA’s International Political Studies program, Professor Anthony Burke—a devotee of postmodern theorists Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, post-colonialist Edward Said and the Frankfurt School of Marxist theory—teaches a program in Refugees and Terrorism, where students learn about Australia’s purported “repression and exclusion of asylum seekers”. Burke practises “critical terrorist studies”, a field that seeks to “de-exceptionalise” terrorism as a form of political violence, rather than a unique form of “evil”, and to engage with terrorists as human beings rather than some de-humanised “Other”.

ADFA students who venture into courses run by the School of English and Media Studies sit at the feet of Professor Nicole Moore, another academic who takes the theories of French postmodernist theorist Michel Foucault seriously and who lists Gender and Sexuality Studies among her research interests. In the school’s undergraduate degree program, they can study subjects such as Reading Theory, and Heroism, Banditry and Manhood.

Or if they go on to postgraduate studies, ADFA students could end up writing theses like the following from a list published on the Academy’s website: Literary Suffragism; Post 9/11 War Films; Representations of African-Americans; or Marriage in the Nineteenth Century Australian Novel—just the thing to prepare them for a promising career as officers in today’s Australian Defence Force.

ADFA’s program in the humanities provides an intellectual climate that teaches identity politics is the progressive political cause *du jour*, and that students who absorb its principles will get ahead in our military services. If an educational institution keeps doing this for three decades on end, and hardly anyone dares to criticise what it is doing, it is little wonder it can create a cohort of true believers dedicated to imposing their ideology on the institution at large.

In short, ADFA’s academics might have won the Culture Wars but at a hazardous cost to the Army’s ability to fight real wars.

ASPERITIES

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

Is there a spectre threatening Europe? That was the question put to a panel (on which I served) at Joao Espada's twentieth annual Estoril Political Forum on the Portuguese coast in late June. The Forum is always an important event because its founder, Professor Joao Espada of the Catholic University of Portugal, takes great care to ensure that the speakers represent the full range of respectable political opinion in the Euro-Atlantic world and that an atmosphere of good-humoured tolerance suffuses the most contentious debates.

How different, how very, very different from the home life of our own dear university vice-chancellors.

As a result of Professor Espada's stewardship, those who have attended earlier conferences—they include some of the brightest students from good universities on both sides of the Atlantic—are among the very few people *not* astonished by such events as the British vote for Brexit or the defeat of the National Front's Marine Le Pen in France's election. The freer and more open the debate, the better informed both the debaters and their audience will be.

On this occasion the speakers were quick to agree that a spectre was threatening Europe, if only because there is always a spectre threatening Europe (indeed usually several). On this occasion "populism" was the spectre they had in mind. But other spectres were on hand.

When Karl Marx coined the phrase in the *Communist Manifesto*, the spectre he saw threatening Europe was communism itself. Two or three years ago, we might have assumed that this spectre belonged strictly to the history books. Surely 1989 and memories of the ruin that communism had inflicted on Russia and Europe—not to mention China and Asia—would guard us effectively against returning to it. But if memories are short, the memories of people born after 1989 don't exist at all.

Accordingly, communist ideas—generally deriving from softer forms of communism such as Trotskyism rather than Leninism—have revived in Greece, in Spain, in Italy, and most recently

in Britain where Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn emerged as the surprise celebrity-hero of the recent election by coming second. These new Left movements have been rendered less threatening culturally, moreover, by the success of playwrights and screenwriters such as Dario Fo, author of *Can't Pay, Won't Pay*, whose fun-anarchism is the main ideological inspiration of the Five Star movement. The modern social democratic state has played its part too by accustoming people to following bureaucratic instructions to obtain free goods. To borrow what Marx said of history: communism repeats itself—the first time as genocide, the second time as therapy.

All this has meant that Corbyn is regarded by the young left-wingers who cheered him at the Glastonbury pop festival as Gandalf—a gentle white-bearded leader of humble country folk against the dark satanic mills of corporate Toryism and into a promised land. That's to be expected at a pop festival perhaps. But his name is winning cheers and debates at the literary festivals where older, centrist and moderately Tory audiences generally fill the hall. And then most ordinary voters simply tune out Tory themes that despite his grandfatherly looks, Corbyn is a dangerous radical leftist.

Consider the positions he has taken both now and over the years. Today, he wants an end to "austerity" and greatly increased public spending at a time when Britain has very high levels of public debt. Such policies would risk the kind of stagflation that in the 1970s compelled the then-Labour government to call in the IMF for help. They would also require massive tax increases on people at all levels of income.

Second, he is soft not on communism only but on almost all the enemies of Britain and, more broadly, the West, including radical Islamists. He will almost never issue an unqualified condemnation of a terrorist atrocity, instead preferring to condemn the violence "on both sides". On such grounds he maintained a friendly relationship with the Provisional IRA when it was bombing London and Manchester and murdering the ordinary citizens of Northern Ireland. He has since refused to

retreat from that support.

Third, following the recent election and the Grenfell Tower fire, which made a febrile political atmosphere even more unstable, Corbyn talked loosely about “requisitioning” the houses of the absent rich for rehousing people made homeless by the fire. He urged people to hold protest marches against the government. He predicted that he would be in power within six months.

Given that Theresa May is unlikely to hold an election in the next six months, how is this going to be brought about? Almost certainly it’s little more than loose talk in an over-excited post-election atmosphere. But it increases the sense that Corbynite socialism is an unsettling force in an already unsettled politics.

Finally, Corbyn has followed the venerable leftist tradition of giving moral support to socialist dictatorships in the developing world, in his case Venezuela. And that may have doomed him.

Venezuela’s collapse into both extreme poverty, including shortages of basic foods and medicine, and violent mass repression has led to calls for Corbyn to disavow his backing of President Maduro. He followed his usual practice of blaming both Maduro and the opposition, both perpetrator and victim—and in addition the fall in oil prices. He is losing his halo in consequence, and will probably enter into a gradual decline as a political leader.

He will remain a spectre for some time, however, but a communist spectre, not a populist one. Corbyn belongs to a long-standing tradition in British politics: the “Keep Left” wing of the Labour Party that in normal times is distrusted by the rest of the party as not fully committed to democracy because it wants socialism at all costs. It serves no good purpose to place him in the ranks of populism, which is anyway a protean and shifty term.

Populism is usually seen as a set of political ideas that are personalist, rooted in a leader-principle, hostile to the “regime of the parties”, and based on blending Left and Right in a vague new synthesis. If that’s so, then the most successful populist leader in Europe today is President Macron of France, who left the Socialists, condemned all the traditional parties as corrupt, set up his own movement loyal to him personally (*En Marche* = Emmanuel Macron), and was elected on a manifesto blending pro-business and left-wing rhetoric.

Of course, Macron is nothing like a populist. The EU’s Jean-Claude Juncker has even hailed his election as the beginning of the end of populism. Juncker is surely right. Not only is Macron a banker and a former cabinet minister, but he also embraced policies that represent the opinions and interests

not of “the people” but of the European and French establishments. Its major provisions include multiculturalism, open borders, an EU banking union, and a kind of militant Euro-nationalism. This is a strong and radical agenda, but not a populist one.

Macron represents a very different spectre, namely the spectre of utopianism—or the pursuit of ambitious high-minded policies that will almost inevitably arouse opposition and run up against political realities. His commitment to the euro, for instance, goes to the extent of wanting a single finance minister for the eurozone that would then evolve into a transfer union with “mutualisation” of debts.

Germans—who would presumably be Macron’s partners in this bold approach—would naturally like the idea of imposing fiscal discipline upon unruly eurozone countries. But they are determined to avert debt mutualisation which, as they see it, would amount to giving Greece and Italy the keys to the German treasury at the very moment when the UK will have opted out of subsidising Europe.

Macron’s proposed labour market reforms already face strong union opposition as his popularity falls. But perhaps his most utopian instincts are a passionate multiculturalism, a post-nationalism, and support for continued mass immigration. He seems to believe in the limitless capacity of France to absorb more migrants and more cultures to the extent of saying (in the election campaign) that “there is no such thing as French culture”.

Others see a very different France—a country divided bitterly between the native-born and migrants, facing another surge of illegal migration from the Mediterranean, disturbed by constant acts of terrorism. Scores of automobiles are burned in the major cities, the spread of “no go areas” continues steadily, and the imposition of Muslim rules on both Muslims and others living in these areas becomes increasingly oppressive.

Ominously for Macron, Marine Le Pen won 44 per cent of the vote of eighteen-to-twenty-five-year-olds in the election—the largest share she garnered from any age group. So the next five years could see two versions of young France—a minority-multicultural one swollen by migration, and a native-nationalist one swollen by the arrival of a post-colonial-guilt generation—who find themselves on opposite sides of a worsening political divide. It is hard to see any of this working out well.

So where does the spectre of populism come into this picture? As this column has argued before, populism is what happens when the voters realise that governments are making their lives insupportable with their grand ambitious schemes of “change”. Populism is what comes next.

ASTRINGENCIES

ANTHONY DANIELS

It is seventy years since George Orwell lamented the decline of the English murder, perhaps as a metonym for national decline in many other fields of human endeavour. As someone who has, over the years, had quite a lot to do with the English murder, both as expert witness and newspaper commentator, I am inclined to agree with him. With the abandonment of respectability as a desirable goal in life, murders no longer take place where they are unexpected or unlooked for. They are now merely brutal or stupid: no English murderer would play “Nearer My God to Thee” on the harmonium having just drowned in the bath his recent bigamously-married bride, as did George Joseph Smith.

The superior quality of old murders over new, however, may be an instance of the numerator-denominator problem. Time weeds out the memory of ordinary murders, as it weeds out that of ordinary books, leaving only the classics behind. From this process, it is easy to deduce a superior general quality that in fact never existed and is purely artefactual or illusory.

Be that all as it may, I still greatly enjoy accounts from what Orwell called the golden age of English murder. In fact they remain, as ever, a source of prurient pleasure, but also a source of reflection on the human condition. For example, I was recently reading (again) about the case of Herbert Patrick Mahon, responsible in 1924 for what was once universally in England known as the Bungalow Murder.

Mahon was a handsome and charming married man, a successful salesman on a good salary, a swindler and a Lothario, who seduced a woman called Emily Beilby Kaye with a view to obtaining her savings. She, however, took him seriously and, not knowing that he was already married, demanded that he marry her when she became pregnant by him. He took her for a romantic weekend to a bungalow near Eastbourne, supposedly just before eloping with her to South Africa, and killed and dismembered her. Before he could fully dispose of the body, he invited another woman, Ethel Duncan, down to the bungalow for another

romantic tryst. She lived to tell the tale, including at Mahon’s trial; but as she arrived and departed that trial, the crowd that gathered outside the court, instead of being sympathetic to someone who had, after all, narrowly missed being murdered and mutilated by a monster, hissed and insulted her. Among the names she was called were “Jezebel” and “harlot”, appellations that suggest that those who hurled insults outside courts were in those days at least better educated than are the similarly-inclined today.

Poor Ethel Duncan! She was regarded as a Jezebel *ex officio*, as it were, for even if, as was likely, she had been unaware that Mahon was a married man, she was obviously prepared to have extra-marital sexual relations with him, and that was enough to label her as a scarlet woman. Could anyone imagine such indignation nowadays attaching to so minor infraction of the moral code—even if it were regarded as an infraction of the moral code at all, that is? From the point of view of distance from our own moral sensibility, 1924 might as well have been 4000 BC and Britain the Trobriand Islands.

And that, by natural extension, brings us to the difficult problem of moral relativism. I leave aside the question of the sincerity of those who shouted “Jezebel!” at Ethel Duncan: the question of whether, at some level in their minds, those who screamed this abuse at her did not know that their outrage was fake or at the very least exaggerated, more to exhibit their own rectitude in public and enjoy the pleasures of indignation than to do good or prevent harm. This is a perennial problem of public expressions of moral outrage, to whatever it attaches. But the undoubted fact remains that the past is another country where they do things differently. We are as appalled by the censoriousness of our ancestors as they would be by our licentiousness.

Of course, we would claim moral superiority over our ancestors on the grounds that we are less hypocritical than they; but I am not sure that this is so. In the first place, there are far worse things than hypocrisy; for if hypocrisy is the tribute that vice pays to virtue, at least it acknowledges that

there is a difference between them. The only way to eliminate hypocrisy from the human repertoire is to have no standards at all, since practically no one, except for saints, lives up to the standards he proclaims; besides which, a society without hypocrisy, in which all were saints, would be decidedly uninteresting, combining discomfort with dullness. But in any case, it is not certain that licentiousness is without hypocrisy of its own: a man may be in theory relaxed about sexual conduct, but devastated by his consort's infidelity. The promiscuous jealous murderer is far from unknown, and is a figure to make Mr Pecksniff seem like a model of probity.

The arguments in favour of moral relativism are not negligible, however much we may dislike them or wish that they were weaker. It is undoubtedly true that other peoples at other times have had very different moral convictions from our own; it is difficult for us to recapture or feel Pythagoras's moral enthusiasm for the avoidance of eating beans (though a physiological explanation of it, the high prevalence on an inborn error of metabolism in Mediterranean populations, glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency, might lessen our puzzlement). Indeed, sometimes we have difficulty in recapturing the moral enthusiasms of our own earlier selves, let alone those of other people. One of the horrors of Islamic fundamentalism is surely that it dreams of reinstating by force a moral code that, however suitable or enlightened it might once have been in the conditions in which it arose, if it ever was, is obviously and grossly inappropriate to modern conditions.

Once this is admitted, what defence—I mean philosophical defence—have we against total relativism? Do we have uncritically to accept that nothing is good or bad but thinking makes it so? In one sense, this is obviously true, for if there were no thinking beings in the universe, everything would be morally neutral. But this, I imagine, is not what Hamlet meant: he meant that goodness or badness do not inhere in actions themselves, but in our reactions to them, and a good sophist (I mean one who is dialectically adept) can justify anything and its opposite.

I am not going to unravel a problem that has

puzzled philosophers since the beginning of philosophy. Perhaps buried somewhere deep in the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society there lies the one true solution to the puzzle, but if so, wide publicity has not been given to it, or not wide enough for me to have heard of it. One of the reasons that our moral disputes are often so heated is that we are all unsure of the grounds—the metaphysical grounds, that is—for our opinions. I will observe only this, that while I have met many people who in theory are moral relativists, I have never met any who are moral relativists in the sense that they do not believe their own moral judgments to be indubitable. They argue as passionately for their own judgments as any person who believes that the moral code is written in tablets of stone, as indubitable as the Koran at its outset claims to be.

Against moral relativism may perhaps be set the fact that there has probably never been a group of people, a culture or a civilisation, which, if apprised of the conduct of Herbert Patrick Mahon towards Emily Beilby Kaye, would say that it was anything other than appalling, or that it was in fact quite justified by her conduct. Would the latter be argued even in the Islamic State? Even there, I suspect, she would be dismemberable, morally-

speaking, only after some kind of trial in which a code of dismemberment was applied by a recognised authority.

I have wandered some distance from Orwell's golden age of English murder. Perhaps part of that age's attraction is that it so easily allows one to combine the pleasures of prurience with those of philosophy, of illicit thrill with intellectual exploration. Indeed, if there were not evil in the world, what would there be for intellectuals to read or write about? Functionalist social anthropologists thought that every social phenomenon served a function. No doubt there is a circularity, or a nondisconfirmability, to this argument: but as an intellectual, I cannot help thinking that a perfect world would be very imperfect.

*Anthony Daniels's most recent book is his first collection of short stories, **The Proper Procedure and Other Stories**, published last month by New English Review Press under his nom de plume, Theodore Dalrymple.*

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The Two Incommensurable Americas

America is an exception among countries. It is a philosophical republic and a creedal nation. As Margaret Thatcher put it, while Europe was born from history, America was born out of ideas. At its very core was the idea of limited government. That precept persisted almost universally until 1932. It did so through war and peace, prosperity and recession. It applied across all political parties and geographical regions. Then a breach occurred. A new politics emerged. It did not replace

the Founders' philosophical politics of principle. But it began to compete seriously with it.

This new politics was the politics of group identity. It started with Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal-era Democratic Party coalition of industrial workers, farmers, southern whites, northern immigrants and Catholics. Roosevelt's forging of interest-group politics did not occur readily or easily. Historically some of the greatest supporters of limited government in America had been Democrats. They ranged from the remarkable Grover Cleveland to FDR's nemesis Al Smith.

Roosevelt's coalition lasted till the 1960s. Then it began to shrink as American manufacturing started to automate. Post-industrialism grew as classic industrialism declined. Public spending ballooned. New public-sector interest groups emerged. From the late 1960s onwards, the Democrats created a coalition of public-sector unions, government employees, African-Americans, the urban poor, liberal intellectuals, unmarried women and Hispanic immigrants. As this occurred, the Republican Party evolved as a philosophical party built on the abstract values of small government and cultural traditionalism.

The result today is that there are two Americas. One is committed to philosophical principle; the other to big-spending government programs. At a national level the two are pretty much evenly balanced. At the state level the differences are starker. In some parts of America, notably the Western Mountain states and Great Plains states, philosophical principle still rules. Elsewhere government spending rules. The difference is not neatly defined by the difference between red states and blue states, or between coastal America and fly-over country. Philosophical America leans heavily Republican. But not all Republican-leaning states are low-tax, low-spending, limited governments. Some, though, are and in interesting ways.

Matt Grossman and David Hopkins observe that Democrats draw their strongest electoral backing from "discrete social groups who perceive

The Complacent Class: The Self-Defeating Quest for the American Dream

by Tyler Cowen
St. Martin's Press, 2017, 256 pages, \$44.99

Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats

by Matt Grossman and David A. Hopkins
Oxford University Press, 2016, 416 pages, \$33.95

The Fractured Republic: Renewing America's Social Contract in the Age of Individualism

by Yuval Levin
Basic Books, 2016, 272 pages, \$35.99

The Working Class Republican: Ronald Reagan and the Return of Blue-Collar Conservatism

by Henry Olsen
HarperCollins, 2017, 368 pages, \$49.99

The Vanishing American Adult: Our Coming-of-Age Crisis—and How to Rebuild a Culture of Self-Reliance

by Ben Sasse
St Martin's Press, 2017, 320 pages, \$55.99

White Working Class: Overcoming Class Cluelessness in America

by Joan C. Williams
Harvard Business Review, 2017, 192 pages, \$34.99

themselves and their fellow group members as benefiting from specific government policies". This is group coalition politics. It pitches government programs for retirees and college students alongside working-class, low-income and female voters. Where the Democratic Party is a coalition of social groups with program-focused identity-based interests, the core Republican electorate is very different. It is made up of voters who defend individual liberty and traditional morality.

In other words, the parties are not mirror images of each other. Hence Grossman and Hopkins's term "asymmetrical politics". This could also be dubbed incommensurable politics. In any event, Republicans and Democrats are different kinds of parties. The American National Election Studies (ANES) survey has data illustrating this going back fifty years. Republican voters see themselves much more in terms of ideas than do Democrats. In 2012, 74 per cent of Republican voters identified as conservative; 47 per cent of Democrats identified as liberals. Republican voters view politics as a contest of principles. Democrats see it as a competition between social groups. One worldview is conceptual; the other emphasises group benefits. The difference between group-interest and abstract-value politics is vast. There is no nice amiable mid-point between the two.

The Republican voters' view of Democrats is that they "want government to run everything and they think government can fix everything". They "promote big government, collectivism, secularism, and elitism". The Republicans' view of themselves is that they "want people to be personally responsible for their own lives" and they wish to "cut the size of the federal government". This remains true even when social scientists control for age, income, education and other sociological factors. In contrast Democrat voters talk in terms of supporting "the poor and the middle class" or the "working class". To them politics is a matter of groups and benefits, not principles and traditions. Republicans, they think, "look out for the rich". The discourses of Democrat and Republican voters are strikingly different. The former use class labels; the latter philosophical labels. The philosophical labels reach back to the seventeenth century, to the age of John Locke. The group labels are twentieth-century inventions. They started to be used as American pressure-group poli-

tics ("pluralism") took off in the 1930s.

As a whole American voters tend to be more left-wing about specific issues and more right-wing about matters of principle. That's echoed not only in the Democrat–Republican party asymmetry but also within the Republican Party. It tends to be symbolically conservative yet operationally liberal. What its legislators do and what its voters think are not neatly aligned. That explains a phenomenon like the Tea Party, the limited-government activists upset by the Republican Party's reluctance in power to implement its own philosophy. Democrats think in terms of subsidies for farmers, workplace regulation for labour unions and housing projects for the inner cities. Their coalition has no common philosophical basis so it is very fragmented. The result,

The sentimental view—which wonders why partisans can't be nicer to each other, why they don't listen to each other or "reach across the aisle"—misunderstands the degree to which they inhabit incommensurable mental universes.

Grossman and Hopkins observe, is that periodically bits of the party are poached by Republicans. The Nixon Democrats and the Reagan Democrats are good examples. Defection is the greatest risk the Democratic Party faces. The major Republican risk is summed up by the old question: How much should the party accommodate the New Deal? In other words to what extent is it a party of principles or programs?

Over time the rate of defection of Democrats has declined. Since the 1960s the electorate has increasingly polarised between two Americas, one philosophical, the other programmatic. Fewer and fewer philosophical voters have remained in the Democratic Party. Americans have got better at sort-

ing themselves into the party of principles and the party of programs. Observers often see this in terms of an increase in political partisanship and shrillness. Writers, as opposed to voters, wring their hands about this polarisation. What they miss is the deep metaphysical difference that now exists between the parties. The sentimental view—which wonders aloud why partisans can't be nicer to each other, why they don't listen to each other or "reach across the aisle" and "compromise"—misunderstands the degree to which they inhabit incommensurable mental universes. There is simply no happy medium between big government and limited government. Or between traditional and romantic morality.

Grossman and Hopkins demonstrate empirically just how incomparable the parties are. They are chalk and cheese. Republican voters are much less likely than Democrats to relate to specific issues

or see themselves as part of an interest group. They are much less interested in specific government benefits or legislation targeted at particular social problems. Their worldview is much more abstract. Grossman and Hopkins's survey data, which underscores this, goes back to 1964. In the same year James Burnham's remarkable *Suicide of the West* was published. Burnham went through the worldviews of the two Americas in stark compelling detail. Burnham was prescient, because two decades before he had predicted the rise to power of the managerial class. This class emerged to run a variety of legally-mandated, tax-funded or rent-seeking programs across both public and private sectors. It adopted a worldview to match, a curious mix of moralising and program-devising. The managerial class shed the philosophical and symbolic abstractions of classic liberalism and traditionalism. It adopted in their place a group-benefit and class mentality that was flavoured with romantic pieties. Classic liberalism in its turn was adopted and transformed by American conservatives into a competing worldview. Fifty years on from Burnham's immaculate dissection of American ideology, it is remarkable how little has changed.

Already in 1964, the year of Barry Goldwater's failed presidential bid, the two Americas had crystallised. Across the subsequent half-century, the conflict between the two worldviews has been impossible to resolve. Among political activists, this deadlock generates heated trolling, endless complaint, vitriol, hysteria and outrage. In spite of that though, Americans on the whole are a polite people. They may shout a bit but they are not going to go to war over their political differences. So they simply relocate. They go upstate, downstate or interstate to find a congenial neighbourhood where people think much the same. They do this because, as they get older, they tire of having conversations that end fruitlessly and that have a strained, sometimes nasty, undertow. One can joke about things, be ironic, smile in the face of incomprehension or avoid political chat altogether. But the sum total of that is a kind of weariness. People get exhausted by incommensurability.

The two Americas have their own media. They watch different television programs, read different newspapers, and come to different conclusions not least because they start with different premises. Each cohort has an armoury of lawyers, lobbyists and consultants arguing their case in Washington. Universities long ago opted to go down the "race, class and gender" path. Centre-Right think-tanks retain a philosophical base. But like Republican legislators in Congress, they awkwardly juggle

philosophical principles with the advocacy of public policy programs. This awkwardness is shared by both parties. For example, in their heart-of-hearts Democrats would like a single-payer system for America's small non-employer health insurance sector. Instead under Obamacare they had to settle for applying central-plan-style price controls and subsidies to the philosophical marketplace. The effect of this was to create a dysfunctional pseudo-market. The dysfunction was not surprising, as price controls limit supply while subsidies drive up costs. Third-party payers, government and insurers alike take away the power of prudent first-party payers to drive down costs and prices. The result was a mess. But it is not as though Republicans have been able to do much better.

At the national level each of the major parties internalises the same two incompatible worldviews. The result is confusion, muddle and disarray. In mid-2017, having assumed control of Congress, Republican law-makers repeated their support for the philosophical marketplace. They signalled the end of Obamacare regulations that had forced at least 15 million Americans to buy insurance they didn't want. Yet in other respects the proposed Republican alternatives to Obamacare looked a lot like Obamacare—or at least the near-term operational parts of the GOP's House and Senate draft healthcare bills did. They retained price controls, subsidies and the commanding role of third-party payers.

They also kept in place the Obama-era regulatory provision that "children" as old as twenty-six could be covered by their parents' health insurance plan. Republican law-makers explained that this measure was popular with voters. Ronald Reagan once remarked that humanity looked to America to "uphold the principles of self-reliance, self-discipline, morality, and, above all, responsible liberty for every individual". It is an irony then that Reagan's party of self-reliance found itself unwittingly incentivising the multiplication of American adult-children, the "Life of Julia"-style Peter Pans who perpetually put off adult responsibilities. Ben Sasse observes that today a quarter of Americans between twenty-five and twenty-nine years old now live with their parents compared to 18 per cent a decade ago. As early as the 700s the Anglo-Saxons encouraged children to leave home early and forge a self-reliant life by working and setting up businesses. Republican law-makers now find reason to underwrite ageing adult-children living at home. This revalorises the old Continental stem-family where a child perpetually lives in the parental home. It is a recipe for lethargic economic and social behaviour. A tradition of leaving home, coupling and founding new households is

vital to an energetic society.

This is what the American “middle” now looks like. It is filled with graceless, cumbersome, knotty and embarrassing jerry-built pieces of legislation that claim to bridge what is in fact an unbridgeable chasm. The truth is that the two truths of American life cannot be reconciled. There is no meaningful in-between. There is no fuzzy logic that can square program spending and deficit reduction, balanced budgets and massive expenditure on infrastructure. Americans can see this. Tired of the political charade, they have been quietly separating themselves along geographical lines. In the last twenty-five years the number living in red and blue “electoral landslide” counties has risen from 40 to 60 per cent of the voting population. In step, the American political middle has shrunk. In 1994 49 per cent of American voters held “mixed” ideological views. In 2014 it was 39 per cent.

After the 1930s an unfathomable tear emerged in the American political psyche between limited-government philosophy and big-government programs. After the 1960s a parallel split occurred, this time between traditional and romantic morality. Both developed as political antinomies. Both presented mutually incompatible standpoints. Consequently persuasion and argument on both sides have proved largely useless. How do you persuade individuals against views that they regard in a deep way as true, valid and authoritative? You cannot. So each side gets very frustrated by the other side.

Consider the following Pew Research Center survey data. Seventeen per cent of Democrat voters in 1994 viewed Republicans “very unfavourably”. The figure in 2014 had risen to 38 per cent. Democrats widely think of Republicans as close-minded, dishonest, immoral and unintelligent. The feelings are reciprocated. Republican attitudes are almost a mirror image of Democrat views. In other words two very large groups of Americans loathe each other. The loathing grows each year. This is not just the Republican Trump voter or the Democratic Bernie Sanders voter. Almost all Americans have a low opinion of Congress. Approval of presidents of all parties has steadily declined since the 1950s. An ever-decreasing number of Americans are happy with national politics. This is because each of the two Americas is constantly checkmated.

The American writer David French suggests that

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Americans are heading for a divorce. He is right. Actually Americans are already separating. They are doing this by sorting themselves into low-tax, limited-government states and high-tax big-government states. Voting with your feet makes a big difference in America. You can live in Idaho where per capita health spending is \$5600 and life expectancy is 79.5 years, or in Maryland where health costs are \$7492 per capita and life expectancy is 78.8 years.¹⁴ Likewise with education. Massachusetts ranks number one in eighth-grade maths performance. It spends \$14,000 per capita on public education. Montana ranks number three in the country, and spends \$10,000 per capita. Massachusetts levies \$5377 per head in state and local taxes, Montana \$3158. Even the use of pharmaceuticals varies by state. Americans can choose to live in North Dakota or Texas where the non-medical use of painkillers is low, or in Oregon or Indiana where it is high.

Like a lot of commentators, Tyler Cowen dislikes social sorting. He thinks it is an effect of complacency. Americans, he argues, increasingly cluster in social silos because they like to be challenged less and less. This is true to the extent that Americans are tired of incommensurability. But it doesn't mean they are hiding from change. Cowen argues that Americans have lost their appetite for change and with it the kind of organisational and technological innovation that drives economic growth and social prosperity. Arguably though, a more prosaic fact explains declining innovation and growth. In 1961 11 per cent of Americans worked in health, education and government; in 2009 30 per cent did. By allocating so much capital to these sectors, the long-term effect has been to reduce national productivity and investment in new, more productive industries. The productivity of health, education and government is chronically low. Americans spend on schools three times in real terms what they did in 1970. In spite of the massive additional expenditure, student test scores today are identical with those in 1970.

Change or the lack of it is not a towering issue for Americans. In his 1943 book *The Machiavellians* James Burnham pointed to something much more significant. In an extended analysis of Vilfredo Pareto's sociology, he observed that societies endlessly change and endlessly rationalise that change.

Yet what results from this is typically meagre and ephemeral. In society as in politics there is a lot of heat and dust that generates little substance. What matters, Burnham argued, is not what's variable but what's constant. The great social constants are innovation and persistence. Innovation is not change. Rather it is creative combination, the ability to put together things that normally exist apart. Persistence is the idea that some part of human existence is permanent. As Edmund Burke described it, it is what unites the living, the dead and the not-yet-living. It is bound up with images of solidity and faithfulness. It evokes durable realities and lasting principles with lucid abstractions.

In short America at its best rests on a fusion of invention and continuity. America's elites, when they function well, are capable of creative combination and stoic persistence. Other paradoxical pairs exist in parallel with this: limited government and traditional morality; self-organising systems (such as markets and industries) and prudential ethics. Contemporary Americans are not complacent. Rather they are bifurcated. Half of them want expensive, dysfunctional, wasteful, inefficient taxpayer-funded and third-party-payer social programs. The other half want to be self-reliant, pay out of their own pocket, save, spend prudently and make their own decisions. It is rational for the self-reliant to flock with like-minded voters in lower-tax states and for the others to congregate in higher-tax states. As for innovation, nothing fuels it like consumer sovereignty.

The Democratic model prefers public and private third-party payers. These are Burnham's managerial oligarchs. American government runs the single-payer payroll-funded pension-age system of Social Security and Medicare along with Medicaid for low-income beneficiaries. Private insurers dominate the tax-exempt payroll-financed group health insurance system. In each case, decisions are made by a small number of managers. In contrast, innovation flourishes in dispersed large-scale markets where millions of consumers make the decisions. It only requires a small percentage of these consumers to be adventurous for real innovation to occur. American hospitals demonstrate what happens when this is absent. They have a high standard of clinical treatment yet they are afflicted by chronic organisational waste and dysfunction. The managerial class, it turns out, is not very good at managing, but it excels at moral preening and lobbying government for resources and law changes.

No one likes America's polarising stalemate. Yet everyone contributes to it. So what can be done to overcome it? Yuval Levin recommends refocusing

political energies away from the federal to the state level and returning program responsibilities back to state governments. There is much to be said for this, in part because it reflects the Great American Sort that has already happened. Yet this solution also has its limits. Not everyone can vote with their feet and choose their state. What then happens if you are a Republican stuck in California? Moreover, even if American national politics was to shrink, it would not disappear. So what can be done in addition?

One answer is to resolve America's great political antinomies by creating dual pathways: one for the philosophical voter and one for the program-benefit voter. For example give citizens, at both state and federal level, a choice between market-based savings and program-driven taxation. For those who prefer to save, do what Singapore does. Halve the rate of personal tax and put that money into mandated savings accounts for health (and education). Likewise redirect the payroll taxes that fund retirement-age Social Security into individual saving accounts. Do the same for the tax-exempt payroll component that finances America's group health insurance. For citizens who prefer tax-based benefit programs, keep those as they are. Persons who choose the savings path can reinvest their funds in prudent stocks and bonds, and enjoy the miracle of compound interest, rather than have their money idle as it is moved in and out of the government's pool of general revenue. For those who choose the program path, they can relax knowing that government is providing group benefits for class needs and it is doing so by their preferred means of plans, allocations and taxation.

To date the best that the two Americas have managed is to put each side of their perplexing national antinomy into separate mental boxes. One side goes into a box labelled "symbols", the other into a box labelled "operations". As time goes by, this national shell-game becomes more and more implausible. Operational liberalism increases in popularity during symbolically conservative administrations (Reagan, Bush) while conservative symbolism becomes more popular during operationally liberal administrations (Carter, Clinton, Obama). Yet the divide between the two remains, sometimes in hilarious ways. Republicans often will attempt to square the circle by voting for small government while asking law-makers to expand their favourite programs. Yes, they insist, we think government is bloated but we love Social Security.

There is a tendency to want to rationalise such contradictory behaviour. One way is to argue for a class-based group-identity kind of Republicanism. After the 2012 loss by Mitt Romney, republican political strategists, notable among them Reince Priebus, argued that the future of the party lay with

Hispanic, African-American and Asian-American voters. Others, like Henry Olsen, talked about the “working class Republican”. Olsen’s argument, expanded in a svelte book of the same title, suggests that, as in the 1980s with Ronald Reagan, Republicans could improve their electoral fortunes by appealing to the American blue-collar white working class. Closely tied to this is the notion that Reagan was a New Deal Republican whose political origins lay in the Democratic Party and who wanted to preserve and extend New Deal programs like Social Security.

The presidential election of 2016 looked like a confirmation of this. To his credit, Olsen came close to predicting the election outcome when most observers did not. The successful candidacy of Donald Trump outwardly seemed to confirm the idea that the future of the Republican Party pivoted on the blue-collar vote. Trump narrowly won the 2016 election because 80,000 medium-to-low-income, mainly working-class, former Obama voters in three states at the last minute opted for a populist Republican. That successful vote-poaching echoed the fabled Reagan Democrats as well as the less often remembered Nixon Democrats. But it also disguised something that arguably was more important in 2016.

Trump did achieve victory in mid-western states by offering the class voter economic protectionism and promising to make no reforms to Social Security. What is less remarked on is the rest of the campaign where Trump ridiculed other class voters: women, Hispanics, minorities. At the time I thought such mockery precluded Trump’s victory. In hindsight it probably underwrote it. Candidate Trump’s garrulous anti-PC shtick resonated with philosophical Republicans. This was not because Donald Trump is a philosophical Republican (far from it) but because he ridiculed the politics of group identity. He did so while making a pitch to the disappearing American industrial blue-collar class. He managed to be both a class Republican and an anti-class Republican. This was a typical, though hardly sustainable, populist zigzag. It was electorally effective. But was it good politics? It left open the question: Where now for philosophical Republicans?

Yuval Levin’s cogent, illuminating book *The Fractured Republic* tackles this question head-on. Levin is a fluent, subtle Burkean conservative.

The thinker he most resembles is Robert Nisbet. Levin looks at what has happened to America since the New Deal. Its politics has been centralised and nationalised. Centralisation has multiplied managerialism, bureaucracy, waste and rent-seeking inefficiency. At the same time the nationalisation of politics has papered over the divide between the two Americas. The increasing national focus of politics tacitly favours big-government programs. The New Deal and Great Society tsunamis are long gone, but the annual incremental increase in federal spending per capita is remorseless. These increases are fiscally unsustainable. The programs they pay for deliver poor value to their nominal beneficiaries. And yet they roll on regardless.

Levin’s answer to centralisation is intermediate institutions. The alternative to nationalisation is the American states. The second, I think, works. The first doesn’t. Just as the post-New Deal era saw the development of government bureaucracies, the post-1970s Great Society era saw the ballooning of non-government bureaucracies. The sainted intermediate institutions were colonised by managers and administrators who turned them into lobbies that co-operated with government to increase regulation and public spending. In other words, Robert Nisbet’s artful conservative ideal was comprehensively steamrolled by the managerial oligarchies that James Burnham predicted in the 1940s.

Nisbet wrote many beautiful books. They are gorgeous to read. With great eloquence he defended community against society, the sacred against the profane, authority against power, and class against status-seeking. Some of this resonates in the contemporary American experience. The obsessive status-seeking that takes place in organisations is a case in point. So is the number of unattached individuals. Today 28 per cent of Americans live by themselves, twice the rate of 1960. In San Francisco’s urban core, the figure is 40 per cent. However, Nisbet’s writings primarily addressed the tragedies of European history, and the twentieth-century American challenge was not home-grown absolutism or totalitarianism. It was Left-liberalism and progressivism. Nisbet sought an answer for the lonely crowd in the early industrial solidities of class and the hospitable embrace of middling institutions like guilds and churches. We see a version of this repeated in the work of Olsen and Levin. Olsen resurrects the promise of class, Levin the warm harbour

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of civic groups, labour unions, schools, churches and charitable groups. Both are mirages.

Like Levin, Ronald Reagan wanted to reduce government to set loose “the energy and the ingenuity of the American people” in order to reinvigorate the “social and economic institutions which serve as a buffer and a bridge between the individual and the state”. Levin’s hope is for an America where there are more “middling relationships”. But that possibility is gone. Most of the buffers now function as de facto extensions of government. However, what remains is Reagan’s profounder promise. This is the vision of an “orderly compassionate pluralistic society—an archipelago of prospering communities and divergent institutions—a place where free and energetic people can work out their own destiny under God”.

Levin’s account of the last half-century is deeply considered. It begins with the mid-century post-New Deal grey-flannel-suit managerial society that was heavily regulated, with economic power concentrated in large corporations. He then argues that, following the 1960s, there was a long wave of individualism that left America torn between the lone individual and the big organisation. Tyler Cowen also argues that big companies rather than small start-ups today still dominate the American economy. That’s true, although in the last two decades the number of non-company business partnerships and sole proprietorships in America has boomed. That suggests that something more than complacent bigness is at work in American society. At the same time sole-headed households have multiplied since 1960. I am not sure though that Anglo-American individualism explains the latter. More important is the long-term effect of 1960s cultural romanticism with its Continental European roots. Though the two may seem to be odd bedfellows, managerialism has developed a close relationship in America with romanticism. They are the twin pillars of contemporary liberal America in the same way that limited government and cultural traditionalism are the principal pillars of conservative America.

Managerialism gathered pace from the 1920s. As organisations spread nationally, enabled by the telephone, the federal government followed suit. It nationalised issues and then set about regulating them, eventually on a mountainous scale. Levin’s view is that Republicans should de-nationalise politics, and return power and resources to the states. Let some states be program-focused and others be philosophically driven. There are echoes of this in proposed Congressional Republican health-care legislation. The medium-term plan is to fund Medicaid by block grants to states and to expand the number of Obamacare regulation waivers that

states can apply for. The point is to let contrarian state models expand. Whether this will ever happen is questionable. But the symbolism is significant.

Part of the attraction of Levin’s go-your-own-way federalism is that it builds on what already exists. There are lower-taxing, smaller-government, good-value, high-outcome American states. This is particularly true of the Western Mountain and Great Plains states. At the other end of the spectrum are the big-government, high-taxing, bad-value, poor-outcome states like Illinois and Michigan. In essence Levin’s view is to decentralise the federal government, return power and income to the states, and let voters at the state level decide. The natural corollary of this is to say to voters: you choose where you live. If you like program-driven government then live in that kind of state. If you want the opposite, go elsewhere. This allows for the explicit concurrency of blue and red state models.

Go-your-own-way federalism is one plausible approach that class-blind Republicans can adopt. But it is not the only one. Consider how key Reagan policies of the 1980s might be updated for the 2010s. Reagan reduced sky-high marginal rates of tax. Today there is considerable scope to replace taxes with mandated individual savings accounts. Reagan argued for limited government. To a notable extent the growth of classic departmental government has been constrained since the 1980s. What has multiplied instead has been the broader public sector (education and health principally) along with private-sector third-party payers. Through regulation and financing, government has extended its power over these non-government actors. This has been mediated across sectors by a common managerial class. This class mixes bureaucratic procedural rationalism with sanctimonious moral romanticism. Radically shrinking the managerial class on all fronts is desirable. Finally, there is Social Security. Henry Olsen is right. Reagan did support the New Deal model of retirement income. Utilising that model, the US federal government collects payroll taxes and currently pays out a modest average retirement income of \$16,000 a year. That same money, put into a prudent superannuation-style saving account scheme over a lifetime of work, would yield twice the retirement income.

Olsen points to Reagan in 1964 declaring, in his convention speech supporting Goldwater’s presidential bid, that “no one in this country should be denied medical care for lack of funds”. Olsen suggests that this statement and others like it echo Franklin Roosevelt. But the medical revolution that created modern healthcare had barely started in the 1930s. Measured in constant 2015 dollars

Americans in 1930 spent \$356 per capita on health, in 1960 \$918 and in 2015 \$9451. Compare the United States today with an even richer country, Singapore, which spends \$4264 per capita on health care, less than half of what America spends. American life expectancy is 78.8 years; Singapore's is 82.6 years. When Americans struggle to afford health care it is not because of a "lack of funds" but because of high costs. Singapore controls its costs because it halved personal taxation and shifted the locus of health-care payment from the government taxation system to mandated personal savings accounts. Even the lowest-income Singaporeans who get government health subsidies have savings accounts and co-pay for their health services.

Such good-value limited government sounds like a version of classical liberalism, yet in the American context it is a species of conservative politics. As Grossman and Hopkins's ANES data shows, the Republican Party is built on the conjoint values of small government and cultural traditionalism. One complements the other. Limited government means rejecting oligarchic managerialism and bureaucratized programs. But that presupposes a certain kind of moral character. To thrive and grow, markets and industries (along with vibrant cities and publics) need individuals who are hard-working, thrifty, self-organising and capable of self-education. These are the traditional moral values on which America was founded. Elements of Calvinism, Augustinianism and Stoicism are prominent.

The mix of limited-government libertarianism and moral traditionalism—in short, "conservatism"—often strikes outside observers as an odd combination. Yet it was this uncanny fusion of small-government principles and moral tradition that defined the highly creative mid-twentieth-century Bill Buckley *National Review* school of American conservatism. Ronald Reagan personified its ambidexterity. Rather than a class Republican he was a philosophical Republican. He pointedly avoided class rhetoric in his speeches. He spoke in terms of "all Americans". He idealised hard work rather than blue-collar work. He was widely read in the philosophy of limited government (Bastiat, Hazlitt, Friedman, von Mises, Hayek), a habit he acquired while working for General Electric in the 1950s. He was the most philosophically well-read president since Jefferson and Madison. Reagan's

vision of philosophical liberty, though, was offset with a palpable demotic sense of transcendental destiny. He was not just a philosophical Republican but also a soteriological one. His was a lucid vision in which free will co-operated with the quiet providential workings of necessity. This was the antithesis of New Deal thinking and American Left-liberalism generally.

Traditional morality has a deep affinity with modern economies and societies. The latter are profoundly cyclical. It is notable how much they replicate antiquity's old eternal return of bad and good, suffering and release, in the form of recession and growth. It is striking that Tyler Cowen concludes his rumination on contemporary America with the judgment that cycles of all kinds—technological, consumer and so on—are a simple fact of modern life and that our existence, far from being progressive, looks like a pendulum that swings back and forth. Hard times arrive periodically, as they did in the 1930s, 1970s and 2010s. Interventionists promise salvation. Yet government programs do little to reverse the self-organised recurring hidden-hand workings of markets and industries. Reagan understood this. The religion of his mature years, Presbyterianism, had its roots in Calvinism, itself the product of a deeper, longer history of Augustinianism and Stoicism.

Modern freedom works where it is intertwined, often paradoxically, with necessity. It may be ironic but a sense of religious strength or philosophical endurance—in short, traditional morality—is the most useful thing we have to adapt quickly and effectively to modern life's inescapable ups and downs.

It is notable that fusionism's first presidential campaign champion, Barry Goldwater, came from a western state (Arizona) rather than from the old archetypal Republican heartland of the industrial Mid-West that crossed from the Illinois of Abraham Lincoln to the Ohio of Robert Taft. Republican presidential politics in 2016 slipped back into the classic national-industrial Mid-Western legacy mode. Its successful presidential candidate, Donald Trump, won on the basis of narrow victories in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. His vice-president, Mike Pence, was governor of Indiana. The current speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, represents a Wisconsin congressional district. Yet the future of America—defined by its best-performing states—

Sasse's book repeats in upbeat contemporary terms what the Calvinists long ago worked out. If you want a successful life then work hard and learn to read big books for yourself. If you are stuck in a permanently declining economy, then move.

lies in the West, not the Mid-West, which is caught in a long-term pattern of incremental decline.

It is no surprise then that Ben Sasse, who has written the most important American conservative book in two decades, is a senator from the Great Plains state of Nebraska. Sasse's book is in turns lively and serious, probing and astute, cheerful and full of good advice. Unusually for a senator it is not a political book or a campaign book. Rather it looks at raising children in America today. The underlying problem it addresses is the increasing propensity of American families to produce hapless child-adults, individuals who never really grow up. To avoid this outcome, and all that comes with it, including depression, passivity and the inability to adapt to the normal challenges of life, Sasse offers a compelling model. Children need to learn to work, read, travel and mix with a broad range of people. The only thing Sasse misses is the need for children to learn to save.

Sasse's volume is relentlessly good-humoured in the great Ben Franklin tradition of wit and wisdom. But its underlying roots are in Calvinism. It repeats in upbeat contemporary terms what the Calvinists long ago worked out. If you want a successful life then work hard and learn to read big books for yourself. If you are stuck in a permanently declining economy, then move. The nuclear family is the key to easy mobility and fluent adaptability. It is a form of mutual aid that is not fixed to one place. Compare that with Joan Williams's *White Working Class*. Williams's short articulate volume eulogises America's relentlessly declining industrial blue-collar class. Yet no matter how prettily she paints the picture, what she unintentionally depicts is a self-defeating culture, one that relies for mutual aid not on spouses but on kin. The geographically-fixed kin-anchored model is more Continental European than Anglo-American. The result of it is that people get trapped in declining towns and cities, reluctant to move away from kin networks. In Democrat-dominated blue states this is compounded by in-state programs that encourage people to receive benefits rather than move to better places.

No amount of words can alter this. You cannot argue people out of the blue-state model. Some individuals are program voters. Others are philosophical voters. Some will move interstate for a better life. Others will stay stranded in opioid hell. This reflects the two Americas. Political arguments do not work across the great divide. You cannot reason with a class voter and say "your life would be much better

if you moved from Detroit to Houston". What this means is that reason has its limits. You can successfully reason with others only by appealing to what they hold to be true. Americans today hold two very different things to be true. Consequently, they cannot meaningfully reason with each about the things that matter most. So they fulminate and bang the table—or else vote with their feet. America was once the philosophical republic. It was born of ideas. Now it is split cavernously between principles and programs.

A short-term fillip comes from blocking the opposition party but at the cost of long-term despondency. So in the end grumpy Republican voters gripe at George W. Bush and join the Tea Party, only for the Tea Party to burn itself out, only then for committed voters to look to a nominal Republican populist promising to punish the bad insiders who failed to do the almost-impossible and break the national checkmate. Can populism do better? No. Its rhetoric promises big government and small government; class politics and anti-class politics; traditional and desultory morals, all in one breath. It will eventually fade as it has thrived, in a long fit of erratic and chaotic swinging back and forth between the deeply-sunk poles of American politics.

The national checkmate is not unbreakable. Nonetheless it is very difficult to break. America does not just have two political parties. It has two worldviews. Neither is reducible to the other. The two are incommensurable. The politics of group-identity and the philosophy of the Founders are like oil and water. That then only leaves an "exit and entry" model of politics. This already is happening beneath the surface of American society. Americans in large numbers have already voted with their feet. They have sorted themselves into distinct geographical allotments. The next logical step in this long slow act of divorce is for legislatures to devise competing social systems that reflect the deep, abiding and unbridgeable gulf between the politics of ideas and the politics of identity. If they don't do this then frustration, anger and hot air will continue to grow on both sides of the political divide.

*Peter Murphy is the author of **Universities and Innovation Economies: The Creative Wasteland of Post Industrial Society** (2015) and **Auto-Industrialism: DIY Capitalism and the Rise of the Auto-Industrial Society** (2017). A footnoted version of this article appears at **Quadrant Online**.*

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Les Murray

Melbourne Morning

for Chris Nicholson

As I sat resting on a back verandah
a warm morning after the long flight,
taking in air scented eucalypt,
a dove cried and flew to land, startling memories
of watching doves dust bathe, one wing raised for hours,
sunning in your back yard, true Australians.

Some doves are natives here
the diamond doves, the peaceful doves,
the bar shouldered doves.
All doves mate for life, just once.
Your doves were diamond doves
or maybe ring necked turtle doves,
immigrants that picked up local habits over time, like us.

I could have guessed affinity
returning every year to find
them crooning softly in the dusty light,
your companions those solitary years
after we had flown the coop.
Still you were no dove, unless these gentle birds
conceal sharp wit and lashing fierceness
behind their cooing ways,
steadfast hearts.

Who knows in infinity how these things go?
Startled one morning, worlds away,
a dead dove at the feeder, perfect in the snow,
I knew as sure as fire you were in for it.

You gave me the world my love,
now I am the mourning dove
north to south and back again
hunting the world for traces of God knows—you.

Your doves are scattered to the winds
crying their message as they sing,
but this one here—
I swear she's looking at me now.

Tina Kane

The United States as the New Middle Kingdom

The rise of China in the wake of the slow relative decline of the United States has been the overarching narrative of global studies since the beginning of this century. Is this narrative correct? China's growth is slowing as it reaches middle-income status and the United States is still overwhelmingly wealthier and more powerful than China. If China will someday "overtake" the United States, it will not happen for decades or centuries, depending what is meant by overtaking. But even this more guarded account of US decline is coloured by an outdated, state-centric view of human society. The twenty-first-century world system is centred on the United States but not contained within it; individuals all over the world participate in hierarchies of distinction that are fundamentally American in ideology and orientation. Whether or not they agree with US policy, support the US president, or are even able to enter the United States, success-oriented individuals choose to live in an American world—or accept global social exclusion. This is just as true in China as anywhere else, and perhaps even more true for Chinese individuals than for anyone else.

From the dawn of history until the long sixteenth century, China was the economic, political and cultural centre of East Asia. It was arguably the most important economic centre in the world. Contemporary China is the lineal descendant of a civilisation that stretches back at least 4000 years and has always existed where it still exists today. More important than its sheer age, it is still being used in the same geographical space by people who identify themselves as being of the same culture—and indeed of the same race—as its prehistoric inventors. China was first unified politically in 221 BC by the Qin Emperor but it was a single political space at least a thousand years before that. When Confucius wandered from state to state in the early fifth century BC offering (mostly unwanted) advice on how to rule in a just manner, he understood China as a single political system and his patrons as

participants in that system.

The Chinese people and the Chinese language have long recognised the coherence of China as a unified political system, even if China has often been divided into multiple warring polities. The name the Chinese give to their country is *Zhongguo*. The word is literally translatable as "Central State" or "Central States" (there is no plural inflection in Chinese). It is more evocatively translated into English as "Middle Kingdom". China is not the land of the Chin (as it is in English, referring to the Qin Emperor) or the land of the Han (the majority ethnic group of China). It is simply and matter-of-factly the central state or states in the same self-evident way that for the Greco-Roman world the Mediterranean was the middle sea. It didn't need a proper name of its own.

Unlike classical and medieval Western geography, which always placed its own civilisation on the north-western edge of the known world, Chinese geography has always located China in the middle. The traditional Chinese "Five Zone" theory organised the Chinese world into concentric circles: first the royal domain of lands under the personal lordship of the emperor, then the domains of the emperor's Chinese subsidiary lords, and then the conquered kingdoms of non-Chinese peoples, the internal barbarians (these three zones being inside the Chinese empire itself). Outside these three civilised zones were the tributary barbarians, who sent customary tribute to the emperor's court as a token of submission, and the "wild" barbarians, who did not. The first three zones were in theory subject to Chinese law, while countries in the two outer zones were free to live according to their own customs. The five zones taken together formed the Chinese *tianxia* (literally "sky beneath", idiomatically "all under heaven").

The concept of *tianxia* has existed throughout Chinese history but its meaning and implications have shifted over the centuries. Originally applied to encompass the literal whole world, early on it came to represent what the historian Wang Gungwu calls

in his book *Renewal* “an enlightened realm that Confucian thinkers and mandarins raised to one of universal values that determined who was civilised and who was not”. It referred to the political system of which China was the central state (or states), not to the geographical world, which might extend to such remote and exotic places as the Roman empire. The historical Chinese *tianxia* corresponded, roughly speaking, to East Asia and the adjacent regions of Central Asia, a region in which China was (and is again) by far the economically, politically and culturally preponderant country. From the apparently prehistoric emergence of a common Chinese consciousness until the crisis of January 7, 1841, when a single British ship sank an entire Chinese fleet in less than four hours, China was the central state (or states) of the East Asian political system.

Hierarchy and peace

The First Opium War of 1840 to 1842 shattered the Pax Sinica. China’s East Asian *tianxia* was hardly an idyllic world of peace and good feelings before the British arrived, but it does seem to have been relatively peaceful, especially when compared to similar periods in European history. The political scientist David Kang argues in *East Asia Before the West* that there were only four major international wars during the three centuries of Ming rule among the states that were subject to the Ming tributary system, and the last of those wars hardly counts, considering that it was the one that brought the system to an end. The international relations of the ensuing Qing dynasty were even more stable. Kang certainly overstates the peacefulness of the system by classifying away many lower-level conflicts. Nonetheless, his argument has merit. Just one major war per century is surely a record to be envied, however many minor wars may have continued to be fought year in and year out. But should this record of major power peace be attributed to the relationalism of the Ming *tianxia*, or to its hierarchy?

Our own era may seem to be one of endless warfare, but when you take a step back to look at the data it also turns out to be remarkably peaceful. Since 1945 there has not been a single major, internationally-recognised change in the international borders between the countries of the world that resulted from warfare. In the decolonisation of the mid-twentieth

century many internal borders became international borders, a process repeated again with the breakup of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia in the 1990s. Sometimes these processes of disintegration were characterised by terrible violence, as in the partitions of India and Yugoslavia, and several former Portuguese colonies were violently seized by post-colonial countries (Goa, East Timor). Many countries have also experienced and are experiencing civil wars. But outright wars between countries on the model of the previous 3000 years of human political history have been rare, and when they have occurred the most common outcome has been a return to the pre-war borders. The right of conquest seems to be a thing of the past.

There are limited exceptions, most prominently the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967 and the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. Neither of these annexations has received widespread international recognition. This might be credited to the new institutionalism in international relations, were it not for the fact that illegal, de facto annexations are also rare. East Jerusalem and Crimea are excep-

The rule seems to be that countries don't invade other countries any more, and when they do invade other countries they do so with limited objectives and withdraw to the pre-war borders once those objectives have been met.

tions, not the rule. The rule seems to be that countries don't invade other countries any more, and when they do invade other countries they do so with limited objectives and withdraw to the pre-war borders once those objectives have been met. Sometimes they maintain an open-ended state of uncertainty, as exemplified by Russia's many frozen conflicts with its neighbours. But *veni, vidi, vici* seems to be a thing of the past. Among Western developed countries, including the United States, the idea of using military power to conquer adjoining territories is considered mad.

It is ironic that just as the United States became the most powerful country in the world, it stopped using its military power to acquire territory. The United States repeatedly used force throughout the nineteenth century to extend its frontiers across North America to the Pacific Ocean, to establish a settler colony on Hawaii in the 1890s, and finally to seize its first colonial possessions in the Spanish-American War of 1898. And then it stopped. At the Paris Peace Conference that followed the end of the First World War, the United States was perhaps the only country that did not press claims for the expansion (or preservation) of its territory. The Treaty of Versailles is often portrayed as a failure because it did not prevent the rise of fascism and

the outbreak of the Second World War. But considering that the United States hardly registered as a European power a mere ten years before, it should perhaps be reappraised as a substantial US diplomatic accomplishment.

The historical memory of the First World War has come to be so overshadowed by the tragedies and triumphs of the Second World War that it is difficult to remember now just how dominant the United States was then. At the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 the GDP of the United States was equal to that of the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia and Japan combined. Despite the enormous physical size of the British and French empires, contemporaries were well aware that the United States pulled the strings that mattered in global affairs, particularly the financial strings. In his 1921 book *Cross Currents in Europe Today*, the American historian Charles Beard told an amusing though sadly unsourced anecdote about this, quoting “a keen French economist” as saying:

One fact dominates all others: the rise of the United States to world hegemony. Lord Robert Cecil [architect of the League of Nations] has compared the position of the United States after the Great War with that of Great Britain after the Napoleonic wars. That comparison is not quite exact; because the British hegemony was then essentially European while that of the United States today is universal.

This is not mere American swagger. In their 1923 book *The Prospects of Industrial Civilization*, the British philosophers Bertrand and Dora Russell agreed. Regarding the future of relations between the United States and the United Kingdom, they reasoned that:

one of two things must happen, either an alliance in which the British Empire would take second place, or a war in which the British Empire would be dissolved. An alliance would only be possible if we sincerely abandoned all furtherance of our own imperialism and all opposition to that of America. If this should happen, an English-speaking block could very largely control the world, and make first-class wars improbable during its existence.

The Russells’ mooted Anglo-American alliance was not forthcoming at the time, with the result that several more “first-class wars” were fought, culminating in the Second World War. Even after the Second World War, the United Kingdom did not “sincerely abandon all furtherance of its own impe-

rialism” and subordinate its foreign policy to the imperative of maintaining its “special relationship” with the United States until after the Suez Crisis of 1956. Half a century later, the United Kingdom and its Anglo-Saxon former dominions (Canada, Australia and New Zealand) are extraordinarily well integrated into American power structures, especially military ones. The Reagan–Thatcher alliance has been credited with bringing about the fall of the Soviet Union, and whether or not that is an overstatement it is clearly true that there have been no “first-class wars” since the solidification of the Anglo-Saxon alliance system half a century ago.

Towards an American Tianxia

Like the United States in the early twentieth century, the United Kingdom after the middle of the twentieth century ceased to use force to impose its rule on foreigners. Most of the rest of the world followed suit. It is surely intriguing that when France withdrew from Vietnam in 1954, the United States did not take over its colonial occupation. However misguided the US involvement in Vietnam may have been, it was a war to support one indigenous regime over another, not a war to impose a US regime. This is typical of the use of US power since 1900 and absolutely characteristic of the use of US power since 1950: the United States uses military force to influence modes of governance within countries, not to change the borders of countries. The American global order is a status quo order with respect to countries’ international borders but an interventionist order with respect to countries’ internal affairs. This is a radically new approach to international relations.

The definitive principle of modern sovereignty was always the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of countries. This principle, though never absolute, is now defunct. In the post-war period the United States and the Soviet Union repeatedly asserted a right to interfere in the internal affairs of their allies and associates, in effect waging a global proxy war for influence within the borders of other countries. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 the United States has been the only serious force ordering the internal affairs of other countries on a global scale. Russia attempts to do so, but with limited success and mainly inside the borders of the former Soviet Union. The United States, by contrast, has deep civil and military relationships on every continent, including permanent military facilities in dozens of countries around the world.

The remarkable stability of international borders since the middle of the twentieth century, coupled

with the shredding of the Westphalian principle of non-interference in internal affairs, suggests that some powerful overarching force is ordering and stabilising the contemporary world system. When it is observed that the United States alone possesses such powerful overarching force, and frequently uses it, the case is complete. Just as China has always been the central state of East Asia, the United States is today the central state of the world. That doesn't mean that the United States dictates the actions of every country in the world. But it does mean that most of the countries of the world accede to American global leadership, both in their rhetoric and in their actions. The political scientist Yuen Foong Khong calls this the "American Tributary System" by explicit comparison to the Ming Dynasty tributary system. A better term might be the "American Tianxia". In his 2013 book *Renewal*, Wang Gungwu was the first to suggest that:

Today ... an American *tianxia* has a strong global presence. It has a missionary drive that is backed by unmatched military power and political influence. Compared to the Chinese concept, it is not passive and defensive; rather, unlike other universal ideals, it is supported by a greater capacity to expand.

The American Tianxia is not a tributary system on the Chinese model, only larger. It is, as Wang suggests, a new form of *tianxia*, a new ethical system for awarding distinction in virtually every field of human endeavour and ultimately for defining civilisation itself. When Khong compares contemporary US international relations to the Ming tributary system, he focuses on only one aspect of the American Tianxia: state-to-state relations. But in the contemporary world system, hierarchies of all kinds find their summits in the United States. Those peaks may be in New York (media, finance, art, fashion, publishing, philanthropy), Boston (education), Silicon Valley (information technology), Hollywood (film) or even Baltimore (medicine), but they all represent a merging of American and global distinction hierarchies. Nowhere is this clearer than in business. In field after field, success in the world means success in the United States, and vice versa.

There are many centres of excellence in specific fields scattered all around the world, but in nearly every field aside from sport most peak institutions are fundamentally American institutions. When peak organisations are not actually based in the United States or staffed by citizens of the United States, they are strongly influenced by American organisational models, seek recognition from American governing bodies, run on American soft-

ware, and conduct business in English. This places a heavy handicap on all non-American organisations and individuals with ambitions to succeed on the global stage, a handicap weighed in direct proportion to the organisation's or individual's cultural and political distance from the United States. English-speaking Canadians pay a small price to participate in American/global distinction hierarchies, Italians somewhat more so, Russians much more, and Chinese most of all. American individuals, organisations and institutions reap the rewards.

The American Tianxia is, in essence, a graded global club that people can join only if they behave in civilisationally appropriate ways—and then pay a membership fee to boot. Proposals abound for the formation of alternative clubs, but the network externalities of joining the American club are so enormous that few people choose instead to join the Russian and Chinese clubs, despite their much lower membership fees. Even many elite Russians and Chinese prefer membership in the American club to membership in their own. Americans, of course, get in free—not just to their own club, but to most others as well. More than that, they are often paid to join. It is well documented that US foreign direct investment abroad systematically earns higher returns than foreigners' investments in the United States. It seems likely that a similar (if less easily measured) "exorbitant privilege" prevails in other fields as well. Simply put, Americans living in an American Tianxia don't have to work as hard as everyone else. When it's time to pay the piper, the piper pays them.

The American within

While the Ming *tianxia* was emphatically Confucian in ideology, the defining ideology of the American Tianxia is individualism. But individualism is an empty container. Liberal principles like human rights, democracy and the rule of law have evolved into a superstructure that elaborates and maintains the base principle of the primacy of the individual, but they have no specific content in themselves. (What policies should democracies pursue? What should people do with their freedoms? What objectives should laws seek to accomplish?) All that is very different from Confucianism. Confucianism prescribed an extensive set of specific policies, actions and objectives, particularly in its Ming-era neo-Confucian distillation. The American-style "pursuit of happiness" does not simply offer an alternative set of cultural expectations, like Indian Brahmanism or medieval European Christianity. American individualism is the ideology of the empty set: individualism is the

ideology that has no tenets.

Individualism means that even when countries have hostile relations with the United States, their citizens can still attend US universities, work in US companies, and (if they want) hope to become US citizens. Ming China used state-to-state relations to defend its society against foreign influences; American institutions self-consciously use people-to-people relationships as a tool for changing values in other societies. This appeal to individuals rather than states generates the ironic contradiction that the American Tianxia is inexorably expansionary while nonetheless maintaining a voluntary approach to the recruitment of new adherents. The United States, its corporations, its universities, and its NGOs are remarkably successful in exporting liberal values by offering individuals opportunities for personal self-advancement. Chinese elites can realistically aspire to attend US universities and work in US companies if they are willing to embrace an individualistic mindset. If they don't conform, they won't succeed, but that is their choice. This appeal to self-interest is an incredibly powerful recruitment tool. By contrast, in those rare instances when the United States has sought to impose liberal values by force (Afghanistan and Iraq, for example) it has failed spectacularly.

In the Ming *tianxia*, both economic surplus and economic actors seem to have leaked out of the centre, towards the peripheries. The evidence for this is circumstantial but one-sided. Experts agree that the early Ming tributary trade generally benefited the tributary, not China itself. The emperor was able to demonstrate his superior status by bestowing gifts of visibly greater value than those he received in tribute from his vassals, and as a result the imperial court was never very concerned to promote tributary trade. Quite the contrary: the court often sought to discourage it, especially when they thought the prospective tributary not worth the political price. The imbalance between tribute received and gifts bestowed helped maintain the hierarchical East Asian political order centred on China because it made Chinese vassals eager to have their inferior status recognised, thus entitling them to send tribute. The emperor could even punish vassals by refusing to receive tribute from them—a “punishment” that makes sense only in

terms of the disproportionate benefits accruing to the tribute-giver.

Ming China also imposed extreme punishments for attempted emigration, which suggests a country that people were eager to escape, not a country that people were eager to enter. Nonetheless, throughout the Ming period Chinese traders, prospectors and ordinary farmers left the country to settle in South-East Asia. There do not seem to have been major economic migration flows in the opposite direction. The contrast with the American Tianxia couldn't be clearer. The United States is a magnet for the world's money and talent. People and their money are free to leave the United States at any time, but net flows of both are strongly inward. The Ming *tianxia* promoted the interests of the state (both Chinese and tributary) over the interests of individuals, with the result that individual economic initiative had to be brutally suppressed. The American Tianxia, by contrast, promotes the interests of individuals, certainly over the interests of tributary states and sometimes over the interests of the United States itself. The result is another ironic contradiction: the state that puts the individual first may be more robust than the state that prioritises the state.

It is often said that the twentieth century was the American century. The great populariser of this idea was Henry Luce, who as publisher of *Life* magazine urged the people of the United States to fulfil what he saw as their historic destiny “to rise to the opportunities of leadership in the world” by joining the fight against Hitler. Luce's American century didn't start

at the end of the Second World War. For Henry Luce, as for Charles Beard and for Bertrand and Dora Russell, the American century had begun at the start of the twentieth century. Luce said that in 1919, at the end of the First World War, the United States had missed “a golden opportunity, an opportunity unprecedented in all history, to assume the leadership of the world—a golden opportunity handed to us on a proverbial silver platter”.

Luce actually called the twentieth century the “first” American century. He strongly implied that it would not be the last. The United States is a large and powerful state, but as a state it is nowhere near as predominant in the current world system as Ming China was in the pre-modern East Asian world

Chinese elites can realistically aspire to attend US universities and work in US companies if they are willing to embrace an individualistic mindset. If they don't conform, they won't succeed, but that is their choice. This appeal to self-interest is an incredibly powerful recruitment tool.

system. The United States is only able to act as the central state of a global *tianxia* because it has successfully disaggregated the world into individuals. For this it was uniquely (one might say fortuitously) prepared by its founding focus on “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”. The US Declaration of Independence takes it for granted—literally, by God—that governments are created by people “to secure these rights” for individuals. In the American tradition, states don’t grant rights to people; people create states to secure rights for themselves.

Any state might have ended up the central state of the global world system, or none. In the sixteenth century it might have been Spain, with control of half of Europe and most of the Americas. In the nineteenth century it might have been Britain, with control of half the world. In the twentieth

century it might have been the Soviet Union, or (God forbid) Hitler’s Germany. But none of these states could have held the system together for long, because none of these states held any appeal beyond sheer force, and none of them ever had enough sheer force to bind the rest of the system to itself. Only a state founded on the primacy of the individual and ideologically committed to freedom of opportunity for all individuals could succeed as the central state of a truly global world system.

Salvatore Babones is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Sydney. This is an edited excerpt from his book American Tianxia: Chinese Money, American Power, and the End of History, which was published by Policy Press in July.

Our Street

Our poor mangy bloody
street. If it was a dog
you’d put it out

of its misery. As a puppy
it was different—all
floppy ears and slobber.

We were in and out
of each other’s houses
and no one cared

two hoots
about the bloody carpet.
But the biting fleas

of envy
wore us down
lowered our resistance

till someone gossiped and
it went like wildfire.
We’re not bad

just human. But
our street’s got distemper
and needs to be put down.

The Dead Sea

The water of the Dead Sea
is diamond clear like vodka.

No weed no slime no skeletons
no stick with cobwebs and a dangling leaf.

Ripples over clean salty pebbles, as
fruitless as footprints on the moon.

Saxby Pridmore

Fresh Nixon, Served Raw

In the televised interviews with Richard Nixon conducted by David Frost in 1977 it was the palpable reserve and awkwardness that, more than anything else perhaps, humanised the former President, an interiorised, lonely personality difficult to know. Together with the will that overcame the reserve and insecurity, people close to him detected self-dislike, not unappealing for anyone who has known the feeling. Even Nixon's "bad" qualities have their appeal. Listening to the Watergate tapes, one warms to the ruthlessness and amorality, not just because his enemies in the press and the Eastern Establishment were what they were, but because it feels good. In any case there's a lot that's salvageable in the Nixon character. Even within the disgrace with which his presidency ended there was a certain graciousness—the filmed farewell speech to his White House staff, for instance, viewable online from the Nixon Library, is superlative.

Things come into proper perspective from a distance. Nixon extricated America from a war it should never have entered and brought Mao's China in from the cold. He negotiated the strategic arms limitation treaty with the Soviet Union. In domestic arenas, where he was something of a social progressive, his accomplishments were also significant. The Watergate break-in (about which he did not know in advance), a trivial thing objectively and criminally, along with the cover-up, undid him—he should have cut anyone connected to Watergate loose, not tried to protect them. He should have known, from Machiavelli if not from his own common sense, that there are few conspiracies of silence—it's hard enough for one person to keep a secret, and politics is about the possible. As an admiring student of Nietzsche he did well on the will side, but failed miserably on Machiavelli.

Richard Nixon: The Life

by John A. Farrell

Doubleday, 2017, 737 pages, \$70

LBJ did far worse things than Nixon and came up trumps (as we see from Robert Caro's *The Years of Lyndon Johnson*). No disgrace there, because LBJ was smarter.

Now along comes this new study by John A. Farrell (author of *Clarence Darrow: Attorney for the Damned*) to expand and sharpen the picture. There are the predictable moralising bits, but on the whole it's objective and fair. It has that ridiculous subtitle, "The Life". No one has "The Life" except oneself, and one mightn't know much about that. The book is notable because it incorporates for the first time in a Nixon biography a multitude of important primary sources unavailable or unpublished until quite recently, including personal diaries made public late in life by some of those closest to Nixon from his childhood on, and a huge slew of Nixon tapes previously withheld from public access.

Nixon's father, a short-tempered boaster and N-grade-school drop-out of Scotch-Irish background from Ohio, married into Quakerism and was your average California dirt-farmer, except his dirt was poor and his lemons wouldn't grow, so he turned to pumping gas and then store-keeping. For their second son, Dick, it was "a dismal childhood, awash in gloom and grief". Two of his brothers died from ghastly illnesses. There was no electricity, no indoor lavatory, they were terribly poor, and among Dick's childhood afflictions were cholera and pneumonia. The Quaker regimen didn't help: no alcohol, no smoking, no card-playing, no dancing, no flirtation. Plenty of time for study, though, and Dick studied hard, did well at school and at nearby Whittier College, went east to work his way through law at Duke University, came back to pass the California bar exam, and took the only job he could find, with a small law firm near home—full circle, which was a disappointment.

In 1942, after marrying Patricia Ryan, he enrolled in a naval officer training course and was posted lieutenant to the South Pacific, serving in the

Solomons and on Bougainville. Back in California in 1945 he became seriously interested in politics. Now lieutenant commander, dirt poor with nothing to lose, he accepted the political advice and help of a banker friend of the family's and, after winning Republican nomination as a fresh young serviceman whose modest background and frank, open manner impressed the local GOP establishment, ran successfully in the 1946 mid-terms as a "practical liberal" Republican against Twelfth District incumbent Democrat and New Deal leftist Charles Voorhis, whom Nixon endlessly, ruthlessly and dishonestly smeared as a pseudo-communist and communist stooge.

Is there a politics that *isn't* dirty? Farrell seems to think so, solemnising his point for rhetorical effect:

Yet in that campaign ... are inklings of tragedy—portents of a slide into "the deepest valley" of disgrace ... the erosion of worthy purpose, and its supplanting by expediency. The great, haunting need, and chronic insecurity. The use of smears. In the crucible of the presidency such cracks could give way, and such a man could shatter.

He has half a point, but overwrites it.

Nixon had beaten down his awkwardness, insecurity and natural detachment. Out of nowhere, a nobody with nothing, at the beginning of 1947 he entered Congress, where both houses were now controlled by the Republicans. Within six years his will and ruthlessness would earn him the Vice-Presidency of the United States.

Nixon soon came to believe that the Truman administration and its key agencies were permeated by former communists, Soviet agents and fellow travellers, most of whom had come into their own under the New Deal and the wartime alliance with Stalin. On the floor of the House, Nixon pressed the administration to investigate, and when they failed to do so in any thoroughgoing way he decided to expose these people himself, quickly making his name by doing so. On the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) he paved the way for Joseph McCarthy. Honourable men were smeared and went into limbo along with the traitors. It was Nixon who nailed Alger Hiss, darling of the Left, as a Soviet agent. To Left-liberal journals like the *Nation* and the *New Republic* Nixon was demonic, to the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* he was a threat to civil liberties and freedom of association.

That he proved them wrong about Alger Hiss exacerbated their enmity. "Sensitive as he was,"

Farrell points out, "and as insecure and easily bruised as he was, and brooding and self-centered and self-contained as he was, Nixon could not shrug off their criticism. It wounded him, and he lashed back. The vicious cycle persisted all his life." His wife Pat told their daughter Tricia:

One thing I want to make clear to you. The reason people have gone after Daddy is that no one could control him—not the press, not the lobbyists, not the politicians. He did what he felt was right, and from the time that became apparent in the Hiss case, he was a target.

He'd awkwardly try to socialise with some of the reporters. That wouldn't work. "These newspaper guys just don't understand a guy that doesn't drink and chase women," he told an old Duke classmate. Jack Kennedy, a good friend from the 1940s on, thought the media's treatment of Nixon "disgusting".

In retrospect the anti-communist witch-hunt was grossly overdone—as Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin later recalled, the "mammoth and unprecedented hunt for communists failed to uncover anything but the most minuscule number". In any case, as Dobrynin pointed out, "The American Communist Party was never taken seriously in Moscow. No one in the Soviet leadership, including the most zealous supporters of communism, ever talked seriously about any concrete prospects for communism in the United States."

Nixon shone on the committee because it was mostly second-raters who chose to serve on it. "Not all Jews are communists," Democratic committee-member John Rankin conceded, "but my information is that 75 per cent of the members of the Communist Party in this country are Yiddish"—Rankin on a *good* day. Other speeches of his are peppered with references to "kikes" and "niggers". James Cagney and Humphrey Bogart were named in closed-door hearings as threats to the republic. It was Nixon who reined in the worst impulses of HUAC, and his service on it was not generally dishonourable. In correspondence of the time, he upheld the right of the Berkeley school board to host Paul Robeson, a Stalinist and advocate for the Soviet system (whose rendition of *Hymn of the Soviet Union* is the best—it's on YouTube), to speak at a local high school in the interests of "a free expression of ideas".

Farrell's coverage of Nixon's vice-presidency includes vivid accounts of his fraught South American tour and his visit to the USSR, where his relations with Nikita Khrushchev are described in engaging detail. Nixon clearly enjoyed being

in Khrushchev's presence, and in 1964, during his years in the wilderness following his 1960 loss to Kennedy, on a trip to Finland Nixon impulsively bought a train ticket to Moscow to see the then-ousted Khrushchev at his Moscow apartment—an unannounced and entirely personal visit. It's a wonderful thing, and a shame that Khrushchev's housekeeper should have to inform the American that her boss was out of town. Nevertheless Khrushchev would know that his ideological foe had made this private pilgrimage of kinship, transcending the base world of politics, the media and lousy things generally. To anyone with a moralistic view of ideology, and of Soviet leaders as necessarily bad men, it must seem incomprehensible.

Meanwhile Kennedy had got the United States into South Vietnam. His Secretary of Defense (and later Johnson's), Robert McNamara, divined the truth too late:

I saw Communism as monolithic ... in hindsight, of course, it is clear that they had no unified strategy. We also totally underestimated the nationalistic aspect of Ho Chi Minh's movement ... We failed to analyse our assumptions critically ... The foundations of our decision making were gravely flawed.

So it all ended in humiliation and rout, though by then Nixon, thanks in part to the co-operation of Moscow and Beijing, had extricated America from the mess.

Nixon knew it was lost even before his victory in the 1968 presidential election, in which he ran as a peace candidate. He told his speechwriter Richard Whalen, "I've come to the conclusion there's no way to win this war. We can't say that of course—in fact, we have to seem to say the opposite, just to keep some degree of bargaining leverage." He promised the electorate he'd end the war, that there'd be "peace with honor". However, during the campaign he deliberately sabotaged Johnson's attempts at peace by secretly flagging Saigon that they'd get a better deal with him in office, and not to go along with Johnson's agenda. Johnson suspected what Nixon was doing and accused him of treason, which is exactly what it was. Nixon denied it, but this biography provides the proof.

Fast-forward to the end-times of that war, in Nixon's second term, after the bombing of Cambodia, after the bombing of Hanoi, with nothing having its desired effect, not 600,000 American troops, not 7.5 million tons of bombs (three times the weight of explosives dropped by American bombers during the entirety of the Second World

War)—and then, finally, "Vietnamisation" of the war, and hundreds of thousands of American troops extracted, tranche by tranche, from the quagmire which, when the final sums were done, took 58,200 of their lives and left 300,000 of them wounded.

The important thing for Nixon was that there be a decent interval between American withdrawal and the inevitable collapse of the Saigon forces he knew would follow. Kissinger put it to Dobrynin in 1969, to Zhou Enlai in Beijing in July 1971, and to Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko in May 1972, that if they would restrain the North Vietnamese so that the Saigon regime survived "for a reasonable interval", the United States would get out. Kissinger wrote in his briefing book for the China visit, "We want a decent interval", and told Gromyko, "We are prepared to leave so that a Communist victory is not excluded". This was the "peace with honor" Nixon had promised to deliver during his 1968 campaign.

But the hopeless performance of South Vietnamese troops in Laos in 1972 meant that the completion of American withdrawal had to be postponed beyond the 1972 presidential election.

"We can't have them knocked over brutally," Nixon told Kissinger, tape spools turning.

Kissinger refined it: "We can't have them knocked over brutally—to put it brutally—before the election."

"That's right."

Nixon took a broad view of the situation. "I look at the tide of history out there," he told Kissinger. "South Vietnam probably can never even survive anyway. Can we have a viable foreign policy if a year from now or two years from now, North Vietnam gobbles up South Vietnam? That's the real question."

"If a year or two years from now North Vietnam gobbles up South Vietnam," Kissinger replied, "we can have a viable foreign policy if it looks as if it's the result of South Vietnamese incompetence. We've got to find some formula that holds the thing together a year or two, after which—after a year, Mr President, Vietnam will be a back-water. If we settle it, say, this October, by January 1974 no one will give a damn."

Nixon wrote in his diary that half the problem was a decadent America infecting its allies with materialism and corruption. "We emphasize the material to the exclusion of the spiritual and the Spartan life, and it may be that we soften them up rather than harden them up for the battle."

The issue of completing American withdrawal while deterring North Vietnam from consummating the war until 1974 or 1975 was proving difficult. They weren't playing ball and it made Nixon mad.

He wasn't going to watch Saigon fall until he was well out of there.

"I'll destroy the goddamn country, believe me, I mean *destroy* it. And let me say, even the nuclear weapon if necessary," he told Kissinger.

"As far as anybody else is concerned you must give the impression of being on the verge of going crazy," Kissinger told him.

"Oh, absolutely," Nixon replied. "I've got everybody so scared then. Go berserk. Worry them."

As for South Vietnam's inevitable collapse, to hell with them. "If they're that collapsible, maybe they just have to be collapsed. That's another way to look at it," he told Kissinger. "We cannot keep this child sucking at the tit when the child is four years old." And to H.R. (Bob) Haldeman he remarked, "As far as a couple of years from now, nobody's going to give a goddamn what happens in Vietnam ... Not one damn degree."

If only Kennedy and Johnson had kept tape recorders running full-time during *their* presidencies.

At other times through 1972 his thoughts were more generous. He told Kissinger he'd be willing to pay the North Vietnamese \$10 billion in reparations.

"I'd give them everything because I see those poor North Vietnamese kids burning with napalm and it burns my heart. I feel

for these people. I mean they fought for the wrong reasons but damn it to hell ... I just feel for people that fight ... and bleed, and get killed."

In January 1973 the Paris peace accords were signed. Finally America could stand its remaining forces down, have its prisoners returned and get the hell out.

Nixon's opening to China was his own idea, though Kissinger had been thinking along similar lines. It was the most dramatic of Nixon's policy initiatives, the best-advised, and the best-paying in terms of long-term dividends for both sides, dwarfing in importance the failure in Vietnam and making Watergate look exactly what it was, an overblown slow-motion scandal of slight moral significance with no claim to define the Nixon presidency, and meriting just fifty or so pages in this 737-page biography.

Nixon never viewed Mao Zedong or his Premier Zhou Enlai in the way zealots of the Right do, as an evil pair of mass-murderers. For all his pas-

sionate anti-communism, Nixon was widely read in history and philosophy, with an understanding of historical complexities—he knew that the Great Leap Forward, for instance, was an appalling 20-million-lives-lost exercise in culpable economic misconception and execution, not some contrived mass-murder. And of course Nixon and Kissinger knew all about the partly-spontaneous, partly-organised executions of a million or more landlords in the early 1950s, and the excesses and killings during the Cultural Revolution, and the estimated fifty to a hundred million Chinese deaths from the opium Britain and other Western powers pushed on the country over 150 years—murder indirect, most foul. There's little or nothing about any of these ghastly things on the tapes of conversations between Nixon and Kissinger because they were talking *realpolitik*.

Nixon told Theodore White in early 1968, months before the election, "If I am elected president, the first thing I'll do is get in touch with Red China," because, as he said, it would be impossible to run a successful foreign policy without China's collaboration.

Nixon told Theodore White in early 1968, months before the election, "If I am elected president, the first thing I'll do is get in touch with Red China," because, as he said, it would be impossible to run a successful foreign policy without China's collaboration. It was wisdom in balance-of-power terms. In 1969 the Soviets secretly proposed to Washington that they and the United States jointly attack China's nuclear weapons facilities (this only became public knowledge this cen-

tury). Nixon would have nothing to do with it. He told *Time* magazine, "If there is anything I want to do before I die, it is to go to China." Mao Zedong told a *Life* magazine correspondent, "If he wishes to visit Beijing, tell him to come. Only Nixon, not the leftists or the centrists, can solve the problems we are now facing." As Kissinger told Zhou during a preliminary visit, Nixon's long anti-communist record would neutralise potential right-wing American opposition to the *rapprochement*. None of these minds was trapped in its ideology.

The publisher of the *National Review* (eternally striving for the moral high ground), William Rusher, bemoaned the change of tack, telling an acquaintance that Nixon should have stuck with Taiwan—it was one of "the greatest historical double-crosses of all time". The tapes provide a different view. "Taiwan, except for the sentimental thing, is really the least significant," Kissinger told Nixon.

"I'm afraid it is. I'm sorry," Nixon replied.

"It's a heartbreaking thing. They're a lovely people."

"I hate to do it. I hate to do it. I hate to do it ... They've been my friends."

Accordingly, Nixon told his ambassador to Taiwan to pass on to the Kuomintang that "They must be prepared for the fact that there will continue to be a step-by-step, a more normal relationship with ... the Chinese mainland. Not because we love [the communists] but because they're there ... and because the world situation has so drastically changed ... Our failure to move would ... prejudice our interests in other areas that are overwhelming."

Nixon's meeting with Mao was an eye-opener in so many ways. Straight off, Mao told Nixon, "I like rightists."

"Those on the Right can do what those on the Left talk about," Nixon told him.

Mao sighed and made a pained reference to his own internal opposition. The two of them should talk philosophy and leave the troublesome issues to Kissinger and Zhou. Mao and Zhou laughed aloud at Americans giving serious consideration to China's rhetoric about "Western devils" and "jackals" that filled Chinese newspapers and the posters decorating Beijing's walls. "Generally speaking," Mao laughed, "people like me sound a lot of big cannons."

"Your writings moved a nation and have changed the world," Nixon told Mao.

"I haven't been able to change it," Mao demurred. "I've only been able to change a few places in the vicinity of Beijing."

On the last day of the visit, in Shanghai, Nixon asked Kissinger and Haldeman into his hotel room. Kissinger recalled Nixon needing "confirmation and reassurance. We gave him both, moved in part by an odd tenderness for this lonely, tortured and insecure man." It wasn't hard to give the reassurance. "He had indeed wrought a genuine historic achievement. He had thought up the China initiative ... he had fostered it, had run the domestic political risks of going it alone and had conducted himself admirably during the journey."

Farrell's summing-up of the China initiative is concise: the new understanding, in its immediate and long-term ramifications, was an outstanding success:

He had taken a giant first step toward integrating China in a new international order, where an array of great powers would bring balance and stability to world affairs. Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, and other free states would grow and prosper in a region free of Chinese military threats and insurgencies. And Nixon had successfully played "the China card" with

Moscow. Alarmed at the prospect of being caught between the hostile Far East and the determined West, the Soviets showed renewed interest in a nuclear arms treaty and otherwise moderated their behaviour.

Domestically, Nixon acted in important ways like a liberal. Of course, issues dear to the hearts of cultural conservatives today were not even on the table, aside from opposition to abortion—and the decision in *Roe v Wade* (1973) was written by a Nixon appointee to the Supreme Court, Harry Blackmun, overturning a host of state statutes that had criminalised the procedure, which in any case was well down on Nixon's list of social concerns.

"Just say it's a state matter and get the hell off it," he told his aides.

He conceded, however, that there were situations where he would sanction abortion. It encouraged permissiveness, but "there are times when abortions are necessary", he told Charles Colson. "I know that—you know ... between a black and a white."

"Or rape," Colson said.

"Or rape ... You know what I mean. There are times."

He told Haldeman:

I do not mind the homosexuality. I understand it. We all have weaknesses and so forth and so on. Nevertheless, the point that I make is that, goddamn it, I do not think that you glorify on public television, homosexuality ... even more than you glorify whores. What do you think that does to kids? ... Let's look at the strong societies. The Russians. Goddamn it, they root 'em out ... You think the Russians allow dope? Homosexuality, dope, immorality generally—these are the enemies of strong societies. The upper class of San Francisco is that way ... I don't even want to shake hands with anybody from San Francisco. Decorators. They've got to do something. ... But, goddamn it, we don't have to glorify it.

The antipathy to women felt by many homosexuals explained a lot. "You know, one of the reasons fashions have made women look so terrible is because the goddamn designers hate women ... though now they're trying to get in some more sexy things coming on again."

"Hot pants," said Ehrlichman.

"Jesus Christ."

One of his supporters from New York, the lawyer Rita Hauser, had suggested that homosexuals might marry. Well, he certainly wouldn't be

appointing *her* to the Supreme Court, he said. It might come one day—“Maybe in the year 2000.”

His war on drugs led to mandatory minimum sentences, at a time when American prisons held 200,000 inmates. Today the United States is the world’s highest-scoring prison state, with more than two million locked up—25 per cent of the world’s prisoners.

The problem, Nixon saw, was the ever-worsening law-and-order situation in the black ghettos. “Most of them basically are just out of the trees,” he told Donald Rumsfeld. And to Ehrlichman and Haldeman:

I have the greatest affection for them, but I know they ain’t going to make it for five hundred years. The Mexicans are a different cup of tea. They have a heritage. At the present time they steal, they’re dishonest ... [but] they do have some concept of family life, at least. They don’t live like a bunch of dogs, which the Negroes do live like.

Forcing school integration would weaken the performance of the brightest kids, because, as he put it on paper for posterity, minority students and teachers “dragged the others down with them”. He was just saying the obvious, telling his aides, “My feelings on race, as you know, are if anything ultra-liberal.”

The Eastern Establishment, particularly the press and television media, to say nothing of Hollywood on the left coast, were mostly Jews, Nixon knew—in fact the goddamn administration was riddled with them.

“The government is *full* of Jews,” he told Haldeman. “You have a Garment and a Kissinger and, frankly, a Safire and by God they’re exceptions. But Bob, generally speaking you can’t trust the bastards. They turn on you.”

He scanned down the list of suspects in the Pentagon Papers affair. “All Jews. Every one is a Jew.”

He could understand the reason they so readily betrayed, their motives in white-anting and undermining the structure of things: “It’s part of the background, the faith and the rest. We would probably be that way if we were a persecuted minority concerned about suppression, police state, etcetera,” he told a gathering of White House aides. “They always come down that way ... you just can’t find any who don’t.”

Attorney-General John Mitchell offered words of reassurance: “Well, at least the Supreme Court ruled yesterday that the Jews couldn’t get into our golf clubs.”

Although he won by an enormous landslide in November 1972, with George McGovern winning only Massachusetts and the District of Columbia, Nixon had forebodings. On the eve of the election, walking the beach at San Clemente, he noticed “the tide was out further than I have ever seen it—a real ebb tide”. He wondered about it in his diary: was it a portent? On election day the cap on a front tooth snapped off. Meanwhile Billy Graham was passing on premonitions of danger. The noted psychic and astrologer Jeane Dixon (Nancy Reagan’s confidant later on), whom Nixon met with in the Oval Office, and with whom he kept in touch via his secretary Rose Mary Woods, had forebodings too. And McGovern’s concession speech irked Nixon. Why did the guy have to rub it in about the continuing violence in South-East Asia?

“To the last, he was a prick,” Nixon told Kissinger.

“Absolutely. He was ungenerous.”

“Yeah.”

“He was petulant.”

“Yeah.”

“Unworthy,” added Kissinger.

“Right. As you probably know, I responded in a very decent way to him.”

“Well, I thought that was a great statement.”

Kissinger brought up the press. “Year after year the media were harassing you. All the intellectuals were against you and you’ve come around ...”

“That’s right.”

“And had the perfect victory.”

Nixon told his aides, “Never forget, the press is the enemy. The press is the enemy. The establishment is the enemy. The professors are the enemy. Professors are the enemy. Write that on the blackboard 100 times and never forget it.”

By March of 1973 the cover-up of the various White House links to the Watergate break-in was fraying all over. On March 21 Howard Dean told Nixon:

We have a cancer, within, close to the presidency, that’s growing. It’s growing daily. It’s compounding, it grows geometrically now. We’re being blackmailed ... people are going to start perjuring themselves very quickly that have not had to perjure themselves to protect other people. And ... there’s no assurance ...

“That it won’t bust,” Nixon put in.

The cancer had to be carved away from the president, Dean continued, so it didn’t damage him. “Some people are going to have to go to jail.

I could, for one.”

Realistically, however, it couldn't be carved away from Nixon because, although he hadn't ordered or had advance knowledge of the Watergate break-in, as Farrell points out, “he had conspired with Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Colson about wiretaps, dirty tricks, break-ins, hush money, clemency”.

Nixon would not have disapproved of the break-in had he had advance knowledge of it. When Haldeman told him that the Brookings Institution had a pile of secret files, some dealing with Nixon's subversion of Johnson's peace initiative before the 1968 election, Nixon told him to use stepped-up black ops. “I want it implemented on a thievery basis. Goddamn it, go in and get those files. Blow the safe and get it.”

There were so many things that could go wrong. With anything like this, with any serious crime one might be contemplating, there are a hundred ways to screw up, and the brightest of us can only think of fifty.

“It's the nagging loose ends, the little inconsistent fact, the unassailable piece of evidence that wasn't included [and] is always the thing that bites in the end,” Ehrlichman pointed out.

Nixon always claimed he was judged by a double standard in the matter of executive misconduct, and Farrell concurs. The view was validated, he reminds us, in the spring of 1975 as Senator Frank Church of Idaho began his hearings into the whole gamut of abuses committed by American governments during the Cold War. Black operations including wiretaps run by the CIA and FBI against citizens who were not in any conceivable or meaningful sense enemy agents, like Martin Luther King (his extramarital sexual activities were taped and quietly put about Washington), and of course by the NSA and the IRS, amounted to a hydra-headed conspiracy against rights and freedoms enshrined in the Bill of Rights section of the Constitution, made null and void. The CIA held files on almost 1.5 million Americans, the FBI over half a million “domestic

intelligence” files, while military intelligence agencies had compiled 100,000 dossiers. As in the Soviet Union, countless millions of letters were secretly opened, read, transcribed, then re-sealed and sent on to their unsuspecting recipients. It's much worse now, of course, with a conspiratorial Deep State that's a standing treason to American freedom and democracy, threatening the presidency itself. The novelty under the Nixon administration was that black ops were also being run from the White House.

As things fell apart, Nixon became stronger and more determined, telling his aides, “This is the time men have to be strong. I don't have contempt for strong men that disagree with me—like the Communists. I respect them. I have utter contempt for the so-called ... intellectuals who put themselves on a high moral plane and are just weak.”

“Weak, selfish and cowardly,” Kissinger put in.

“Clowns, dilettante intellectuals ... who bite us like sand flies.”

Nixon told his aides, “Never forget, the press is the enemy. The establishment is the enemy. The professors are the enemy. Write that on the blackboard 100 times and never forget it.”

This new biography follows in a line of revisionist assessments of Nixon and his legacy, a tendency that began ten years after Watergate with Paul Johnson's *Modern Times*,

his virtuoso history of the twentieth century. No longer does Watergate predominate in assessments of Nixon, whose achievements were most outstanding in the area of foreign policy. Thanks to John Farrell's biography and the wealth of recently-available primary sources it taps, we have a fuller and sharper image of the man from birth to death, one that is generally fair and in many ways sympathetic, but that leaves the reader with a personality so interiorised, complex, defensive, insecure, with so much held in check, that after 737 pages of revelation and analysis the core of the man remains inaccessible.

Philip Ayres is a biographer whose subjects have included Malcolm Fraser, Ninian Stephen, Douglas Mawson and Owen Dixon.

A Once Well-Watered Farm

The dust storms that covered the American West in the 1930s permanently buried towns and villages, destroying homes forever, killing animals and people.

It was an environmental disaster.

I

It was once a good farm
a well-watered farm
made green
until the dark dust
rose up from the earth
thick with neighbors'
dead seeds and useless prayers.

Porch deep in parched lungs
of every living thing
we struggled to breathe
plugged the holes, but
the devil dust grew
darker and denser
with broken barns, twisted cattle.

We opened the gates
of our once well-watered farm
and walked away
leaving the wingless chickens
pecking the earth
and the dry-eyed horses
cracking.

II

In the silence
in the stillness
heavy dust Navaho red
hangs suspended
above a windless horizon.
Circling the splintered tree
armless, barren
a lone mother bird
carries a piece
of barbed wire
to build her nest—
because she must
because it's morning.

Eye to Lizard Eye

We sit
I on my rock
you on yours
frozen in sunlight

I hold as still as you
see fear throb in your neck
under rubbery skin

Your bead eye stares at me
I don't blink
I hold my breath
You sense danger
or death

Your ugliness clings to the rock
casting an ominous shadow
What do you see in me?
Do you sense my fear
pity my ugliness?

Do you remember my stooped shadow
roaming an infant earth?
Small dragon
did I grow
or did you shrink?
Which one of us ate the other?

Carolyn Evans Campbell

The Mass Immigration Suffocating Europe

Amidst the near-daily accounts of suicide bombings, shootings, stabbings and foiled terror plots—from the streets of Paris to the Borough Market—the spectre of Islamic terrorism in Europe has taken on a wearying familiarity. That the response of many to these obscene incursions upon the values and liberties of the European peoples should be a sigh of resignation at the inevitability of it all, is itself a remarkable phenomenon. Oddly, few among the media class deem it fit to remark upon. Yet the sense of resignation is almost as palpable as the terrorism itself.

With this in mind Douglas Murray has written a stylish and tightly argued volume, *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam*, that addresses the concatenation of events that has put Europe on the verge of “committing suicide”. Far from a boisterous call-to-arms in defence of Western civilisation, Murray’s book speaks with a deep regret that “by the end of the lifespans of most people currently alive Europe will not be Europe and the peoples of Europe will have lost the only place in the world we had to call home”.

The proximate cause of this suicide is the decades-long current of mass immigration. Unplanned by those who originally set it in motion, it increasingly pushes Europe in the cultural direction of the very places from which many immigrants seek refuge. But another object of Murray’s critique is the cultural condition of Europe itself. Mired in a chronic state of torpor and self-abnegation, the media and political class of Europe lacks the courage of its convictions necessary to make a stand against developments it would once have found unthinkable.

Douglas Murray is an indefatigable debater and

verbal jousting, ever on the offensive against thugish Islamists and the cretinous Western apologists who give them cover. Yet his book draws much of its power from the sombre realisation that even the most basic and decent of European values—rule of law, equality of treatment, protection of minorities, freedom of expression and the artistic creativity it engenders—may perish with scarcely a word of protest from the culture that gave birth to them.

A unique virtue of the European peoples has been their ability to assimilate ethnicities and cultural currents initially strange to them. But successful integration can only occur if there is a stable core of values that can be successfully inculcated in the arriving population. Human beings are tribal creatures, and the virtues of a multi-ethnic and sexually equalitarian outlook in Europe have taken centuries to achieve. For this to occur the meaning of “European” identity has evolved to become above all a question of the ideas in someone’s head—communicable and amenable to debate—rather than being based on ethnic origins or skin colour. As Murray writes: “If being ‘European’ is not about race—as we hope it is not—then it is even more imperative that it is about ‘values.’” Murray wishes this condition of development to be maintained. But the future of such healthy pluralism is in doubt.

Murray cites the results of the 2011 census as showing that only 44.9 per cent of London residents now identified themselves as “white British” and that “nearly three million people in England and Wales were living in households where not one adult spoke English as their main language”. He quotes the Oxford demographer David Coleman as saying that, on current trends, within our lifetime “Britain would become ‘unrecognisable to its present inhabitants’”. Obviously, changes in ethnic identification would not matter if the values remained much the same—or improved—but it is here that we witness a disturbing trend; and where the question of mass Islamic migration becomes

The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam

by Douglas Murray

Featherstone Education, 2017, 352 pages, US\$29.99

of particular concern. The 2011 census showed the Muslim population in England and Wales had risen from 1.5 million to 2.7 million in the previous decade. In a country as small as Britain, population expansion and integration are burdensome enough, but even more so if a foreign religious group is simultaneously the most culturally dissimilar minority *and* the fastest growing.

Those of us in secular societies are used to thinking of religion as something primarily cultural and private—something that spiritually sustains people in their personal capacity, but that is largely separate from their broader political convictions. But this conception of religious belief is anomalous in the long run of human history, and remains unusual in large parts of the non-Western world. In our own tradition, one need only consult the Old Testament or recall the Crusades to be reminded of a time when religious convictions were one and the same with political convictions—and to be reminded that religion is not only something people may die for, but often kill for.

Murray locates one of the early warning signs of our current dilemma in 1989, on Valentine's Day, when Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, issued a fatwa calling on Muslims to assassinate the British-Indian novelist Salman Rushdie—a punishment supposedly deserved for the offence of irreverently depicting Mohammed. Blasphemy leapt back into the Western consciousness as a live issue, as associates of Rushdie and his publishers were threatened, injured and murdered. Rushdie himself scrambled into hiding under police protection. Even Yusuf Islam (formerly Cat Stevens) endorsed the death sentence and said he'd abet the assassination effort if Rushdie were before him. What's worse, many British non-Muslims in politics and the press failed to stand up against this egregious attack on freedom of speech. Many, including Prince Charles, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the historian Hugh Trevor-Roper, either asserted a moral equivalence between Rushdie's blasphemy and the actions of his would-be assassins or indicated that Rushdie deserved any punishment that came upon him.

The Danish cartoon controversy of 2005—when a small Danish newspaper published pictures of Mohammed—resulted in similarly violent reprisals and tepid defences. Murray comments: "If a Dane in the 1990s had said that the story which would bring most attention to their country in the next decade

would most likely be a 'cartoon crisis' (a phrase people increasingly uttered with a straight face), people would have thought the person unhinged."

These instances, and the more recent murders at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*, have set the stage for a culture of silence and self-censorship in the face of religious thuggery. And in Britain polling data suggests the existence of many fellow travellers to the Islamist blasphemy police. In 2006 it was revealed that "78 per cent of British Muslims believed the publishers of the [Danish] cartoons should be prosecuted". In 2015: "27 per cent of British Muslims said they had 'some sympathy' for the motives of the [*Charlie Hebdo*] attackers. Nearly a quarter (24 per cent) said they believed violence against people who publish images of Mohammed can be justified."

The decades-long current of mass immigration increasingly pushes Europe in the cultural direction of the very places from which many immigrants seek refuge.

Yet blasphemy is but the tip of the iceberg. Other regrettable tendencies on the up include homophobia, misogynistic violence and anti-Semitism. Out of a plenitude of illuminating statistics and studies, here are some choice examples from Murray's admirably researched book: a 2003 report into anti-Semitism by the European Monitoring Centre found that an upsurge in anti-Semitic attacks was attributable to increased attacks by young Muslims; the number of anti-Semitic attacks in France doubled between 2013 and 2014 alone (Jews were the victims of nearly half of

all racist attacks, despite accounting for only 1 per cent of the French population); a 2009 Gallup poll found that zero per cent of British Muslims (sample size: 500) thought homosexuality was morally acceptable; a 2016 survey found that 52 per cent of British Muslims thought homosexuality should be made illegal; by 2015 Sweden had the second-highest number of rapes per capita amongst all countries (after the chronically impoverished African nation of Lesotho); Danish research published in 2016 found Somali men (almost 100 per cent of whom are Muslim) were roughly "twenty-six times more likely to commit rape than Danish men, adjusted for age"; and "In 2016 it transpired that as much as 80 per cent of the Swedish police force were considering quitting because of the dangers that their jobs now entailed in dealing with the increasingly lawless, migrant-dominated areas of their country."

Among the political and media classes, terror attacks remain (fairly) easy to condemn. They are calculated to attract the spotlight, and do so very successfully. Sexual crimes, however,

are notoriously under-reported and under-acknowledged. “Intersectionality” is the term coined for a modish branch of left-wing theory that purports to analyse the unique “intersection” of various disadvantages that may affect an individual (the confluence of gender and racial discrimination, for instance). But what happens when the fear of inflicting one kind of injustice gives cover to the perpetrators of another injustice? Murray provides two recent examples—one British, one German—that illustrate the dire consequences of this other kind of “intersectionality”.

Overlooked and wilfully ignored for years, it came to light in the 1990s and 2000s that the town of Rotherham in northern England was home to a massive child-sex trafficking ring. An inquiry held into the criminal operation and its accompanying police failings “revealed the exploitation of at least 1400 children” between 1997 and 2014. Murray elaborates:

The victims were all non-Muslim white girls from the local community, with the youngest victim aged eleven. All had been brutally raped, some had also been doused in petrol and threatened with being set on fire. Others were threatened with guns and forced to watch the violent rape of other girls as a warning should they tell anyone about the abuse. The inquiry into the abuse found that although the perpetrators were almost all men of Pakistani origin, operating in gangs, staff of the local council described their “nervousness about identifying the ethnic origins of perpetrators for fear of being thought as racist; others remembered clear direction from their managers not to do so”. The local police were also found to have failed to act for fear of accusations of “racism” and of what this might do to community relations.

Likewise in Cologne, where on New Year’s Eve 2015, up to 2000 men sexually assaulted and robbed about 1200 women in the city centre. As with the Rotherham case, it transpired that police and media had kept silent about the issue for fear of being labelled “racist”.

The consequences of such moral idiocy hardly need to be stated. The criminal law is meant to operate in terms of individual, not group, responsibility. And yet dubious attempts to prevent racism—as if the skin colour of the person was the *only* indicator they needed of a person’s guilt, after which police would conclude the investigation and the courts would record a conviction—preclude the victims of horrific sexual crime from having their

assailants brought to justice. One shudders to think what other horrors have been swept under the societal rug. (Murray notes, amongst other dispiriting statistics, that 130,000 women in Britain have suffered from female genital mutilation, which has been illegal for three decades, yet no one has been successfully prosecuted.)

The statistics on mass migration over the past few decades in general, and the last few years in particular, are staggering. In the 1960s it was assumed that the “guest workers” brought in by Western European nations to fill gaps in the labour market (resulting from mass youth casualties in the Second World War) would return home eventually. Hence, there was little proper planning for integration, or the consequences of foreign communities choosing to stay. Although the “guest worker” arrangements between Germany and Turkey ceased in the early 1970s, today there are roughly four million people of Turkish descent in Germany. The New Labour government in the UK greatly eased restrictions on moving to the UK, yet despite their enthusiasm they greatly underestimated the numbers that would come: “The numbers of non-EU nationals were expected only to double between 100,000 a year in 1997 and 170,000 in 2004. In fact over five years the government’s predictions for the number of new arrivals would be off by almost a million people.” Murray points to such statistics to illuminate the astonishing lack of foresight amongst policy-makers, who consistently had to play catch-up to their own blunders. Given how politicians struggle with far easier political problems, it is flabbergasting that the incredibly complex dynamics of population movements—political, social and economic—should have been given so little thought. This pattern of carelessness reached its apex with Angela Merkel’s off-the-cuff invitation in 2015 for more than one million migrants to enter Germany.

Lacking the means even to assess who were refugees and who were not (the Vice-President of the European Commission later admitted that at least 60 per cent of the people who came to Europe in 2015 were economic migrants rather than refugees) this decision was bound to have catastrophic consequences. Although Europeans are generally hospitable to genuine refugees, surveys reveal a steadfast disapproval of mass migration to their countries. Needless to say, an unplanned and unprecedentedly large influx of non-refugees during the recent migrant crisis has done nothing to assuage their reservations. Murray gives as evidence a 2016 Europe-wide Ipsos poll querying whether Europeans had a generally positive or negative view of the impact of immigration on their country. The results were dire,

with positive assessments in Britain at 36 per cent, 24 per cent for Sweden, 18 per cent for Germany, and 10 to 11 per cent for Italy, France and Belgium.

Murray includes a pithy chapter dispatching the oft-cited (and bogus) justifications for policies of large-scale immigration. To the economic argument that immigrants as a whole contribute more to the economy than they take out, Murray gives a number of commonsense and easily verifiable replies. Noting that it will take a long time for immigrants to pay in as much into the social security system as they take out (if they ever do)—a fact fudged by politicians often claiming tech-entrepreneurs and the like to be representative migrants—Murray presents the findings of a UCL report that immigrants over the period from 1995 to 2011 had cost the UK somewhere in the order of £114 billion. This is unsurprising if you consider also the population pressures immigration presents in a small country such as the UK: in order to accommodate current trends of immigration the country would need to build a city the size of Liverpool every year.

This latter point contributes also to invalidating the claim that countries need to import a population to keep the ageing populations of Europe in the comforts to which they are accustomed. Surveys indicate that the current peoples would like to have more than enough children to maintain the current population. That they don't is largely due to the astronomical costs of living pushed upwards by, among other things, a scarcity of available housing and educational opportunities—something unlikely to be alleviated by importing massive numbers of people.

Another argument trotted out by the mass-migration enthusiasts is the cultural benefits that accrue from ethnic diversity. This argument in particular has a great superficial appeal—no one would deny the great benefits that have come in language, cuisine and the arts as a result of new peoples settling in Europe. But—Murray queries—when does a country have enough diversity, or enough of a particular type of diversity? Immigrants to European countries by and large come from the same parts of the world—and little effort is made to import people from far-flung parts of the earth of which there is a genuine lack of knowledge. The result has been not a proliferation of different cultures living side by side, but rather discrete monocultures living

apart from the broader community. Again, he provides evidence from the 2011 census showing that in England certain areas have a lack of diversity not due to lack of immigration, but due to a lack of native English people.

The final most common argument to be addressed is that of globalisation—the idea that inflows of people are inevitable and unstoppable, given our economically and technologically interconnected world. Quite aside from the free pass it gives to policy-makers lacking the courage and intelligence to tackle the issue head on, it is manifestly false. China and Japan not only do not import large numbers of people, but successfully dissuade people from taking up permanent residence (something for which, incidentally, they receive remarkably little criticism). And yet who would argue that these economies are shut-off and unsuccessful?

It need hardly be said, though it bears repeating, that the primary victims of Islamist violence and oppression are Muslims themselves. If European civilisation is to continue as a civilisation with virtues to share—a place that can receive real refugees and offer them a better life—then those who come to it must adopt the values that enable that better life to continue for those that come after them. Yet liberal

voices within the Islamic community are too often denounced as being themselves “Islamophobic” when they so much as criticise Islamic practices they abhor.

Murray lists Ayaan Hirsi Ali in the Netherlands, Maajid Nawaz in Britain and Kamel Daoud in France as examples of critical voices with Islamic backgrounds who have been smeared for their reformist efforts:

In every Western European country it is the Muslims who have come here or been born here and stood up for our own ideals—including our ideals of free speech—who have been castigated by their co-religionists and carefully dropped by what was once “polite” European society.

In the Australian context, we might add Dr Jamal Rifi to Murray's list.

A failure by European leaders to discern the different currents of Islam results in the foregrounding of those “community leaders” who are loudest

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and most aggressive in pushing their views. And it silences not only those Muslims we admire, but also the Muslim victims in our midst.

Murray gives an example of the kind of odious personality that comes to represent Islamic communities because of this abdication of intellectual and moral responsibility:

So, for instance, the chairman of the Luton Islamic Centre, Abdul Qadeer Baksh, is also the headteacher of a local school, associates with local politicians including MPs, and works with local officials on the “Luton Council of Faiths” interfaith network. He also believes Islam to be in a 1400-year war with “the Jews”, that in an ideal society homosexuals would be killed, and he has defended the chopping off of hands of thieves and lashing of women under Islamic “hudud” punishment laws. Yet none of these facts—all easily available, all known or knowable—made him a pariah or an untouchable.

Murray closes *The Strange Death of Europe* with two chapters, somberly titled “What Might Have Been” and “What Will Be”. In the penultimate chapter he lists a handful of commonsense approaches that would help deal with the problems of mass migration in a manner beneficial both to the current European populations and to those they seek to assist.

First, he argues, measures should be taken to relieve more refugees in areas more proximal to their original homes. Not only would this allow such people to maintain a connection to the cultures with which they are familiar, and easier for them to return to their homes in the future—it also makes economic sense. One comparison he gives is provided by Dr Tino Sanandaji, who has pointed out that “it costs more for 3000 migrants to be housed in temporary accommodation tents in Sweden than it does to fund outright the largest refugee camp in Jordan (housing around 100,000 Syrian refugees)”.

Additionally, he advocates the adoption in Europe of an Australian approach to enforcing migration borders through boat turn-backs and a refusal to accommodate people who attempt to enter the country illegally. This would have a discouraging effect on the people-smuggling trade (a racket far easier to operate between Africa and

Europe than to isolated Australia) and lead to fewer deaths at sea.

Furthermore, Murray posits a strict adherence to law enforcement and the deportation of those without legitimate asylum claims as being necessary to maintain order and optimise the use of governmental resources to help legitimate refugees. Finally, he points out the need for a framework of temporary asylum in case of humanitarian emergencies so that people can be given shelter and comfort when fleeing catastrophe, but be returned to their countries when conditions are suitable.

But for such approaches to be feasible, there needs to be a reassertion of cultural confidence and a return to the belief that some basic European values are necessary foundation stones for a cohesive, secure and free society. Murray cites with approval the concept of a “core culture” put forth by the Syrian-German academic Bassam Tibi:

This notion—first put forward by him in the 1990s—argued for a form of multi-ethnic society that embraced people of different backgrounds but united them around a set of common themes. Like jazz, it could work if everyone knew the theme that they were riffing around. But it could not possibly work if the theme was unknown, forgotten or lost.

At another point in the book Murray recalls the sense of surety that Izaak Walton wrote of upon the death of his friend John Donne. Walton maintained a Christian belief that he would in time see his friend rise again:

At the end of this brief work Walton speaks of his friend’s last days and described his body “which once was a temple of the Holy Ghost and is now become a small quantity of Christian dust”. And then the last line: “But I shall see it reanimated.”

A pessimistic and foreboding book, *The Strange Death of Europe* nevertheless offers a spark of hope. In the grip of repeated crises, and a feeling of historical despair, Europe stands on the brink of death. But we may see it reanimated.

Edward Cranswick is completing a postgraduate degree in law at the University of Melbourne.

Channel Country

Each year big rains leave the Diamantina
in flood. Water spreads into channels
sinks in slow streams to lakes down south.

Drifts of bark and twigs catch in the fork
of trees like forgotten nests of the cockatoo.

Lines of mud mark the slurry rushing through.

Tiny micro-life survives in soil washed down
with the spill. Drying in silt it lifts off, flies
on the wind in a red-dust storm.

Spangled perch adapt to life in puddles.

Crustaceans survive the dry season buried
under sand. They wait for the big wet, breed
in the warm flow as the tributaries run.

Frogs too lie under silt for years, waiting
for floods to take them into deeper water.

*

The wet season ends once more in a heat haze.
A smell of yellow hangs on the air. Insects

search for honey among flowering gidgee,
keep up a steady burr as if intoxicated
by nectar. Warm sunlight after rain.

Little corellas fly low over lignum brush,
swing and dip on a spinifex stalk, waiting
for a spider to come their way.

A tiny planigale returns to find a home
in clay-pans cracking in the sun, a baby
secure in the pouch. She disturbs

a swarm of gnats lifting from moist shadows
sends them flitting too fast for the naked eye
to catch, their span of a life shorter than a day.

An easy prey to stillness, sharp eyes
quick tongues waiting in the tussock grass.

*

Saltbush runs wild on the mallee plain.
On the road heading west, trees thrive
from run-off after rain. Honey-eaters

no bigger than a leaf shimmer and dash,
hang upside down, their red breasts unseen

among the dazzle on a bush cherry tree.

A pygmy glider hovers over flowering scrub,
steers her way with a feathery tail, to pluck
the sap of mulga blossoms. Small as a mouse

she builds her handball nest in tree trunks
or takes a ready-made instead. Cradles
her litter in sandy pockets out of danger.

She waits, knows the value of stillness.
A ready prey to night hunters, the paw

of a feral cat roaming the rusty plain.

Brenda Saunders

The Great Immigration Non-Debate in Australia

President Donald Trump and his team are working with Republican senators on a bill to halve legal immigration—to 500,000 per annum—into the United States. Across the Atlantic, Prime Minister Theresa May has vowed to reduce immigration to less than 100,000 a year. In launching the Tories’ recent election manifesto, May said immigration to the UK needed to be brought down to “sustainable” levels. In 2016, she argued that there was “no case, in the national interest, for immigration of the scale we have experienced over the last decade”.

Immigration has also erupted as a major issue in the lead-up to the September New Zealand election. The country’s main opposition party, Labour, has pledged to slash the migrant intake, which is presently running at record levels. Perhaps more significant is the recent surge in support for the populist New Zealand First, led by the wily Winston Peters. The great survivor of Kiwi politics, known for his colourful utterances, Peters has slammed the National government’s unfocused immigration “merry-go-round” and wants permanent visas restricted to 10,000 per annum. With his party expected to hold the balance of power after the election, Peters may well get his way.

Yet, while other Anglosphere countries look to curb immigration, Australia is moving in the opposite direction, with Canberra firmly planting its foot on the mass immigration accelerator. Over the last twelve years, annual average net immigration has tripled from its long-term historical average to 210,000 people a year. Australia is importing a population equivalent to Hobart every year or an Adelaide every six years, and this turbocharged intake is expected to continue for decades.

While the populations of most other developed countries have either stabilised or declined, Australia’s population surged by a staggering 21.5 per cent between 2003 and 2015 on the back of Canberra’s immigration-on-steroids policy. If current trends continue, Australia’s population is

projected to nearly double by 2050 to over 40 million. This immigration-fuelled population explosion will have a host of social, cultural, demographic, economic and environmental consequences. But little effort has been expended by governments to consider what Australia will come to look like. Canberra is rushing headlong towards a big, ultra-diverse Australia at breakneck speed while blindfolded. In the long history of human folly, this must be a stand-out.

Nor has the Turnbull government provided an official rationale as to why it is running the largest per capita immigration program in the world. Its immigration policy appears to be simply to bring in as many people as quickly as possible while assiduously burying public discussion on the issue. The government didn’t even mention the 2017-18 permanent intake number in the budget papers. Immigration Minister Peter Dutton made no public statement on the matter. Dutton’s new super ministry, ostensibly to enhance national security, has been pilloried by pundits on both sides of politics as ministerial overreach. Yet, at the same time it has been reported that Dutton is considering outsourcing vast swaths of Australia’s immigration system to the private sector, effectively surrendering control over our borders. Rorters, dodgy middlemen and fifth columnists will be rubbing their hands in anticipation.

There has been a steady stream of puff pieces in the mainly Left-leaning media claiming that mass immigration is both necessary and beneficial. The arguments proffered tend to fall apart under scrutiny. Despite the various claims by some business groups and others, Australia does not have a general skills shortage requiring heavy and sustained inflows. Moreover, current immigration policy is, in fact, largely detached from Australia’s labour market requirements. As a recent report by the Australian Population Research Institute found, any relationship that existed between skills recruited under the points-tested visa subclasses and

particular shortages in the labour market has eroded under successive governments. This is resulting in large numbers of “skilled” permanent migrants of dubious professional quality and relevance in fields such as IT and accounting, despite these sectors already having a surplus of workers. In any case, the annual immigration report by the Australian Productivity Commission made it clear that about half of the skilled-migrant stream includes the family members of skilled migrants, and only around 30 per cent of Australia’s total permanent migrant intake is actually “skilled”.

Nor can immigration realistically provide a solution to the problem of an ageing population, as is frequently claimed by immigration enthusiasts. Again, the Productivity Commission has stated in numerous reports that immigration is not a feasible countermeasure to an ageing population, since migrants themselves also age. As migrants grow old, even larger inflows will be required to support them, and so on *ad infinitum*. In other words, using immigration in an attempt to counter population ageing is a Ponzi scheme. At some point Australia’s policy-makers are going to have to bow to the inevitable and deal with the ageing population, as Japan and other smart countries are already doing, rather than trying to delay the day of reckoning through misguided and ultimately counterproductive immigration policies.

As a small but growing number of commentators have rightly argued, large-scale immigration is being used to artificially pump up economic growth figures at the expense of the existing Australian population. While mass immigration may fuel GDP growth, the average Australian is no better off economically, as various studies have confirmed. And when one takes into account the greater congestion, higher housing costs, lower wages, intensified job competition, loss of amenity, and overburdened infrastructure and services linked to the present influx, there is a compelling case that wide-open immigration is degrading the living standards of existing citizens.

Those peddling the myth that high immigration is good for us tend to be driven by either vested commercial interests or open-borders ideology. Australia’s GDP per capita growth rates over the last decade or so have been weak compared to a number of developed nations that have little to no immigration. Australia has been experiencing largely prosperity-free growth. As the economist Judith Sloan recently observed:

Successive Australian governments have been keen to boost population growth through excessive immigration intakes and have been

able to disguise two recessions by not measuring changes in GDP per capita.

Despite the mounting problems associated with the current policy, the major parties remain silently locked in bipartisan embrace of mass immigration. As Mark Latham has written, both the Liberal-National Coalition and Labor have “caved in to pro-immigration groups, property developers, big retailers and foolhardy Treasury officials who use planeloads of new arrivals to artificially inflate Australia’s GDP numbers”. The influence of this powerful growth lobby over government policy has been chronicled by the sociologist Katharine Betts.

Federally, the only person in the major parties to acknowledge publicly that mass immigration is not an unalloyed good has been Tony Abbott. In a recent address to the Institute of Public Affairs, Abbott argued that cuts were needed:

Right now, a big slowdown in immigration would take the downward pressure off wages and the upward pressure off house prices.

One of the reasons why statistical growth is not translating into higher living standards is that high immigration means that GDP per head is hardly growing at all.

Newcomers in hard-to-fill, high wage, high skill jobs make very good migrants—and should be encouraged—but they’re not the only ones coming.

A big slowdown in immigration would allow housing starts and infrastructure to catch up with population. It would give harder-to-assimilate recent migrants more time to integrate with the wider Australian community before many more came in.

Abbott’s conversion into a mass-immigration sceptic is welcome, although it is a pity he didn’t have this epiphany while still prime minister. The Liberal leader-in-exile is, of course, correct: cur-tailing immigration would alleviate pressure on infrastructure, housing affordability and wages. Australia’s clogged cities are struggling to keep up with population growth as migrants continue to flock in. Congestion is a major drag on the country’s economic productivity and is expected to worsen. Governments will need to embark on the biggest infrastructure expenditure in the country’s history to prevent living standards being further eroded by immigration. The costs will fall largely on existing residents. The scale of the challenge is mind-boggling. In 2013, the Productivity Commission warned that the total estimated private and public investment requirements needed to accommodate

a rapidly-expanding population over the fifty-year period to 2060 would be more than five times the cumulative investment made over the last half-century, or at least \$38 trillion dollars over the projection period in 2011-12 prices.

Sydney and Melbourne, which receive the lion's share of new migrants, now rank among the least affordable housing markets in the world. Panjandrums and policy-makers expend countless words on Australia's housing affordability nightmare but seldom mention the prime demand-side driver, immigration. Bill Shorten's tacit support for current immigration settings shows that Australia no longer has an authentic labour party. Studies from around the world have shown that mass immigration depresses wages and exacerbates economic inequality, hence US policy analyst Roy Beck's description of immigration as the "great unequaliser". It is unfathomable that nobody in the Labor Party, which professes to care about wages and inequality, has realised the contradiction at the heart of its policies. It may be that fostering and expanding the ethnic minority vote via immigration is now more important to Labor than the interests of the Australian working and middle classes.

In regard to migrant integration it is difficult to see how such a vast number of dissimilar newcomers will be able to integrate successfully into the mainstream when mainstream Australia is in demographic and cultural retreat. The 2016 census confirmed what we can see every day on the streets of our cities: immigration is transforming Australia into something very different from the mainly European, Christian society that most of the adult population grew up in.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 28 per cent of the population in 2016 was not born in Australia. Another 21 per cent of the population was born here, but with at least one foreign-born parent. No other Western country has such a high proportion of residents from recent migrant backgrounds. Those with two Australian-born parents are on the verge of becoming a minority. For the first time ever, the Asian-born population has eclipsed the number of residents born in Europe, reflecting the seismic shift in migrant source countries over recent decades. The Anglo-Celtic and European share of the population is in marked decline.

With a sustained high rate of immigration, largely from non-Western sources, the makeup of the population is changing profoundly and, if

present trends continue, Australia will become a "majority-minority" country at some point this century. This dramatic shift is already occurring in Sydney and Melbourne, where recently-arrived groups are able to wield disproportionate and growing social and political influence, while the more traditional Australian outer suburban and rural areas are increasingly marginalised. For a country which once prided itself on the "crimson thread of kinship" and fiercely sought to protect its cohesiveness, the transmutation of Australia into a kaleidoscope of diasporic communities—most with shallow roots in this land and little connection to each other—represents a social experiment on a colossal scale.

One would think that this unfolding social and demographic revolution would elicit some sort of serious national discussion. Instead, open discourse on the issue is largely suppressed. Multiculturalists in the media, academia and politics applaud the country's growing diversity but rarely consider in anything but the most superficial manner the wider, long-term effects on national unity and identity. There is no serious consideration given to whether the old Australian majority may be uncomfortable with the prospect of being supplanted by different peoples and cultures from other parts of the world. To raise such matters publicly is to risk charges of "xenophobia", or worse, "racism".

As Eric Kaufmann, a political scientist at the University of London, has argued, there is a need for ethno-demographic interests to

be aired more openly without accusations of racism. In a recent study for the UK think-tank Policy Exchange, Kaufmann put forward the case that all groups, including the old majority, have legitimate interests that should be taken into account by governments when formulating immigration policy:

The rise of the populist right in the West has been fuelled in large measure by concern over immigration and ethnic change. Now more than ever it is important to draw a distinction between irrational racism and rational group self-interest ... Group-based sentiments should be considered rather than vilified.

It is high time Australia had a mature and honest debate about such issues. Geoffrey Blainey once wrote that to shape an immigration policy is to

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“influence nearly every facet of life, now and for generations to come”. Governments are pushing us down a path that will dramatically affect the quality and way of life of current and future generations, without ever having allowed real public discussion on whether or not Australians want their country transformed beyond recognition.

If the only justification the government has for endless sky-high immigration is that it’s “good for

the economy”, it is pursuing a policy that is fundamentally flawed. When judged through the prism of the interests of existing citizens, there is no economic case that can justify the transformative changes that current policy is inflicting on Australia.

E.R. Drabik is a former regional journalist and research officer to a state politician. He lives in rural Western Australia.

Shadows

We
who are “we”
my mother my father my children
we have fallen
 apart
my daughter wanders in the wilderness
and does not know where she comes from
where she is
She is lost in “I”
my brothers wallow in unthink
learned in youth from beer and
aspiring global citizenry.
We believe whatever pays
whatever wins
What the heroes say.

Australia is a dirty word
jingoistic without sentence or verb
Yet here we are
on the other side of the world
from all the action
tearing ourselves apart.
We are hurt.
We drug our children to keep them safe.
This is the truth.

Decadence is upon us
our children in the state run madhouse
our women fight and spit in public places
the men are out of work
and the enemy cannot be named
we fire blindly into the future
shadows slip beneath our names.

To Unthink

What cannot be said
grows like a vine in moist ground
and soon it cannot be thought.
What is not said breeds what
is not thought
Yet as the tree in the forest unobserved
falling
still falls ...
what is not thought
persists
in the unsaid place
where thought no longer goes.

Patrick McCauley

Standing Up for the House of Freedom

President Trump's Warsaw Speech, delivered on July 6 in Krasinski Square, scene of Poland's 1944 uprising against Nazi occupation, was—depending on your political point of view—either a cry of freedom or duplicity of the greatest magnitude:

The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive. Do we have the confidence in our values to defend them at any cost? Do we have enough respect for our citizens to protect our borders? Do we have the desire and the courage to preserve our civilisation in the face of those who would subvert and destroy it?

The Churchillian urgency of the Warsaw Speech was, for many, not at all misplaced. Western civilisation is indeed in peril because it happens to be confronting a global jihad, and whether we have the will or even the lucidity to meet the challenge remains an open question. For the naysayers, on the other hand, the primary danger facing the West was the *speaker* of these words.

Jamelle Bouie, writing for *Slate* magazine, was one of the many pundits on the Left who viewed President Trump's vigorous defence of Western civilisation, the passage above especially, as an allusion "to ideas and ideologies with wide currency on the white nationalist right". Similarly, Jonathan Capehart, in the *Washington Post*, detected "white-nationalist dog whistles" in an appeal to "preserve our civilisation". Not to be outdone, Sarah Wildman, in *Vox* magazine, considered Donald Trump's performance to be straight out of the so-called alt-right's playbook: that is to say, racist, xenophobic, Islamophobic and so on. Peter Beinart, in the *Atlantic*, clarified the situation for anyone who might have thought Trump's words about freedom and civilisation *sounded* like John F. Kennedy or Ronald Reagan defending the West in times past: "The West is a racial and religious term."

Here, in a nutshell, is the modern-day Left's *modus operandi* for criminalising any opinion that gainsays their identity politics and ideology of political correctness. Conflating "the West" with "the white national right" marginalises conservative or traditionalist thinking of every kind. It is also, we might note, perverse. Western civilisation, as Roger Scruton explained in *The Uses of Pessimism*, is not about race or any other form of tribalism but about individual self-determination. The West has led the way in creating a workable social arrangement "that confers security and freedom in exchange for consent—an order not of submission but of settlement". Vaclav Havel's essay "The Power of the Powerless", as encapsulated by M.A. Casey in the July-August edition of *Quadrant*, is an instructive example of the freedomist Western impulse challenging, in this case, the "post-totalitarianism" (or soft totalitarianism) of late communism in Eastern Europe: "life, in its essence, moves towards plurality, diversity, independent self-constitution and self-organisation, in short towards the fulfilment of its own freedom".

The Western ethos, by this account, is neither racial nor religious *per se* but, ultimately, a project of individual autonomy and liberty. Our post-tribal sense of individual uniqueness, choice and conscience has its roots in long-standing Christian principles. Even the Age of Science, notwithstanding the New Atheists, was not a rebellion against Christian culture but, as writers such as David Bentley Hart have argued, a *product* of it. Participation in a Western society is open to people of all races and all religions, with the caveat that they embrace a civilisational code that demands not *submission* but *settlement*—freedom, in other words.

Western-style freedom, as President Trump noted in his Warsaw Speech, has often come at a terrible price, the anguish of thousand-year-old Poland during the Second World War being a case in point:

Under a double occupation the Polish people endured evils beyond description: the Katyn forest massacre, the occupations, the Holocaust, the Warsaw Ghetto and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the destruction of this beautiful capital city, and the deaths of nearly one in five Polish people.

The Poles were able to survive all this and the subsequent four decades of communist rule, which involved “a brutal campaign to demolish your freedom, your faith, your laws, your identity”, because the spirit of the Polish people “could not be broken”. And that spirit, a desire to be free whatever the cost, requires indomitable courage and strength. The most advanced military technology will not save us from the enemies of Western-inspired notions of freedom and liberty if there is no longer the will on our part to do so.

Freedom, as we have come to understand it in the West, might be a glorious thing, and yet there is a restless and unsettling aspect to it, since long-cherished notions of truth can take on a provisional quality. How could it be otherwise? As President Trump noted: “And we debate everything. We challenge everything. We seek to know everything so that we can better know ourselves.” These lines reminded me of Robert Irwin’s *For Lust of Knowing* (2006), a vivid depiction of the lives of Western Orientalists through the ages culminating in the centenarian Bernard Lewis. All of the great Orientalists, according to Irwin, were characterised by brilliance of mind and uninhibited inquisitiveness. The Greater Middle East, and destinations further afield, were there to be explored and understood.

This inquiring spirit of the West, our yearning to seek the truth by debating and investigating everything, is now being seriously challenged. The cultural relativism of Edward Said and his academic acolytes, as one example, are part of what Bernard Lewis called the “deadly hand of political correctness” that began to descend on Western universities during the 1970s. This goes some of the way, in Lewis’s opinion, to explain why “Islam now enjoys a level of immunity from comment or criticism in the Western world that Christianity has lost and Judaism never had”. The work of Bernard Lewis, including the fourteen-page article “The Revolt of

Islam” in the *New Yorker*, November 2001, received much attention at the time. Even the mainstream media, briefly, were reconciled to an honest evaluation of the reasons for the 2001 Salafi-jihadist attack on the United States. But then, as the horror of September 11 receded, the PC police reasserted themselves and drove frank discussion from the public forum. Bernard Lewis, who won a journalistic prize for “The Revolt of Islam”, and authored two *New York Times* best-sellers in this period, was never again invited by the editors of the *New Yorker* to write for them. The notion of a “clash of civilisations”, Lewis dryly observed in *Notes on a Century*, was “obviously not in accord with their worldview”.

Not in accordance with the worldview of our political class and PC commentariat, perhaps, but the continuing slaughter of Westerners by radical Islamic terrorists, the phenomenon of Sudden Jihadi Syndrome, the rise and fall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the atrocities committed by the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq, not to mention the growing boldness of the Muslim Brotherhood within our own communities, mean that the public conversation about the challenge of Islamic revivalism to Western civilisation, at least partly begun by Bernard Lewis, is back on the agenda. Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential victory makes it so. Whether we have the spirit, the

courage and the wherewithal to follow the argument to a satisfactory conclusion is another matter.

The defence of Western civilisation will not be easy because, as the negative reaction to President Trump’s Warsaw Speech makes clear, fashionable and progressive thinkers are not especially keen on the notion of “the West”. Eugene Robinson, writing for the *Washington Post*, derided Trump’s claims about the West’s achievements: “If the president read a few history books, he’d know that for most of the past 2000 years, China and India were the world’s leading economic powers and Europe was a relatively primitive backwater.” If Robinson read more Bernard Lewis he would know that one of the likely causes of Islamic revivalism is the astonishing success of the “relatively primitive backwater” of Europe. As Lewis wrote in 2002: “Why did the great scientific breakthroughs occur in Europe and not, as one might reasonably have expected, in the richer, more advanced, and in most respects more enlightened realm of Islam?” This

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is a fascinating question, surely, and addressing it might bring us closer to accounting for (and thereby defending ourselves against) Islamic rage, which takes the form of Wahhabism, the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi jihadism.

The standard PC position has been that the mere mention of Bernard Lewis's "clash of civilisations" thesis (taken up by Samuel P. Huntington) is to invite Armageddon by playing into the hands of the Salafi jihadists. Replicating, however inadvertently, the radical Islamic doctrine of the House of Peace (*Dar al-Islam*) versus the House of War (*Dar al-Harb*) only reinforces—or so the narrative goes—the anti-Western propaganda of the likes of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State group. President George W. Bush, according to such a view, made it easy for the Salafi-jihadist recruiters to promote their apocalyptic millennialist cause. Bush's post-9/11 rhetoric—"Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists"—and US military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq allegedly gave radical Islamic indoctrinators all the scope they needed to reconfigure the Global War on Terrorism as a Global War on Islam.

President Obama's refusal to properly address the peril of radical Islamic terrorism—or even utter the words *radical Islamic terrorism*—has its genesis in this line of thinking. On the surface, at least, there might have been a case for Barack Obama's Islamic outreach. David Kilcullen, in *The Islamic State and the Failures of the War on Terror*, notes that it was in George W. Bush's second term that the either-with-us-or-against-us oratory was replaced by "disaggregation", an attempt to portray the West's response to global jihad as separate and unrelated military operations. In other words, the Global War on Terrorism was already scaled back to what would later be called the Overseas Contingency Operation before Barack Obama even entered the White House.

But there was also a great deal of intellectual dishonesty, not to mention cravenness, in the refusal of the Obama administration (and, yes, the George W. Bush administration before it) to come to terms with the crisis of Islamic civilisation. Irrespective of what the disciples of Edward Said say, Bernard Lewis did not fabricate the problem of a civilisational crisis in Islam. Ali A. Allawi's *The Crisis of Islamic Civilisation* (2009) tells more or less the same story as Lewis does but from the other side of the divide. Islam, once a cohesive and complex civilisation stretching from northern Africa to India, has largely come undone due to Islam's "apparent mismatch with the modern world" and, concomitantly, the "decay of its defining and vital forces". Islamic revivalism, argues Allawi, exists

in different forms, some benign and others—like Wahhabism/Salafism—entirely pernicious. All have a vision of restoring "the oneness" of private and public life disturbed by the arrival of Western-style individualism: "The sharp dichotomy between the sacred and the profane—'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's'—does not hold in Islam." Japan and China, writes Allawi, eventually found "an alternative modernity", a way to adapt their heritages to the reality of Western-inspired notions of freedom and material success. Muslim-majority societies have found the going much harder. Wahhabism/Salafism, according to Allawi, is not an indication of Islam flourishing, but floundering. It is a *political*—and I would add *apocalyptic millennialist*—response to a civilisational breakdown. Radical Islamic terrorism is a more psychotic version of effectively the same phenomenon.

Distinguishing Western civilisation from (say) Islamic civilisation, or even Russian and Chinese civilisations, is obviously not difficult for an insightful Muslim thinker such as Ali A. Allawi. Thus, when President Trump extols the distinctive features of the West and sends out a call for their safeguarding it does not signify, as Eugene Robinson puts it, a "dangerous thirst for a clash of civilisations". Robinson has it exactly the wrong way around. An awareness of potential civilisational fault lines provides us with an opportunity to avoid, or at least not exacerbate, civilisational tensions. David French, writing for the *National Review*, contends that "a universalist view of human nature", as espoused by both George W. Bush and Barack Obama, has brought disaster. Bush, for his part, "failed to adequately plan and prepare for the Iraq that would emerge after the Iraq invasion" because he idealistically believed Iraqi political leaders benefiting from the US-imposed revolution would want "liberty more than they wanted to settle old scores".

President Obama, driven by a New Left globalist creed, was naive about the enemies of the West, believing that if he pandered to their one-sided grievances against the United States and Israel, then "alleged universal values would have a chance to prevail against the forces of hate". It is hard to name one way in which international relations improved under the Obama administration, from the failure of the Russian "reset" and all the subsequent acrimony, the rise of Salafi jihadism in Libya, Syria and Iraq, acts of radical Islamic terrorism throughout the West, the increasing Islamisation of Turkey, China's militarisation of the South China Sea, North Korea's unabated

bellicosity, Iran's emboldened adventurism, and so on. Obama apologists, such as CNN/*Washington Post*'s Fareed Zakaria, condemn the "parochialism" of President Trump's America First creed while ignoring the nightmare that was Obama's post-America ideology.

The Poles, judging by their enthusiastic response to the Warsaw Speech, understand very well that America First is not the same as America Alone. At the time of the speech, for instance, the Trump administration announced its intention to sell medium-range Patriot missiles to Poland, something the Russia-placating, first-term Obama administration dared not do. Appeasement, as we were to discover during President Obama's second term, did not provide great dividends. It rarely does. While still in Poland, President Trump also took the opportunity to extol to President Andrzej Duda, and Eastern European governments in general, the economic and political advantages of replacing imported Russian natural gas with shipments of US gas. America First does not have the splendour of Obama's heal-the-world, globalist rhetoric but maybe it makes up for that by aligning itself to reality.

If the West can be characterised as a community of liberal-democratic states, then it should be incumbent upon the political leadership of each of those autonomous national entities to promote the best interests of their respective populations. Theoretically, of course, people of any religious or ethnic background can—and do—assimilate into a society based on Western principles. We have to wake up to the reality, however, that this occurs *despite* the sectarianism encouraged by multiculturalism, which might be better described as poly-tribalism. The "oneness" sought by Sunni supremacists contrasts sharply with the enlightened patriotism of the Poles. A Western society might be "open", in the sense that Karl Popper used the term, but it has the right to closed

or secure borders, not to mention a stringent immigration program. How else can a heritage of liberty be protected against those with an entirely different civilisational framework?

We are not the House of War, as the Wahhabis/Salafists assert. We are the House of Freedom. To critique and constrain Islamic revivalism in the West is not to be Islamophobic as *both* the Muslim Brotherhood and the PC police would have it. Paradoxically, perhaps, the real danger for the West, when it comes to global jihad and all those who do not have the interests of the House of Freedom at heart, might not be so much the enemy at the gates but the anti-West nihilism at the core of politically-correct thinking. How else to explain the fact that today when the President of the United States makes a speech in Warsaw praising the grandeur and liberty of Western civilisation he is immediately censured for being a white male supremacist?

For the purveyors of identity politics, who have managed to ensnare too many of our compatriots in a modern-day version of soft totalitarianism, it is not simply Donald Trump, or even his "deplorable" supporters, who are racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic and Islamophobic, but the West itself. Astonishingly, we have reached a point where to defend ourselves is

to condemn ourselves. Somebody urgently needs to write an updated version of Vaclav Havel's "The Power of the Powerless". To safeguard a place for our children and grandchildren in the House of Freedom we must push back hard against the alliance of convenience between the PC brigade and Islamic revivalists, and be prepared to pay whatever price is demanded. We could do worse than consult the Poles about what this might require.

Daryl McCann is a regular contributor. He has a blog at <http://darylmccann.blogspot.com.au>, and he tweets at @dosakamccann.

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Aborigines Want More Than a Voice in Parliament

The proposal for an Aboriginal House of Review in Parliament

The Council recommends: 1. That a referendum be held to provide in the Australian Constitution for a representative body that gives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Nations a Voice to the Commonwealth Parliament. One of the specific functions of such a body, to be set out in legislation outside the Constitution, should include the function of monitoring the use of the heads of power in section 51 (xxvi) and section 122. The body will recognise the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia.

—Final Report of the Referendum Council, June 2017

If all that the Referendum Council wanted was a representative body of indigenous people to act as a federal government adviser on social policy to improve Aboriginal health, education, welfare and other practical issues, there was no need for constitutional change to make it happen. The demand for an Aboriginal “voice” in the Australian Parliament, which the Council has now recommended to the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, is nothing new. There have been Aboriginal advisory groups commissioned by the federal government more or less continuously for the past fifty years: the Council of Aboriginal Affairs 1967–1973; the National Aboriginal Conference 1977–1985; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 1990–2005; and the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples 2010–present.

Giving a body like this constitutional approval would make it a more permanent fixture within our political system and, the Referendum Council argues, would mean its voice could not be dismissed by government, as has happened sometimes in the past. “A constitutionally entrenched Voice appealed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities because of the history of poor or non-existent consultation with communities by the Commonwealth,”

the Council’s report says. “Consultation is either very superficial or it is more meaningful, but then wholly ignored.” The report says its new body could fix this: “The logic of a constitutionally enshrined Voice—rather than a legislative body alone—is that it provides reassurance and recognition that this new norm of participation and consultation would be different to the practices of the past.”

At the Garma Festival in Arnhem Land in early August, Malcolm Turnbull was non-committal about this proposal but Bill Shorten pledged that a future Labor government would endorse it.

Although it would be up to the parliament to decide what further definitions of the structure and role of “the voice” would be, the Council has some non-negotiable views of its own on what should be done. It expects that the body would be established in accordance with the wishes of Aboriginal people. Their continued support, the Council says, would be necessary for the success of the proposal. It also recorded the following conditions which it wanted adhered to:

Any Voice to Parliament should be designed so that it could support and promote a treaty-making process. Any body must have authority from, be representative of, and have legitimacy in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia. It must represent communities in remote, rural and urban areas, and not be comprised of handpicked leaders. The body must be structured in a way that respects culture. Any body must also be supported by a sufficient and guaranteed budget, with access to its own independent secretariat, experts and lawyers. It was also suggested that the body could represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples internationally. A number of Dialogues said the body’s representation could be drawn from an Assembly of First Nations, which could be established through a series of treaties among nations.

In other words, the eventual goal of “the voice” would be to make treaties between the Commonwealth and what it calls the First Nations. The Council’s report notes that the demand for a treaty or treaties was a priority demand of the indigenous conventions leading up to the Uluru Statement of May 2017:

The pursuit of treaty and treaties was strongly supported across the Dialogues. Treaty was seen as a pathway to recognition of sovereignty and for achieving future meaningful reform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Treaty would be the vehicle to achieve self-determination, autonomy and self-government.

So, rather than one “black state” as envisaged in 2001 by Geoff Clark of ATSIC, the latest proposal is for each individual clan or language group to be recognised as a First Nation and for the Commonwealth to make a treaty with each one, as if it was a separate state. As I record in *The Break-up of Australia*, this is a political outcome advocated by both Noel Pearson and Warren Mundine. They want statehood, self-government and an independent legal system for each self-identifying Aboriginal clan that gains native title. And they want the Australian taxpayer to fund it all.

In its recommendation to the Prime Minister and Opposition Leader, the Referendum Council spells out one specific function for “the voice”. It calls for legislation that “should include the function of monitoring the use of the heads of power in section 51 (xxvi) and section 122”. Section 51 (xxvi) gives the Commonwealth the power to make laws for any race of people. Section 122 allows the Commonwealth to make laws for any territory surrendered by any state or otherwise acquired by the Commonwealth and allows the representation of that territory in either House of the Parliament. In short, if constitutional change along the lines recommended by the Referendum Council is successful, it looks forward to the government acquiring new Aboriginal states or territories and accepting them into the Commonwealth.

This is obviously a program for a radical revision of the Australian federation—all of it in the interests of Aboriginal people, but with no thought about how it could possibly be in the interests of the rest of us.

At the moment this is a wish-list only, since there are some big political steps that need to be taken before it could become a reality, but this is nonetheless the direction in which Aboriginal politics is clearly headed.

The first political step in the process will be for the parliament to decide what powers this new body would have. Giving it constitutional status raises obvious problems from the outset. For a start, the new body would represent a major change to the structure of our parliamentary system. It would amount to a second house of review, after the Senate. Even if it was not given direct voting power but relied on moral persuasion only, this would still give it an extraordinary status. The Australian parliament would then comprise the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the Aboriginal House of Review.

Hence those who once imagined that Aboriginal recognition could make the nation complete so that all Australians can walk forward together, as Tony Abbott used to say, are kidding themselves. The Referendum Council’s proposal breaches the long-standing Australian principle that our parliamentary democracy is based on one person, one vote. Aborigines would get one more vote than anyone else to elect their own House in the parliament.

A new political institution that privileged one group of Australians over others, that conferred a political status on one ethnic identity group that was not available to anyone else, would breach one of the fundamental principles of Federation. This proposal alone, not to mention the political baggage of treaties and sovereignty in its train, would divide our nation permanently.

Its advocates also seriously underestimate the difficulties their structure would pose for the workability of parliamentary democracy. Nor have they thought out how the inevitable disputes that arise would play out in the national news media.

Once such a structure was in place, any government seeking to pass legislation relevant to Aborigines would need to gain the approval of all three bodies: the House of Representatives, the Senate and the Aboriginal House of Review. It is not hard to see that there are inherent difficulties in deciding where Aboriginal interests begin and end. The Referendum Council’s report recognises this is a likely problem but offers no solution:

It would not be realistic to provide advice on all matters “affecting” Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples because most laws of general application affect such peoples. On the other hand, it may be too narrow to limit the subject matters to laws with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples because some laws of general application have particular impact on or significance to such peoples.

In other words, any proposed Commonwealth policy that affects all Australians, say in health,

education or welfare, will naturally affect Aboriginal people too. In these cases, the Aboriginal house of review would inevitably want its own voice to be heard. Like the Greens, its members would not be content to stick with their originally designated field of interest, but would want a voice in any policy area they decide is in the interests of their people.

But even if this problem could be overcome by some judicious definition of the house of review's legislative scope, it still leaves room for plenty of moral and political pressure. The new house's pronouncements could assist or frustrate governments on policy related to mining, pastoralism, agriculture and especially on environmental issues where radical Aboriginal and green activists have long formed mutually supportive alliances.

Even on Aboriginal-only issues closer to home, there would be plenty of ground for playing politics. The Referendum Council's own report unwittingly predicts this. It says one of the functions of the Aboriginal house should be monitoring the Commonwealth's use of its existing race power. "This means," the report says, "that discriminatory legislation like the Northern Territory Emergency Response would be contested before it originates." This is a leftist interpretation of the policy launched by the Howard government in 2007 to stem a spate of domestic violence against women and sexual abuse of children by adult men, including clan elders, in remote communities in the Northern Territory and the Kimberley. To talk about it simply as "discriminatory legislation" rather than an attempt to protect the women and children in remote communities indicates where the political sympathies of the report's authors lie.

Hence it is not hard to see that the outcome of this political privilege for Aboriginal affairs would be a strengthening of radical Left politics. Given the assumptions now entrenched within the leadership of the Aboriginal political class, the proposed house of review would quickly become a critic of mainstream Australian politics. It would be a voice that criticised both Liberal and Labor governments from the Left, while continuing to press its own self-interest for increased funding to solve its own people's never-ending social and welfare problems.

The Referendum Council denies this would happen because: "It is not suggested that the body should have any kind of veto power." Anyone

who believes this should consult the report of the Council's sole dissenter, Amanda Vanstone. This former Minister for Indigenous Affairs in the Howard government makes it clear that an Aboriginal house of review would exercise a de facto power of veto: "Advice opposing a proposal before parliament," Vanstone writes, "would in effect be perilously close to a veto."

She goes on to predict that the likely outcome of the Council's proposal will be more political antagonism rather than less. "It would be important that such a body did not become another combatant in a frankly all too combative political arena." That would be a terrible outcome for everyone, she says: "What was intended to be a unifying and progressive move forward could turn into a lightning rod for discontent."

In 2012, the "expert panel" on indigenous constitutional recognition, chaired by Patrick Dodson and Mark Leibler, said it had received many submissions calling for recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty. However, the panel decided at the time that sovereignty was outside its frame of reference to "contribute to a more unified and reconciled nation" and "be capable of being supported by an overwhelming majority of Australians from across the political and social spectrum". In 2017, however, the Referendum Council, chaired by Mark Leibler and Pat Anderson, has now jettisoned any earlier doubts about sovereignty and supports

the government making treaties with Aboriginal people as if they constitute "First Nations".

So, will a referendum with this as its goal succeed or fail? The Referendum Council's own research—telephone and online surveys of 5300 people—claims there is strong support for giving Aborigines a constitutional "voice" in the parliament. No less than 68 per cent of all those surveyed endorsed this. Among Aboriginal people, the figure was 93 per cent. The issues of sovereignty and treaties with government were not among the five topics put to survey participants. However, in an analysis of the total of 1111 submissions received by the Council, the report said there was "strong support" for a treaty even though submission authors were not asked to comment on the topic.

In other words, unless a strong public voice emerges to challenge these ideas they are likely to attract Commonwealth government support and trigger a referendum, perhaps during what remains

Given the assumptions now entrenched within the leadership of the Aboriginal political class, the proposed house of review would quickly become a critic of mainstream Australian politics.

of the current term of the Turnbull government but certainly in the term of its successor. If the Commonwealth does go ahead with a referendum, it should at least address something that is not yet on the table: it should publicly fund and properly publicise a fully investigated, well-articulated case for voting No.

The proposal for a Declaration of Recognition

The Council recommends: 2. That an extra-constitutional Declaration of Recognition be enacted by legislation passed by all Australian Parliaments, ideally on the same day, to articulate a symbolic statement of recognition to unify Australians.

—Final Report of the Referendum Council, June 2017

In March 2013, the Gillard government steered through parliament the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Bill*. It recognised the existence of the Aborigines on the Australian continent and islands before the Australian nation came into being; it recognised their continuing relationship with their traditional lands and waters; and it acknowledged and respected their continuing cultures, languages and heritage. If the members of the Aboriginal political class wanted nothing more than formal recognition by the Australian government, they got it in that Act of Parliament in 2013. Yet the fact they still pursue recognition in the Constitution, as if the parliament had never made this gesture, is clear evidence that something else is going on.

The Referendum Council's report makes it clear exactly what this something else is. It embeds within its own report—not as an appendix but in the main body of the report—verbatim extracts from the Uluru Statement. Hence both the Uluru meeting and the Referendum Council endorse a series of statements that:

- declare the existence of Aboriginal sovereignty over Australia
- demand the recognition of traditional Aboriginal law
- call for treaties between the Australian government and First Nations.

These demands are based on a version of Australian history, spelt out at length in the Referendum Council's report, that is a radical travesty of the truth, a combination of assumptions that arose in the Black Power movement of the 1960s and which found expression among the Aboriginal Tent Embassy activists of the 1970s. Here is a slightly shortened extract from the Referendum Council's version of Aboriginal history, which

the Council believes should form the basis of its Declaration of Recognition:

We have coexisted as First Nations on this land for at least 60,000 years. Our sovereignty pre-existed the Australian state and has survived it. We have never, ever ceded our sovereignty. The unfinished business of Australia's nationhood includes recognising the ancient jurisdictions of First Nations law. The Law was violated by the coming of the British to Australia. This truth needs to be told.

Australia was not a settlement and it was not a discovery. It was an invasion. Invasion was met with resistance. This is the time of the Frontier Wars, when massacres, disease and poison decimated First Nations, even as they fought a guerrilla war of resistance. Everywhere across Australia, great warriors like Pemulwuy and Jandamarra led resistance against the British. First Nations refused to acquiesce to dispossession and fought for their sovereign rights and their land.

The Crown had made promises when it colonised Australia. In 1768, Captain Cook was instructed to take possession "with the consent of the natives". In 1787, Governor Phillip was instructed to treat the First Nations with "amity and kindness". But there was a lack of good faith. The frontier continued to move outwards and the promises were broken in the refusal to negotiate and the violence of colonisation.

Eventually the Frontier Wars came to an end. As the violence subsided, governments employed new policies of control and discrimination. We were herded to missions and reserves on the fringes of white society. Our Stolen Generations were taken from their families.

But First Nations also re-gathered themselves. The Annual Day of Mourning was declared on 26 January 1938. It reflected on the pain and injustice of colonisation, and the necessity of continued resistance in defence of First Nations.

But as we mourn, we can also celebrate those who have gone before us. In a hostile Australia, with discrimination and persecution, out of their mourning they started a movement—the modern movement for rights, equality and self-determination. Through the activism of our leaders we have achieved some hard-won gains and recovered control over some of our lands. After the Mabo case, the Australian legal system can no longer hide behind the legal fiction of terra nullius. But there is Unfinished Business to resolve.

And the way to address these differences is through agreement-making. Through negotiated settlement, First Nations can build their cultural strength, reclaim control and make practical changes over the things that matter in their daily life. By making agreements at the highest level, the negotiation process with the Australian government allows First Nations to express our sovereignty—the sovereignty that we know comes from The Law.

The Constitution needed to recognise the traditional way of life for Aboriginal people ... It would have to acknowledge the “Tjukurrpa”—“our own Constitution”, which is what connects Aboriginal people to their creation and gives them authority.

Despite the endorsement of the Referendum Council, it is not hard to show that a Declaration of Recognition based on this kind of narrative would be a caricature of Australian history. It falsely portrays people of Aboriginal and British descent as long-standing enemies and it misrepresents British, Australian and international law. Here are some of the more obvious objections to its assumptions:

Aboriginal people are the First Nations. Aboriginal clans, hordes and tribes, which in most cases were no more than large extended families, never attained nationhood either before 1788 or any time after. This was confirmed in 1836 in the seminal judgment of William Burton in the New South Wales Supreme Court and has been repeated several times since by Australian judges, including the High Court’s Harry Gibbs in 1979:

it is not possible to say ... that the aboriginal people of Australia are organised as a “distinct political society separated from others”, or that they have been uniformly treated as a state ... They have no legislative, executive or judicial organs by which sovereignty might be exercised. If such organs existed, they would have no powers, except such as the law of the Commonwealth, or of a State or Territory, might confer upon them. The contention that there is in Australia an aboriginal nation exercising sovereignty, even of a limited kind, is quite impossible in law to maintain.

Aboriginal people never ceded their sovereignty. Before the colonisation of Australia Aboriginal people never had any sovereignty to surrender. “Sovereignty” is a term from international law, or what was called in the eighteenth century “the law of nations”. The two leading European authorities on international law at that time, Christian Wolff

and Emmerich de Vattel, both argued that for a society to be a genuine nation it must have civil sovereignty over a territory and its people and, as a corollary, only nations could have genuine sovereignty. Aboriginal activists and their academic supporters such as Henry Reynolds have argued that, because the High Court’s Mabo judgment recognised that Aboriginal clans had their own laws that made them owners of their land, they therefore also had sovereignty over their territories. However, this wrongly assumes small tracts of land ownership entails national sovereignty. Burton’s 1836 judgment found the Aborigines did not have anything that amounted to what the British and other nations could regard as statehood or nationhood. He said they:

had not attained at the first settlement to such a position in point of numbers and civilisation, and to such a form of government and laws, as to be entitled to be recognised as so many sovereign states governed by laws of their own.

Aboriginal activists and their supporters are free, of course, to disagree with both international law and its interpretations by Australian judges, but in doing so they place their case outside the boundaries of debate in that field of jurisprudence. This means their views should not be taken seriously when it comes to the writing of a national Declaration of Recognition.

Australia was invaded, not settled, and the British colonisation was illegal. These claims are partly a matter of international law but also an issue within Australian frontier history. In eighteenth-century international law a “settled colony” was one which, at the time of its occupation by a European power, was either uninhabited or else inhabited by people whose political system and laws did not amount to those of a nation-state. In a colony of the latter kind, the laws that applied were not those of the local inhabitants but those of the new power. In early colonial New South Wales, the absence of any political structure among the Aborigines that the English explorers or members of the First Fleet could recognise as a nation or state meant they annexed it as a colony of settlement. This meant English law came into force, the British Crown became the sovereign of all the land it claimed and, in legal theory, the indigenous people automatically became subjects of the Crown, living under the protection of its laws. The legal judgment that eventually confirmed the settled colony principle was given in 1889 in *Cooper v Stuart* by the Privy Council. Yet the Referendum Council report wants us to go back and rewrite Australian legal history in order to accommodate today’s political demands.

For the first 150 years of their practice in Australia, historians and anthropologists agreed with the legal fraternity on the question of invasion or settlement. There was no warfare waged by Aborigines against the British arrivals and no sustained resistance to the British presence. The best and most comprehensive of these authors, Charles Rowley, was also the most sympathetic to the Aborigines' plight. The title of his impressive work, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society* (1970) might seem to be in the same mould as the originator of the warfare/resistance thesis, Henry Reynolds, but Rowley was quite insistent: "Aboriginal society lacked the type of organisation which makes possible a campaign of warfare." The most common violence in any of the new colonial settlements was simple retribution, or "payback" by Aborigines against individual settlers or convicts who had stolen or destroyed their canoes or weapons, or abused their women. On some occasions, Aborigines used violence, or more commonly threats of violence, to purloin game taken from the bush by settlers and convicts or fish they took from the rivers and estuaries.

But Australian history never resembled the real warfare waged by other indigenous groups in the Pacific region, especially that of the Maoris in New Zealand. In the Maori Wars of the early 1860s, about 4000 Maori warriors battled 1800 British imperial troops and local volunteers. In one confrontation at Paterangi in January 1864, some 3000 Maori warriors from twenty tribes met in battle an imperial army of more than 2000 men supported by artillery and cavalry.

Nothing on this scale ever happened in Australia. According to Governor Arthur Phillip of New South Wales: "the natives ... always retire at the sight of two or three people who are armed". And according to Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur of Van Diemen's Land, there was no "systematic warfare exhibited by any of them as need excite the least apprehension in the Government, for the blacks, however large their number, have never yet ventured to attack a party consisting of even three armed men".

Although Australian academic history is dominated by supporters of the resistance thesis, the more convincing accounts of the early settlement of Sydney by Keith Vincent Smith, of Melbourne by Beverley Nance, and of Perth by Bob Reece, reveal the most common response by Aboriginal people to the British colonists was that of "coming in" or "accommodation". Reece writes of the 1830s in Western Australia:

Far from retreating from white settlement, Aborigines were attracted to it, although their movements were still very much conditioned by [tribal] territorial boundaries and punishment for "trespassing". Those groups closest to the main centre of settlement adjusted their traditional pattern of seasonal movement in response to the relatively easy availability of European food ... Although the Aborigines knew they were being dispossessed, there does not seem to have been any continued resistance to this process. The Aborigines were ready to make pragmatic arrangements with the whites to compensate for the loss of their land and the livelihood which it represented, and this readiness was acknowledged by the white authorities. Aboriginal "attacks" on livestock and "thefts" of flour and other property on the edge of the settlement seem to have been a response to the whites' refusal to share their resources rather than any "guerilla" effort to drive the whites away.

In other words, a Declaration of Recognition based on the Uluru Statement of the Heart would not contribute to reconciliation or a more unified nation. It would have the opposite effect.

How do its authors imagine such a document would be received by the non-indigenous people of Australia who now generously, and by and large without objection, fund Aboriginal communities to the tune of \$30 billion a year (the most recently available total from the Productivity Commission's *2014 Indigenous Expenditure Report*)? This accounted for 6.1 per cent of total direct government expenditure in 2012-13, even though Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up only 3.0 per cent of the population. It means annual expenditure per person was \$43,449 for Aboriginal people compared with \$20,900 for other Australians.

Moreover, this discrepancy will in no way be addressed, let alone disappear, by giving Aboriginal people a voice in a de facto third chamber of the Parliament. This is a political proposal that would benefit no one except a small number who will get to strut their stuff on the national political stage. Indeed, it virtually guarantees the expenditure gap between black and white Australians will only keep on widening.

Keith Windschuttle is the Editor of Quadrant, and the author of The Break-up of Australia: The Real Agenda Behind Aboriginal Recognition (Quadrant Books).

The Last Service

A Glimpse into the Near Future

Although intended as fantasy, this story deals with some of the difficulties that will arise if and when, as Philip Larkin puts it:

... churches fall completely out of use
What we shall turn them into, if we shall keep
A few cathedrals chronically on show ...

* * *

There weren't many worshippers coming out of the Cathedral that Easter morning, even though it had been an important service. Several grouped themselves under umbrellas on the wet stone steps, waiting for the courage to dash across the street to the tram stop and the station opposite. High above them the three crocketed spires soared heavenwards until the tips were lost in the drizzle. The rumble of an organ recession competed with the traffic.

"It's like the end of a way of life," said one elderly lady. "Where on earth will I go now?"

"Home, I should think, if we don't drown first," said an umbrellaless lady, holding a service sheet inadequately across her home-perm.

"I meant on Sundays," said the first.

The sound of the organ was stifled as someone from inside began to shut the Great West Doors. There was a series of creaks from the decorative hinges that stretched across their surface in a pattern of coiling tendrils, a final thump and the Cathedral was closed.

The gentleman choristers were in the vestry taking off their surplices. "What shall we do with these?" asked one, reaching for its wire coathanger. "And the music books? There doesn't seem much point in leaving them here."

"Easter's about resurrection," observed another, platinously. "Perhaps there's somewhere they can be re-used. There are churches out in the eastern suburbs I've heard are going strong."

"If they are," said the third (there were only three choristers), "they won't be the sort of place that wants surplices and Merbecke. Just put them away.

Isn't there going to be some sort of sale?"

There used to be boy choristers as well, until the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse intervened. Still going strong after more than two decades with a second and third generation of inquisitors, the commission, like the dragon in alchemic mythology that eats its own tail, was now investigating the "counsellors" who in earlier decades, with considerable profit to themselves, had assisted its proceedings by flocking at public expense to comfort the "survivors" of abuse and help them "remember" their stories. With the fount of ecclesiastical compensation having run dry, some of the surviving survivors were now eyeing the bank balances of their former comforters and accusing the latter of having been a little too attentive in their ministrations of solace. The improbability of the accusations, not least on account of the aesthetic effects on the accusers of advancing decrepitude, had not deterred the commission from its duty of investigation, and the halls in which it conducted its peripatetic star chambers were cluttered with wheelchairs, walking frames and stretchers.

The prohibition of choirboys had been enacted some years earlier, the result of a recommendation by the then commissioner that the attendance of persons under eighteen at "faith assemblies", by which was meant Christian church services, be forbidden as a protection against "clerical predators". The Green and Labor coalition then in power had rushed the legislation through, with much approval from the media, though the exclusion from the prohibition of "authorised multicultural community religions" had been the subject of dispute. The New Conservative Party had taken the line that the legislation should apply to everyone or no one. When it was outvoted on the latter, the party had sought to have the exceptions removed completely, but had given up its attempt after objections from the more militant of the multicultural community religions had been expressed in the form of the burning of the party's offices and a partial beheading.

The service had been important not only because

it was Easter Day but because it was the last the Cathedral would hold. The vast building had become too costly to maintain for its tiny congregation. They had hoped to keep it going until at least the 150th anniversary of its consecration but that was still five years away. The trust that paid for Cathedral maintenance could no longer afford to do so, the munificence of donations and bequests was a thing of the past, and offerings in the plate amounted to next to nothing since there was hardly anyone to give anything. Fewer people than ever professed the Christian religion and those who did were elderly or old. To people of middle age and under, Christianity was something associated with the bad old days before post-birth abortion and family-authorized euthanasia for doddering grandparents who would otherwise have to be put into expensive nursing homes. The under-thirties showed no interest in religion at all since most of them knew nothing about it. State-mandated courses in atheism, conducted by the Safe Schools movement and imposed, as a condition of “funding”, even in schools which had once been owned by or connected with the Church, had for some years now protected the young from “sectarian contamination”.

In the last census just 1.75 per cent of respondents had described themselves as Anglican and of them hardly any still went to church. When the Cathedral was built and in its flourishing years a quarter of the population had considered itself “Church of England” in name if not always in practice. But those days, as the hymn put it, were one with Nineveh and Tyre.

For reasons rooted in colonial history an Act of the state parliament had been required to dissolve the diocese. Few MPs attended the proceedings and fewer had the faintest idea what a diocese was, but they passed the dissolution bill with a unanimous show of hands in an interval between the first and second readings of the Legalisation of Multiple Marriage (Polyamory) Bill. The diocese had existed for 189 years but would henceforth have the status of a parochial district, with, instead of an archbishop, a missionary vicar under the metropolitan jurisdiction of Sydney, as in the earliest days. Sydney, with its considerable assets in property and investments, still had a diocesan structure in place, a pale ghost of its former self, but functioning.

The Archbishop had presided at the service and preached. When she was installed in 2020 the Cathedral had had a dean too. That office had subsequently lapsed, combined with the archbishopric as a “cost-cutting measure”. From now on there would be no archbishop either, but it didn’t really matter as the responsibilities were not great, with

only a dozen or so churches still open for services in the former diocesan territory.

The Most Reverend Archbishop Judy, as she liked to be known, was the first female archbishop of the diocese. She had been due to retire even before the abolition of her office but had agreed to carry on for a time as missionary vicar, augmenting her exiguous stipend by embarking on a part-time career as a funeral celebrant. Archbishop Judy had been an outspoken advocate of “marriage equality” before that came in eighteen years ago and had subsequently made the solemnisation of same-sex unions a prominent part of the Cathedral’s “outreach”, so that, with the beauty of the great building as an attraction, quite a number of ardent couples, sometimes with both bride or groom in natty suits, sometimes in tulle and shantung, had celebrated their nuptials in the Cathedral with a service in which God was or was not mentioned, according to taste. The Archbishop herself had been a bride there on the proud day when she and Ellie, a champion full-forward, had plighted their troth. These ceremonies had been a shot in the arm for the Cathedral’s finances, until the vogue for “gender-irrelevant” weddings, as they were officially designated, had dissolved in a welter of acrimonious divorces and expensive legal wrangles over houses, children and other possessions (Ellie had managed to get custody of Brianna but now lived alone in Hepburn Springs where she coached the under-15 girls). A suggestion that the Cathedral offer a ceremony for the blessing of a divorce had been dismissed on account of the difficulty of getting the participants together and the likelihood of unseemly spats in front of the altar. With polygamy now legal there was the possibility of multiple marriage ceremonies as a source of income, and the Cathedral’s accountants advised that if the building could be kept open until these became the norm, solvency might be restored. But there was no money to keep going, and anyway, with the sea of faith all but ebbed into history, a few more weddings wouldn’t have made much difference in the long run.

In her final sermon, for which she leant on the end of a pew instead of addressing a near-empty nave from the pulpit, Archbishop Judy took as her biblical text verse eight of St Luke’s chapter eighteen (Revised Australian Inclusive Version): “However, when the Child of Humankind comes back, will they find any faith left on planet earth?” The closure of the Cathedral, she said, was not, as people might be tempted to think, “a setback to the witness of Christianity in this country”. It was “a wonderful opportunity”. She did not elaborate on what it was an opportunity for. This was the sort of thing you always had to say when a church closed, rather

than acknowledge the closure as the evidence of decline it was, and she had had to say it many times in recent years. Whatever she once believed about “new growth” out of “outmoded structures”, she was now beginning to suspect that it wasn’t an opportunity for anything. Perhaps it was, as custom required her to add, “a challenge”—“a challenge to our complacency”. (If any of the few practising Anglicans in the diocese had been complacent about the state of their Church in the last half-century they must have been singularly unobservant.) God, she concluded, was “calling us out of our comfort zone”, though it was up to us to “discern” exactly where.

“We go forth from here,” said the Archbishop, the stylised fish in lurex appliqué on her home-made mitre glinting like tinsel, “a leaner and less encumbered Church, a Church that can travel lighter, now renewed for the journey”. She paused, and looked round as though daring anyone to contradict her. “And if I may add a personal note, it is this: that as a Christian feminist I believe the greatest blessing we have ever received was the rediscovery last century of women’s ministry. The Church has been immeasurably enriched by it in the years since, and whatever the future of this Cathedral, that will not be lost.”

Whatever the future of the Cathedral: but what future could it have? There were so many unwanted churches. The suburbs and country towns were full of them, large and small, good, bad and ugly architecturally, old and new. Some went no further back than the 1980s, some had been the centre of their communities for generations since their towers and spires rose above fields or market gardens and isolated villas in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Many were now in a pitiful condition, with slates sliding from the roof and loose stonework. “Dangerous Structure. Keep Out” said notices on barricades of wire mesh. Vandals had interpreted this as an invitation and had climbed the fences to break into the locked churches and desecrate the fittings or pull the wire screens from the windows to smash the stained glass. The older churches with their elaborate interiors offered the greatest incentive to destruction, so that intricate stencilled ornament on sanctuary walls was disfigured with spray-painted obscenities and daubs, broken bottles and mounds of excrement lay everywhere, and plasterwork and memorial plaques were chipped or streaked with droppings from the pigeons that flew

in through the glassless windows. In a few churches tragic figures, demented or drug-numbed, had made their way in as well and lay or squatted on makeshift beds of embroidered hassocks that were once the pride of the Ladies’ Guild needleworkers but were now stained and stinking.

Some redundant churches had been sold and, still in use, were kept in better repair, although those among them adjudged by permit-issuing councils as of lesser importance within the “built environment” were now defaced by loud neon signs or bright paintwork that advertised their present use as “Heavenly Pizzas” or kickboxing academies. The worst treated were the churches that had been “creatively” adapted as apartments or offices. From these tortured relics, spiky roof planes and disproportionate expanses of glass in pointy-topped apertures thrust themselves impertinently through and above bluestone parapets. These superimpositions, invariably described as “award-winning”, were said in modish architectural circles to “complement” and “reimagine” the Neo-Gothic of the original building. If they did, it was only in the minds of the committees of designers who handed out the awards to each other and of council planners obsessed with “sustainable conservation”. Anyone with genuine aesthetic sense could see that the additions and alterations were crude and jejune by comparison with the

*The Cathedral was
“too churchy” for
contemporary worship
and, with all its
stone and marble and
tiles, too difficult to
adapt to the high-tech
paraphernalia that
had taken the place of
altars and choir stalls.*

mutilated original structure.

Of churches still functioning as churches, the Roman Catholics retained the greatest number, though with congregations of almost exclusively Asian origin, just as a century earlier they had been Irish. About a third of Catholic parish churches had been disposed of and most of those still in use had reverted to the older form of Mass. The Latin and the silence seemed to appeal to the Catholic component of the diminishing band of eccentrics in the community who persisted in caring about God.

The Uniting Church, the present participle in its name expressing an aspiration to pan-ecclesiastical reunion that would never now be realised, had held a synod in which it was resolved that the “Christian character” that had hitherto formed “an integral element of our worshipping communities’ core identity” should become “optional”. The name would be changed to Australians Uniting for Wellness. Of Uniting churches not yet abandoned, those on the most valuable sites would be sold and the remainder turned into “neighbourhood inspirational centres”

where people could go for “holistic refreshment”.

Among other varieties of Christianity only the revivalist churches in the far-out suburbs still drew large attendances. They had names such as SpiritSong and Joy Church. A few of these congregations were technically Anglican, but the chorister at the Cathedral was correct in thinking that they would have no use for surplices or Merbecke. It was hard to detect anything in their thumping strobe-lit liturgies or in the attire of their T-shirted “worship leaders” that was peculiarly Anglican or that differed from a revivalist meeting with its cries of swooning ecstasy from the redeemed.

At one point someone had proposed that a revivalist congregation migrate to the central city and install itself in the Cathedral. There had been all sorts of reasons from the revivalists themselves why this couldn't happen: the city was too dangerous, with gangs roaming with machetes and baseball bats; it was too hard to get to from their comfortable suburban homes—too distant, too much traffic, and you wouldn't take a train unless you wanted to be raped or worse. There was nowhere to park the electric SUV; the Cathedral was “too churchy” for contemporary worship and, with all its stone and marble and tiles, too difficult to adapt to the high-tech paraphernalia that had taken the place of altars and choir stalls in revivalist ecclesiology. The idea was dropped.

The extent to which the Cathedral as a building was undervalued in its own city was astonishing. It was a masterpiece, an edifice that ought to have been regarded as a principal ornament of the metropolis. Tourist guidebooks, obsessed with restaurants and “historic sites” associated with supposed events in Aboriginal history, never noted this, but the Cathedral was one of the finest Gothic Revival structures in the world. Its architect, of unequalled eminence in his time, had put his all into the design of this principal church for what was intended to become the finest Victorian city in the British Empire: his homeland was full of cathedrals; there was no opportunity for him in Britain to build anything on the same scale. True, his disinclination to travel and to put up with those he took to be fools led to his falling out with the committee of citizens in charge of building the Cathedral, but that had not prevented the great church being completed to his design, its interior especially a testament to his originality. The bands of light and dark stone that alternated along the walls and the use of encaustic tile and rich colours were evidence of an ability to interpret Gothic and employ its idiom in a new way rather than, as lesser architects had done, copy medieval models. Almost certainly he would not have approved of the three spires added to the

Cathedral after his death in place of the unbuilt ones he had designed. They were much more grandiose than his, but no one could deny that they were imposing. The central spire, more than three hundred feet above the street at its tip, was supported by a lofty tower. Sculpted figures of St Peter, St Paul and St John gazed down from their corner plinths at the base of the tower, with on a fourth plinth the Bishop in whose episcopate the Cathedral had been built. He was holding his crozier but, in a typically Low Church way, not wearing a mitre. In the era in which the Cathedral arose that traditional item of episcopal regalia was reserved for episcopal thrones rather than episcopal heads.

Once it became known that the Cathedral was no longer to be a Christian church, suggestions for alternative uses began to flow in. Concert halls headed the list, but the city was replete with concert halls from other church conversions in addition to those with which successive arts-worshipping governments had provided it. An indoor market or a “shopping mall” were popular proposals, except with the stallholders of the city's existing market and the owners of the shopping hall in the erstwhile central post office, who swiftly lodged objections. As happens with every vacated public building there was a flurry of applications to adapt the Cathedral “sympathetically” as apartments, but this, surprisingly, proved unacceptable to the state's “heritage” arbiters, who were generally quite elastic in their approval of unsuitable conversions (a former synagogue in a main boulevard had recently been transformed with their blessing into a swimming pool and ladies' “fitness centre”). Bell-ringers applied for a tenancy in one of the spires to continue their craft. The Humanist Society thought that to turn the Cathedral into a museum of atheism on the Stalinist model would be the most appropriate use.

A veteran lawyer who had built her whole career, from counsel's assistant to interrogator-in-chief, denouncing child abuse in the Royal Commission, proposed that the Cathedral be unroofed to symbolise the successful “uncovering” of plots by ecclesiastical authorities over the years to keep cases of abuse “hidden”. (She was told that there were prospects of a more “appropriate” cathedral eventually becoming available for this estimable purpose.) Accommodation for the city's homeless seemed to many a not unreasonable use, but no one wanted to pay for the necessary dormitories and bathrooms, least of all the city council that for years had been conducting a campaign against rough sleepers, who, it alleged, were “a blot” on the appearance of the city and reduced its appeal to tourists. A proposal to convert the Cathedral to “a world-class Gothic

terminus" for the new interstate high-speed train in emulation of St Pancras in London and Eurostar, was dismissed on the grounds that unlike St Pancras, which had been built as a station, the Cathedral would have to lose much of its main façade to allow the rail lines to run inside to the platforms along the nave.

Not far from the Cathedral was a college bursting with aspiring youthful talent in the various fields that constitute contemporary endeavour in "the arts", which may be summarised as everything but the conventional forms of art practised since the beginning of civilisation. With ability as traditionally understood no longer a requirement, the college received more applications than it had space to accept, and a large empty building designed for public assemblies was just what it needed until a new college could be "purpose-built". And so it came about that six months to the day after the last service the Premier of the state presided at the ceremony in which the Cathedral, leased from its trustees, was reopened for its temporary new function as the college's "creativity space". The heavy blackwood pulpit, bishop's *cathedra*, once gleaming but now tarnished brass lectern, choir stalls and all the pews had with considerable inconvenience, sweat and cursing been carried down into the crypt, pending a decision on whether to auction them off when the more portable contents such as candlesticks, flower vases, embroidery and other "collectables" were put on sale. Thus disencumbered, the nave and chancel could be given over to dramatic rehearsals and expressive dance without any restriction on artistic freedom of movement. The organ had been retained *in situ* for the music students, though it was scarcely an ideal instrument for the kind of music they liked.

Guests at the opening were able to admire selected examples of student achievement in the visual arts executed in garish acrylics and replete with shard-shaped compositional forms and unconvincing figures and faces. These filled the Gothic panels of the reredos, in which an ascending sequence of nineteenth-century Venetian glass mosaics was one of the glories of the Cathedral. The mosaics were now hidden behind canvas covers hung there ostensibly for "conservation" but more importantly to avoid any offence the iconography might cause to the various mullahs and imams who from time to time were conducted through the Cathedral by estate agents. Their visits were in furtherance of a "strategy" devised by the state's Ministry for the

Arts to persuade the trustees, once the college had moved to its new premises, to sell the Cathedral to the philoprogenitively-multiplying Islamic "community" as the city's own Hagia Sophia (albeit with three minarets only compared with that former church's four; if necessary, explained the agents, an extra one could be added somewhere).

The most solemn part of the reopening was a smoking ceremony to eject any lingering "unfriendly spirits" and cleanse the Cathedral of its "past impurities". Sparks flashed and spat from the sprigs of burning melaleuca and eucalyptus waved around by the officiating Aboriginal elders (several of whom, as it happened—a Tasmanian "climate activist", an Irish backpacker and an American Peace Corps volunteer—were not ancestrally "indigenous" but "identified" as such). Ex-Archbishop Judy had graciously accepted an invitation to take part in the ceremony as an honorary "aunty" of the Tomandjeri people (on whose land the Cathedral stood, according to a plaque in the narthex) and instead of her lurex mitre now donned the cloak of possum fur distinctive to that office. The smell of bushfire filled the lofty edifice in a way that the aroma of incense had never been allowed to, the Cathedral having always been at the lower end of the Anglican scale of ritual procedure. Above the gyrations and incantations the

The most solemn part of the reopening was a smoking ceremony to eject any lingering "unfriendly spirits" and cleanse the Cathedral of its "past impurities".

purifying smoke ascended towards the roof, its blue-grey billows criss-crossed with rays of tinted light from the clerestory stained glass. Thicker and thicker rose the haze till it obscured the bands of stone and the barrel-vaulted ceiling of kauri pine, beneath which naked mime and dance students ("liberated from the artificial barrier that clothing interposes between body structure and movement") would tomorrow give an inaugural display of their artistry in the form of a "spontaneous performance presentation" illustrating the irrelevance of binary concepts of personhood.

That night the fire could be seen for fifty miles. The clouds were orange with fearful flickering as in a medieval illustrator's vision of Hell. The glass walls of office buildings reflected and intensified the brightness till it seemed that the whole city was being consumed. Tongues of fire from the Cathedral's mullioned windows licked upward in the acrid air, scorching and calcining the sandstone above. When the burning rafters of the nave gave way and the vaults fell in, the crash was heard several districts away. The central tower, its bell openings incandescent, blazed like a beacon. If the big

ships out on the bay had been sleek quinqueremes and triremes instead of container carriers it might have been the distant Pharos of Alexandria guiding them towards their haven at the end of a crossing from Ostia or Byzantium.

Yet like the dome of St Paul's above the smoke of the blitz on London, the tower and spire held firm, kept in place by the steel frame that the architect, with typical Victorian inventiveness of construction, had embedded deep in the stone-

work. The same structure built in original Gothic manner on clustered columns would have fallen as soon as the stone of the columns, desiccated by the heat, turned to powder beneath its weight. This one was still there in the morning, black-streaked but stable, though Peter and Paul had fallen off, John was tottering and the Bishop had lost the top of his crozier.

Christopher Akehurst is a regular contributor.

Numbers

Another Christmas, another New Year's Eve,
the world sparks, searching for hope and serene
times, but I myself can hardly believe
the new number: two thousand and seventeen

just doesn't seem possible. As a child
I calculated how old I would have to be
when the century ended—the wild,
ridiculous age of 52 would add up to me

and I could never have imagined where
I am now, in the country, with our son
and your ashes just across the road; there
he and I spread their coarse crumbs

of memory, numbly, almost five years ago.
Five: another number I can't comprehend.
Incomprehensibility is all I have to show
though numbers are cruelly meant never to end.

The year that has been showed how unwise
the world can be, but for me was rewarding:
a new house, a new book, to my surprise
I could feel, and love again. Somehow I'm sure

you wouldn't mind. But the years, 2016
and 2017, of course can mean nothing
to you, nor you to them, a heady fix
of numbers that relate to you

only in the harsh, haphazard mathematics
of my mind, where addition is blind,
where numbers, fear and hope intermix
and subtraction cannot be, or be refined.

Dennis Haskell

Christians versus Feminists on Domestic Violence

Domestic and family violence is too grave a problem to be misused as a weapon in anti-Christian bigotry. And yet, the ABC recently achieved a new low standard in anti-Christian journalism. In a report on 7:30, Julia Baird and Paige MacKenzie claimed the biggest wife-bashers are Christian men who “sporadically” attend church. The report quoted advocates claiming “the church is not just failing to sufficiently address domestic violence, it is both enabling and concealing it”. In an online article by Baird, published by the ABC on July 21, no details of any surveys are given to substantiate the claim that evangelical Christians are the worst wife-beaters. There is only an inconclusive reference to an obscure researcher’s citation of a survey in Brisbane.

This is militant anti-Christian bias by a tax-funded media corporation. A journalist makes an outlandish charge, oblivious to the immense body of research that contradicts her. Not only is there no support for a claim that Christian husbands are more likely to abuse their wives; there is actually solid evidence that they are better, more loving spouses.

Of course, modern feminism has a distinctly anti-Christian flavour. Feminist scholars often claim that Christianity has been a major oppressor of women throughout history. Amid ongoing denunciations that Christianity is inherently patriarchal and sexist, these ideologically-driven scholars often ignore the fact that the early Church was especially attractive to women. The first Christian communities were predominately female, not male. As noted by the Cambridge historian Henry Chadwick, in ancient Rome “Christianity seems to have been especially successful among women. It was often through the wives that it penetrated the upper classes of society in the first instance.”

Although from the early days of Christianity women were involved in numerous church activities, feminist scholars have gone so far as to claim that rampant sexism was the rule in the early Christian

communities. In fact, in those days Christian women enjoyed a much greater status than did their female counterparts elsewhere in the ancient world. According to another prominent historian, Adolf von Harnack, in early church history “Christian preaching was laid hold of by women in particular”. Christians differed in this respect not only from pagans, but also from the Jews. As noted by Peter Brown, Emeritus Professor of History at Princeton University, “the Christian clergy ... took a step that separated them from the rabbis of Palestine ... they welcomed women as patrons and even offered women roles in which they could act as collaborators”.

Professor Rodney Stark was for many years Professor of Sociology and Professor of Comparative Religion at the University of Washington. He now works as Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences and co-director of the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University. According to him, “objective evidence leaves no doubt that early Christian women did enjoy far greater equality with men than did their pagan and Jewish counterparts”. Professor Stark says that “there is virtual consensus among historians of the early church as well as biblical scholars that women held positions of honor and authority within early Christianity”. For example, he explains that women deacons assisted in liturgical functions and administered the charitable activities of the Church. This is in line with the Apostle Paul’s commendation of “our sister Phoebe” to the Roman congregation, stating that she was a “deaconess of the church of Cenchrea”. In 1 Timothy 3:11, Paul refers to women in the role of deacons. In Corinthians 11:11–12, Paul talks about the right of women to prophesy, and that they are as essential as men in Christian fellowship. “For it is through women that man comes to be, and God is the source of all,” he says.

In elevating the status of women, the early Christians were simply emulating the example of Jesus Christ, who had many women as friends, followers and supporters. Christ saved a woman who

had been caught in adultery from being stoned to death. It was to women that Christ first appeared after his Resurrection. He confronted prejudicial attitudes towards women, blatantly breaking with the rabbinical tradition when he spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well (see John 4). Not only was it unheard of for a rabbi to be alone with a Samaritan woman, but to discuss theology with her was absolutely scandalous. This is why the Bible refers to the disciples' reactions upon finding Christ talking to her: they were "surprised", or "marvelled", which carries a sense of incredulity.

No doubt the disciples' wonderment arose from their Jewish culture. Women in Palestine at the time of Christ were subject to severe legal restrictions. Their witness had no validity in law courts and they were often segregated from the rest of society and shut in their houses. They weren't considered fit for education. Jewish women were not allowed to read the Torah to the assembly, and women were seated separately in synagogues. As quoted in the Babylonian Talmud (ca. 90 AD) by Rabbi Eliezer: "Better burn the Torah than teach it to a woman." Elsewhere the Talmud admonishes: "Everyone who talketh much with a woman causes evil to himself."

The disparagement of women is particularly seen in this prayer often uttered by ancient Jewish men: "Praise be to God that he has not created me a Gentile; praise be to God that he has not created me a woman; praise be to God that he has not created me an ignorant person." By contrast, writes US theologian Gary Thomas, "Jesus challenged and confronted these attitudes about women, lifting women up and including them in his inner circle of confidantes and supporters" (see Luke 8:1-3).

In the Christian statement of faith expressed by the Apostle Paul, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Such statements exercised an enormously positive effect in the development of human rights in the West, including gender relations. In an ideal Christian community all barriers of prejudice must be broken, including xenophobic nationalism (Greek or Jew), racism (barbarian or civilised), social discrimination (slave or free), and finally, of course, gender discrimination (male or female).

Feminist critics dismiss all these biblical statements. They assume that such remarkable statements had no impact on the advancement of human rights, in particular fundamental rights for women. However, the late Harvard legal historian Harold Berman credits biblical statements such as the one found in Galatians 3:28 as positively having "an ameliorating effect on the position of women and

slaves and the protection of the poor and helpless" between the sixth and eleventh centuries. According to Sanford Lakoff, Emeritus Professor of Political Theory at the University of California, San Diego:

The Christian teaching with the greatest implications for democracy is the belief that because humanity is created in the image of God, all human beings are of equal worth in the sight of God. Along with the Greek Stoic belief in equality as a reflection of the universal capacity for reason, this belief shaped an emerging democratic consciousness, as Alexis de Tocqueville noted when he observed in the introduction to his study of democracy in America that Christianity, which has declared all men equal in the sight of God, cannot hesitate to acknowledge all citizens equal before the law.

Frequently, feminist scholars interpret the rejection of divorce by Christianity as indicating a revulsion against sexuality, and demonstrating a bias in favour of "patriarchy". These critics ignore, or refuse to recognise, what Paul wrote about marriage and sex:

The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to the husband. For ... the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control. (1 Corinthians 7:3-5)

This means that Christian husbands should not withhold from their role of fulfilling their wives' sexual needs. This is why in seventeenth-century New England the courts consistently "upheld the view that women had a right to expect content and satisfaction in bed".

Of course, even this historical fact may not pacify the ideologues who are blindly convinced that Christianity must be an anti-woman religion. This is especially so when someone lacks the proper knowledge of the meaning of the following instruction in Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. (Ephesians 5:22-24)

Submitting to another person is an often misunderstood concept. For the Christian wife, this means obeying a husband as long as he acts in a Christ-like manner. For the Christian husband, this means putting aside his selfish desires in order to care for his wife's well-being. This is why Paul adds this important admonition: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her" (Ephesians 5:25). Paul is saying that husbands must be willing to sacrifice everything for their wives. They should give up their own lives if necessary. A Christian husband must make the well-being of his wife the primary consideration, "so husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:28).

The essence of Christian leadership is not personal empowerment, but sacrificial love. This essence of sacrificial love is found in Philippians, where Paul urges believers to "do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4). Paul then asks Christians to emulate the example of Christ himself, "who, being in the very nature God ... made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant" (Philippians 2:6-7). Christ often expressed this principle:

But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:26-27)

The greatest among you will be your servant. (Matthew 23:11)

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all." (Mark 9:35)

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. (Mark 10:43)

But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. (Luke 22:26)

Although claiming to be the Son of God, Christ made himself into a humble servant. On the night before his death, he humbly washed his disciples' feet (John 13:1-17). As the theologian Timothy Keller notes, Christ thus showed "in the most dramatic way that authority and leadership mean that you become the servant, you die to self in order to love and serve the Other". In doing so, "Jesus redefined all authority as servant-authority. Any exercise of power can only be done in service of the Other, not to please oneself. Jesus is the one who did not come to be served, as the world's authority figures expect to be, but to serve, to the point of giving his life."

At least for those who truly live by Christ's definition of authority and leadership, in the language of Christianity the leader is the one who must be the most self-effacing, the most sacrificial, and the most devoted to the good of others. It takes an equal degree of submission for a faithful husband to submit to such a sacrificial role, as a "servant-leader" in the marital relationship.

How different is this Christian message from the feminist language of gender empowerment and gender domination! Today's feminism is basically a sexist ideology aimed at empowering women in the pursuit of individual autonomy. The ultimate goal of feminist ideology is personal achievement at the expense of others. Accordingly, the expectations of husbands, parents and children are considered less important than a woman's right to autonomy.

What could be further from the Christian concepts of leadership, love and sacrifice? No wonder Christianity is so hated by the advocates of radical feminist ideology. Take the issue of marriage, for instance. We often encounter in the feminist literature a militant anti-Christian bias. Some feminist scholars dare even to claim that Christian views of sex roles justify husbands' mistreatment of their wives. This is precisely what 730 alleged. However, as Rodney Stark points out, "not only is there no support for claims that Christian husbands, especially those of the Evangelical Protestant variety, are more likely to abuse their wives, there is solid evidence that they are better, more loving husbands".

About two decades ago the US National Health and Social Life Survey conducted extensive personal interviews with a national sample of 3432 Americans eighteen years of age and older. Stark notes, "That survey was remarkable for the care that went into its execution, and the results are probably very accurate." It was found that Christian women were "extremely" emotionally satisfied with their sex lives. The irreligious were the least likely to give that answer. Interestingly, the researchers concluded

that “conservative Protestant women” are far more likely to “always” have an orgasm during sex with their husbands (or live-in partner), while those with no religious affiliation were by far the least likely to do so.

Feminist stereotypes about the lives of married Christian couples are ill-founded. Perhaps some of those feminists would be happier if they rejected their narcissistic lifestyle, embraced biblical Christianity and married a committed Christian husband. Although committed Christian men would reject premarital sex with them, once they got married they would almost certainly have far superior sex lives! As Rodney Stark notes, “Christian women married with Christian men reportedly have sex more often, more reliably achieve orgasms, and express greater emotional and physical satisfaction with sex than their irreligious counterparts.”

Although Christianity has received consider-

able bad press (especially from the ABC) it is a religious worldview that is profoundly pro-family and pro-women. There is no justification for a tax-funded media corporation to support unsubstantiated claims that contradict a large body of research supporting the claim that Christian men, especially of the evangelical kind, are better, more loving husbands. Christianity offers a worldview that is radically different from contemporary feminist ideology; though one that is far more attractive for women, and which works.

Dr Augusto Zimmermann is Director of Postgraduate Research and former Associate Dean (Research) at Murdoch Law School. He is also Professor of Law (Adjunct) at the University of Notre Dame Australia (Sydney campus), and a member of the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia. A footnoted version of this article appears at [Quadrant Online](#).

Wisdom

For Leah, born 7 November 2016

Little bundle of joy, you lie back,
eyes scrunched, lips pouting, crayfish red,
unbelievably twelve hours old,
totally oblivious, tucked tightly
in your bunny rugged bed,

how you shine the surface of our lives,
how you take us to the watery depths,
soar us into the incomprehensible blue,
how you connect us so mightily
to happiness, to mystery, to the depths
of blood, to the whole wonder of being.

While you slipped into the world
two urgent candidates for President
abused each other ferociously,
fighters in Syria slaughtered
one another, Australia’s sad
political leaders nagged and whined

and you sleep, you breathe so gracefully
I thank heaven, or fate, or chance
or whatever, for what you absorb
and absolve, for what
you unquestionably are.

Dennis Haskell

The Emergence of Conservative Affection for Israel

In recent years the State of Israel has become an object of deep affection for many of the Western world's conservatives, especially in the United States. For example, in his campaign material, Senator Ted Cruz—probably the most conservative of the Republican candidates at the recent presidential election—stated, “We stand with Israel. We must make it clear that the US–Israel alliance is once again a strategic bedrock for the United States.” This was not simply a campaign ploy for votes, since few American Jews were likely to vote for him, but what appears to be a sincere commitment. “Ted Cruz Loves Orthodox Jews—and They Love Him Back”, is the way the website *Politico* put it last year. Similarly, newly-elected Vice-President Mike Pence, also an extremely conservative Republican with an across-the-board record of supporting all conservative positions, and a Roman Catholic, referred to Israel as “America’s most cherished ally”. He visited Israel in 2014 to express his support, and in 2016 as Governor of Indiana (a state where Jews comprise less than 1 per cent of the population) signed into law a bill which bans Indiana from having commercial dealings with any company that boycotts Israel. In Australia, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was greeted by Malcolm Turnbull and his cabinet on his recent trip here like visiting royalty, in a manner which surely exceeded any required diplomatic protocol.

This love affair by many of the Western world’s conservative leaders with the State of Israel—and, by implication, with the Jewish people—is a recent development. Into the 1960s and beyond, there was a lingering unease by many Western conservatives with both the Jews and Israel, an attitude which may still exist among components of the British “Establishment”. Indeed, until fairly recently, many on the Right were overtly or covertly anti-Semitic; until 1945 (or beyond) anti-Semitism was almost always a major component of the ideology of the continental European Right. While the grosser forms of anti-Semitism were usually absent from

the political Right in the English-speaking world, it always existed as a social attitude, probably until the 1960s.

Several factors comprised the bases of traditional right-wing anti-Semitism. Theological anti-Semitism—the Jews crucified Jesus and have stubbornly refused to recognise His Divine status as Saviour—was always a major driving force, especially in Europe. However, one factor in particular was probably the main element in right-wing anti-Semitism in the modern period until the 1940s: the rootlessness and statelessness of the Jews, their status as the only Western people without a geographically contiguous area of settlement, the necessary prerequisite for independent statehood. In contrast to all other peoples, the Jews were seen as a permanent class of aliens and strangers wherever they went.

The lack of a contiguous territory led to all the other distinctive and negative social characteristics of the Jews which set them apart from all other peoples. They lacked an aristocracy, a peasantry, and a military component of soldiers. The peculiar social structure of the Jews lay behind the image of the Jews as not merely different from any other European people, but dangerous, sinister and repellent. The unique failure of the Jews since Roman times to have a territory or state of their own was perhaps the most important single element in Hitler’s anti-Semitism, referred to in demented and ranting terms in *Mein Kampf*:

Since the Jew never possessed a state with definite territorial limits and therefore never called a culture his own, the conception arose that this was a people [of] nomads ... [but] the Jew never thinks of leaving a territory he has occupied, and he sits so fast that even by force it is hard to drive him out ... The Jew was never a nomad, but only and always a parasite in the body of other people ... He is and remains a typical parasite, a sponger who like a noxious

bacillus keeps spreading as soon as a favourable medium invites him.

Although (by definition) Hitler's views are probably uniquely extreme, the core of his attacks on the permanent rootlessness and statelessness of the Jews was widely shared among European conservatives before 1945. Their rootlessness led Jews to be seen as constituting an international conspiracy, masterminding virtually every malign facet of the modern world—exploitative finance capital, communism, depraved and pornographic modern culture, atheism—all with the aim of destroying traditional European society, leading to control of its successor by the Jews.

What primarily accounts for the almost total reversal of Western conservative and right-wing attitudes towards the Jews in today's world compared with the situation eighty years ago? The main reason, surely, has been the creation of the State of Israel and its maintenance against its Arab enemies by military force during the past seventy years.

Jews are no longer seen as cowards and parasites without an army, but, via the Israel Defence Force, a military superpower which has, time and again, vanquished its enemies. Perhaps the most visible facet of Israeli society apart from its soldiers is its Ultra-Orthodox religious sector, evidence that Israel is a nation which reveres its millennia-old past. It now has a normal social structure rather than an abnormal one. More basically, the Jews are no longer unique among European peoples in being without a contiguous geographical territory or stateless.

This fundamental change in image has allowed the Jews to be seen, not as subversives, but as one of the main progenitors of Western society, which invariably defends itself against its destructive enemies and more recently against terrorists by force. In other words, all of the distinctive characteristics of Israeli society as it has evolved since 1948 have accentuated its conservative values and diminished

the radical and destructive image of the rootless Jews. It is also the case that Israelis are culturally self-confident about their national identity, patriotism and the morality of their national self-defence, in a way which is the opposite of the attitudes of today's left-liberal elites and radical activists in most Western countries. While there are certainly left-wing Israeli dissenters from the actions of their government, they are smaller in number and more marginal than in Europe, America or Australia. The great majority of Israelis reflect a position of confident patriotism that has been absent from most Western discourse since the 1960s.

The reasons why the West's conservatives now support Israel are the mirror image of the reasons why the West's extreme Left hates Israel: in the Left's eyes Israel is a military behemoth which usurped the land it occupies and is oppressing the Palestinians by force. As always, the Western Left's hallmark is its drive for destruction, and especially the destruction of successful conservative institutions. It is also hallmarked by hypocrisy, in this case by ignoring or whitewashing the barbarity of the Islamic states and their terrorist movements with which Israel has to deal every day.

There has, in short, been a reversal of anti-Semitism during the past thirty or forty years, with hostility to the Jews moving from the extreme Right to the extreme Left. While many Jews, especially outside the United States, are well aware of this reversal, the large American Jewish community still remains mainly on the political Left (it is estimated that 75 per cent of American Jews voted for Hillary Clinton at last November's election). Elsewhere, however, most Jews now support the right-of-centre parties—in Australia, in Britain, and in Israel. Instead of being proponents of radical change, they are now proponents of stability, which is how most of the gentile world now perceives them.

William D. Rubinstein taught at Deakin University and at the University of Wales, and is now an adjunct professor at Monash University.

All of the distinctive characteristics of Israeli society as it has evolved since 1948 have accentuated its conservative values and diminished the radical and destructive image of the rootless Jews.

Bush Tucker Tour

Witjuri

We take a well-worn track out to a stand
of desert wattles, watch
the women dig deep, hack at the treasure
curled safely among the roots
They offer a native snack, a bush challenge
to visitors from the city
—a creamy morsel wriggling on a stick
soft and nutty in the mouth or
a roasted puff-ball, the comforting hint
of chicken held on the tongue

*

Grandmas with dillybag and stick
once sustained whole families
—the yield from a single tree
an easy meal to fill a hunter's belly
We smell the familiar scent of wattle
as they smoke *tnyeme* brush
sip a healing tea, bitter as any bush medicine
Children find us a hidden treat
honeydew, a native sweet to lick
from the underside of leaves

Honeybag

Aunties talk of helpless slaves kept in tunnels
their swelling bellies heavy with nectar
They serve as rich store-pods
feed worker-ants in dry seasons
We join the search for sugar ants, thump
the ground, trace the hollow places
as they dance in line, “Sing-up” the *Tjalpa Tjalpa*
with their digging sticks
bite supine honey-pots, gold backs
ripe for plucking

*

Old men share their tribal know-how
tell of a hive close by the waterhole. Worker bees
swarm to a bloodwood tree, dazed by the scent
of their favourite *ntewale* blossoms
They have no sting, no defence against black hands
or lizards camped in their honey tree
waiting to grab a juicy treat
Back at the hive, men find the hole, drain honey
on a stick, show us sugarbag
an easy steal, hidden inside

Brenda Saunders

Witjuri: witchetty grub
tnyeme: wattle bush
Honeybag: sugarbag, wild honey
Tjalpa Tjalpa: Honey-ant Dreaming
ntewale: sugar blossom
(Arreente language)

On a Branch

A finely tiger coloured sporan of bees
with over a thousand animal souls
a swarm in the surge of Spring
hangs on a small gum tree in the reserve.
Workers fly off and back drowsy with gorged honey
that scents the air for twenty metres around.
Within, the old queen waits on news of her next home.
Her former hive is close in the giant eucalypt
with the glinting stream of wings and the daughter queen.

I cared for hives as a teenager;
a rural cotton-clad rent collector with gauze mask
bearing an iron hive tool and distracting smoke.
Under one hive a copperhead, cousin of the cobra, briefly kept warm.
Bee stings were less painful than falls and scrapes in paddocks
or punishments for young misdemeanors.
I hot knifed full combs and spun out sweetness
while bees worked for the common good.

Paul Williamson

Inventing the Dismissal

The Wrong Words on the Wrong Sheet of Paper

A piece of paper from Malcolm Fraser's files destroyed Sir John Kerr's post-1975 reputation. Kerr was hated and abused by those who maintained the rage, but a single sheet of paper, an A4 paper plane, toppled the last standing remnants of the man in the top hat. The document, lethally loaded with a handful of scribbled words, proved, according to the latest history of the dismissal, that "Fraser was ready and prepared. The defeat of Whitlam was comprehensive—it was a joint Kerr-Fraser effort." Paul Kelly and Troy Bramston, who wrote this, are wrong: misled by the wrong words on the wrong piece of paper.

Philip Ayres's 1987 biography of Malcolm Fraser first revealed Fraser's claim that on the morning of the dismissal Kerr rang and asked four questions which indicated he was about to dismiss the Labor government. It was plausible. It was no secret that the phone call had taken place. In *Matters for Judgment* Kerr wrote that after speaking with Gough Whitlam, "I next spoke to Mr Fraser who confirmed that the position and the Opposition policy remained the same. I said nothing else to him about the situation."

The questions Fraser said he was asked were familiar. They were among the conditions Kerr said he had put to him, but later in the day, in his study before he commissioned the new prime minister. Kerr sought an undertaking to guarantee the passing of Supply, the calling of a double-dissolution election, an agreement not to introduce new policies or make any appointments, and an undertaking, during the period of the caretaker government, not to hold inquiries into the activities of the Labor government. Sceptical commentator Gerard Henderson suggested Fraser used Kerr's book "to reconstruct the alleged phone conversation of ten years earlier".

Had Fraser confused his memories of what was said on the telephone and what took place later at Government House? Sir John Kerr said he had. Fraser insisted his version of what had happened

was correct. Stalemate.

After the celebrations and commiserations that took place in Canberra that night, did anyone have a clear memory of what happened during the day?

Within the going-nowhere controversy a new factor did emerge which possibly could have resolved the conflict. Fraser said he made a note of the conversation as it happened. Witnesses in his office now confirmed they had seen him writing something. Unfortunately, the piece of paper had vanished.

Thirty-five years later, in 2010, everything changed. Fraser's political memoirs were published, and he produced a note which he had been holding back from publication for some years. A photograph of it was included in the book. Some thought it was the only interesting thing in the co-authored volume. The matter was resolved: Fraser told the truth, Kerr was a liar.

In 2015, Paul Kelly and Troy Bramston published *The Dismissal: In the Queen's Name*. A chapter with the giveaway title "Kerr and Fraser: The Tip-Off" presented their case for the prosecution:

Fraser's note is authentic and constitutes powerful evidence. It has been validated by eyewitness accounts of the call and note, other sightings of the note and a statutory declaration from Fraser. In addition, since Fraser first revealed the story his account of the conversation has been remarkably consistent.

The note is not authentic, and it is not evidence of Kerr's phone call to Fraser. It is something entirely different. None of the eyewitnesses to the call had read the note or would have known, at the time, who Fraser was talking to or what the person was saying. The statutory declaration Kelly and Bramston refer to was evidence of a cover-up, not validation. Fraser drew on the note, before it was made public, but recast its contents to make it seem

consistent with his earlier claims. As for the document itself, if there was a note this is not it, it is something else far more commonplace. And, in one way, ever since 1975 it has always been sitting close by on library shelves.

None of the witnesses who saw Fraser writing confirmed that *this note was that note*. This note was never a secret document, nor is it evidence of a conspiratorial conversation. It is something the historians should have recognised. Fraser's secretary, Dale Budd, said he saw it on Fraser's desk on the afternoon of the dismissal. That afternoon, that is exactly where it should have been, lying in plain view on Fraser's desk.

Fraser's memory was always confused about which of his colleagues had been in his office when he took the call from Kerr and he seems never to have bothered asking them. Peter Nixon remembered a call which Fraser did not discuss: "we did not know if it was the Governor-General himself or an aide". Nixon, writing years later, thought the call had come from Government House to invite Fraser to Government House at one o'clock. At the time Nixon did not give the impression that a great secret had been shared. When Fraser left his office for Government House, Tony Staley remembered Nixon saying, "It's no damned good, Malcolm. Whitlam's got Kerr in his bloody pocket. It's no good."

Reg Withers recalled Fraser making a note which he and Vic Garland read "upside down" but Garland said only, "I recollect Malcolm making a note." At the end of the call, Withers said Fraser "came to and took the paper aside". That may be the last time the famous scrap of paper was ever seen in public. Fraser may have destroyed it, as he suggested in a 1995 interview with Paul Kelly: "There were some people in my office at the time. I think Withers, Lynch and Anthony were the most likely ones. They wouldn't have heard. They would have seen me take a few notes on a piece of paper which I haven't kept, I promise you that."

Reg Withers also remembered that Fraser "took up his big felt pen". The note is written with a finer-point pen and the annotation with a thicker felt pen. Withers claimed to have read some of it upside down. Try it. Fraser's scrawl would have been impossible to read from the other side of a desk, and it was highly unlikely Withers would have been so overtly curious.

The document Fraser produced is the typed agenda for the Coalition's joint party meeting held on November 11, 1975. On the reverse side, in his handwriting, are six numbered points. There is no mention of Kerr. Towards the foot of the page is an annotation, added at a different time and with another pen: "9.55 11 Nov 1975 J.M. Fraser". The year was originally written as 1985 and corrected to 1975.

Dale Budd said it was dated and signed when he saw it on the afternoon of the dismissal. He made a photocopy, but waited until 2006 before he made this public: though without releasing a copy. On the original, the colour of the blue felt-pen annotation has remained remarkably bright over the years.

The note has been used to attack Kerr's reputation in two ways. The six points are used as evidence that he lied and, as Fraser claimed, had discussed these matters with him before Whitlam was sacked. Then, the 9.55 time point shows the call occurred even before Whitlam had informed the Governor-General that it was his intention to proceed and advise a half-Senate election. One plus one equals the destruction of Kerr's reputation. Paul Kelly and Troy Bramston are succinct and judgmental: "Kerr's action constituted an unjustified tip-off to Malcolm Fraser."

The document lists six, not four points, and is not a record of Kerr's call to Fraser on the morning of the

dismissal. This piece of paper is a numbered list of points Fraser wanted to include in his statement to the House of Representatives that afternoon. It was probably written on his return to Parliament House and after meeting with senior colleagues and having been assured by Reg Withers that the Supply bills would rapidly be passed in the Senate. He may even have written it inside the chamber as he waited to speak.

The points on this list are not in the order that reflected the Governor-General's priorities, but in the order that was important to Fraser that afternoon. This is the note:

- 1 Double Dissolution Bills
- 2 Caretaker
- 3 No policy changes [though his writing was so scrawled it could have read "No police charges"]
- 4 No Royal Comm[ission]
- 5 + Supply
- 5 [6] Dissolution Today

The note is not authentic, and it is not evidence of Kerr's phone call to Fraser. It is something entirely different. The statutory declaration Kelly and Bramston refer to was evidence of a cover-up, not validation.

The two last points were both numbered 5. This may not have been a mistake but an “either/or” suggestion for where they would be best placed in his statement.

If this had been written as the Governor-General spoke to Fraser, passing Supply would have been his first condition. That place, on this document, is taken by “Double Dissolution Bills”, not double-dissolution election. That afternoon this was of major importance. It refers to the assembling of the parliamentary bills that could be used to trigger a double dissolution. These had to be collected and framed into a document for Fraser to offer his advice to the Governor-General that elections be called for both houses of parliament. This was his urgent priority after Supply had been passed in the Senate. For the public servants two days work had to be compressed into less than two hours. The new prime minister had given them a 3.40 deadline and he left the House after making his statement in order to ensure they produced the documents he needed to present to the Governor-General. The chamber was in furious uproar. He did not even stay to vote on his own motion to suspend the sitting. He had to deliver his advice to Kerr before four o’clock. This is why it was placed at the beginning of his speech notes.

After the passing of Supply, which had been the tactic of both Fraser and Whitlam when Parliament resumed, there was now a race to Government House: for Fraser to recommend a double-dissolution election or for the Speaker of the House of Representatives to ask the Governor-General to reinstate Whitlam. Labor never heard the starter’s gun.

An extract from Hansard shows how Fraser used the note in his speech. I have inserted the point numbers in square brackets, and have changed the second number 5 to 6 for clarity.

The text begins with point number 2 because that sentence is taken from Fraser’s letter to Sir John Kerr, which he was reading into the parliamentary record:

[2] My Government will act as a caretaker government and will make no appointments or dismissals or initiate new policies before a general election is held. [1] Under the terms of the double dissolution the Bills that are in a double dissolution position will all be cited in that double dissolution and honourable members will have in mind the significance of that. [3] There will be no new policy changes. [4] There will be no royal commissions or inquiries into the activities of this Government throughout the period of the election campaign.

[6] We will be seeking dissolution of the Parliament at the earliest opportunity. [5] The Appropriation Bills, as some honourable member [Gough Whitlam] interjected, have already passed through the Senate.

The statement continued with extracts from Kerr’s statement giving the reasons for taking the action he had.

The document Fraser produced so long after it was written was probably neither secret nor lost, and all the time Dale Budd had a copy of it. Until it was “found” it was probably exactly where it should have been: either among copies of Fraser’s speeches or sitting typed-side-out among his old office files, beside the minutes, as the agenda of the joint party meeting. Only when someone looked on the opposite side would the handwritten notes have been seen. Unsurprisingly, Fraser found it when “sorting” his papers.

The 9.55 time notation on the document should have alerted historians to a problem. It contradicts all previous accounts of the dismissal, including Fraser’s own. Earlier evidence placed the Kerr–Fraser phone call somewhere after 10.05 and before 10.30. The note was published and historical narratives were readjusted with strange results. It’s an interesting point whether 9.55 is meant to mark the beginning or the end of the call. And how long did it last? Those six points, plus explanation and introductory matters, would have taken at least five, eight or ten minutes. Some years earlier, in conversation with Gerard Henderson, Bob Ellicott said the call had been too quick even for a discussion of the *four* points Fraser was then claiming had been discussed.

Fraser’s *Political Memoirs* are misleadingly specific about when the notation was added: “The phone call with Fraser ended. Fraser wrote the time and date on his note of the conversation, and signed it.” When Gerard Henderson queried this with Fraser’s co-author Margaret Simons, she described his queries as “snarky”. Her reply changed the story, slightly: “Malcolm put the time and date on the note later—he believes after the joint party meeting that immediately followed the call.” Actually it didn’t. Though the starting time on the agenda is stated as 10.00 it was delayed to 10.30.

An equally sceptical observer could speculate that Fraser had forgotten that the meeting had been delayed when he added the annotation—and also speculate that because the year had first been written as 1985, it had been added in the 1980s. Of course, such speculation is pointless as we have both Fraser’s own evidence and that of Dale Budd

who photocopied the document, with its annotation, on the afternoon of November 11.

On Remembrance Day, 1975, a morning meeting to discuss the Supply crisis was attended by Whitlam, Frank Crean and Fred Daly from the government and Fraser, Doug Anthony and Phillip Lynch from the Opposition. It ended at 9.45. Whitlam had issued an ultimatum; the word was chosen by Laurie Oakes in his report the following day. The Opposition had been given six hours to agree to his terms or he would call a half-Senate election. Everyone, except Whitlam, knew this would provoke a showdown with Sir John Kerr, who would be forced to make a decision over authorising the conducting of an election while the government was without the money to pay its expenses.

After the meeting John Menadue, secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, went to Whitlam's office and was briefed about what had taken place. Menadue wrote a file note the following day with his account of how matters had unfolded.

Fraser and his associates had gone to his office for a discussion with senior members of the shadow cabinet. Fraser dictated a note on the meeting: "The prime minister said that if the appropriation bills were not passed today, he would go to Government House to recommend a half-Senate election."

Whitlam was already double-crossing the Coalition. He had already made his decision to call the half-Senate election and David Combe, the ALP's national secretary, was advising state ALP secretaries of the coming election and making the first campaign bookings. Before he had a response from the Coalition, Whitlam asked Menadue to phone Kerr for an immediate appointment. His account in *The Truth of the Matter* is deceitful, as he makes it appear that Fraser had already rejected his offer at the meeting itself.

Menadue rang Government House at about 10.00 and, as David Smith, Kerr's Official Secretary, was unavailable he spoke to Kerr himself. The Governor-General had to officiate at the Remembrance Day ceremony at the War Memorial and suggested meeting Whitlam when Parliament broke for lunch. Menadue passed this message to Whitlam.

About the same time, in Fraser's office, the decision was taken to reject Whitlam's offer and it was just after 10.00 when he rang Whitlam to inform him. The time was given in Philip Ayres's 1987

biography.

After speaking to Fraser, Whitlam's secretary rang Government House for the Prime Minister and was told that the Governor-General was unavailable. Whitlam himself then rang on Kerr's direct line and immediately got through. Kerr apologised and said he had been talking to his daughter, as his grandson had just been admitted to hospital. Whitlam now confirmed his intention to call a half-Senate election even without the Supply bills being passed:

He said Supply was not available and he intended to proceed with his plan to govern without it. This was in response to a question from me. He did not say he could get temporary Supply for the half-Senate election.

At about 10.10, before he went into the Labor caucus meeting Whitlam told Menadue that he had spoken to Kerr and Fraser: "Mr Whitlam told me that, in the meantime [before his call to Kerr], Mr Fraser had rung him to say that he was not interested in any arrangement to pass Supply in return for no half Senate elections before May/June 1976."

After talking to Whitlam, Kerr rang Fraser. He recalled that the time was between 10.00 and 10.30. Fraser gave several different times for the conversation. In Philip Ayres's biography it occurred between 10.05 and 10.30. Elsewhere he suggested "probably about 10.30, or a quarter to 11": these latter times

are incorrect as he was attending a joint party meeting from 10.30.

Whitlam made the election announcement in the caucus and it was soon being broadcast by the media, but he did not announce it in the parliament and the Coalition was left confused as to what was happening.

If the 9.55 time, on the wrong piece of paper, is correct, then Kerr spoke to Fraser before he spoke to Whitlam, and before Fraser spoke to Whitlam. Yet Kerr and Fraser agreed that they only spoke after each of them had talked to Whitlam.

As Fraser recalled:

John Kerr did ring me up in the morning of that time, after that meeting had failed and that there was no agreed compromise, *which he had been advised by the Prime Minister* [emphasis added] and I said yes that was right.

When Whitlam's office attempted to contact Kerr he was unavailable because he was taking a call from his daughter. Hocking ignores this and knits a fluffy conspiracy for her readers.

On this point their memories seemed very similar, with Kerr saying Fraser “confirmed that the position and the Opposition policy remained the same. I said nothing else to him about the situation.” On that latter point Fraser disagreed.

Jenny Hocking’s *Gough Whitlam: His Time* ignores contemporary evidence to claim that Fraser had already spoken to Kerr, “agreeing to terms”, before he telephoned Whitlam. When Whitlam’s office attempted to contact Kerr he was unavailable because he was taking a call from his daughter. This is what Kerr told Whitlam, and David Smith was in the room when the private call began. Hocking ignores this and knits a fluffy conspiracy for her readers:

Shortly after 10 am, having just spoken to the Governor-General on the official Government House line [the what?] and agreeing to terms, Fraser had telephoned Whitlam and told him there would be no compromise. It was only then that Whitlam had reached Kerr on his private line, unaware that his difficulty in contacting him had been because Kerr had been speaking to Fraser.

In that bad book, Hocking claimed Dale Budd was present when Kerr spoke to Fraser. He wasn’t. In another book, shorter but perhaps even deadlier, *The Dismissal Dossier: Everything You Were Never Meant to Know about November 1975*, she magically deletes Fraser and transforms Budd into the note writer: “A note of this vital conversation made by Fraser’s private secretary at the time and subsequently released”. Discussing the note she actually, and tellingly, prefers the old logical four-point list from 1987, rather than the six-point list. Perhaps, in a confused way, she also recognises the problems with the later list.

That morning the events played out with these approximate times:

9.45: The Whitlam–Fraser meeting ends and both leaders return to their offices to confer with colleagues.

10.00: Menadue speaks to Kerr and makes an appointment for Whitlam to visit Government House.

10.05: Fraser calls Whitlam to reject his offer.

10.10: Whitlam calls Kerr. His staff have been unable to speak with Kerr and Whitlam calls on the Governor-General’s direct line. Whitlam tells Kerr that the meeting did not produce a compromise and he will be advising a half-Senate election which he plans to conduct without Supply.

10.15: Kerr, now knowing Whitlam’s position, telephones Fraser to confirm what he has been told by Whitlam and that his own position has not changed.

These times are based on evidence given by the participants long before the famous piece of paper was produced. Move the Kerr–Fraser telephone call to 9.55 and it produces a scenario which has the astute Governor-General revealing his hand to the Opposition leader before Whitlam has confirmed that he will be advising an election.

Kerr cautiously delayed taking action as long as possible. At 12.15 Government House rang Fraser’s office with a simple request for the Opposition leader to see the Governor-General. It was all very low-key and, as Dale Budd recalled, “This call did not generate any particular excitement.” When leaving Parliament House, Fraser paused to talk with the journalist Alan Reid. He said that he and Whitlam had been asked to see the Governor-General. Asked why, he replied: “I don’t know. I wasn’t told. I suppose it’s to get my version of this morning’s discussions [with Whitlam, Crean and Daly].”

At Government House nothing was final until the very last, as Sir David Smith, responsible for preparing all the paperwork that may have been needed, has noted:

The Governor-General had prepared for any eventuality, including the possibility that Whitlam might choose to go into the election as prime minister by changing his mind *at the last minute* [my emphasis] and recommending a dissolution of both the Senate and the House of Representatives—a double dissolution.

Until the last act of dismissal was completed, Kerr, as his own playwright, had left open the possibility of different endings to his drama.

Malcolm Fraser relied on the wrong time, on the wrong piece of paper, to make his case against Kerr. An injustice has been done.

When Communists Invaded Cold War Canberra

The seemingly endless second prime ministerial stint of Liberal Party stalwart Robert Gordon Menzies from 1949 to 1966 was not, as it is now often portrayed, a period of unbroken certainty, somnolence and solidity. The first years of the Menzies restoration in particular were quite rocky.

For a start, when Menzies won the 1949 federal election, his incoming government faced a hostile Senate. Sixteen months later a double-dissolution defeat for Labor ended the impasse. But success on this front was shortly followed by the historic 1951 referendum campaign in which Menzies unsuccessfully sought to ban the Communist Party of Australia.

For a while, fortune did not favour the re-elected Menzies government of 1951. The Korean War, in which Australia was deeply involved, had degenerated into a stalemate. A war-induced outbreak of inflation forced the Coalition government to adopt harsh budgetary measures. This deflationary approach produced a recession, with unemployment in the second half of 1952 rising to what was then the high figure of 4 per cent.

The Liberals knew they were in trouble because of the downturn. Their anxiety is documented in a manuscript located in the National Library of Australia by my colleague, the Canberra-based researcher Stephen Holt. This shows that in July 1952 a Menzies cabinet minister and ex-Australian Olympian, Wilfrid Kent Hughes, lamented in a letter to a friend that, politically, things were “anything but pleasant” given that the “economic situation changes so rapidly from day to day”.

Menzies’s growing unpopularity in 1952 was highlighted in October when a self-styled “Oust Menzies Campaign” began to attract public attention. This “Oust Menzies Campaign” was the unalloyed brainchild of the Communist Party of Australia. The result of the 1951 referendum had saved the party from illegality, but a desire for retribution soon followed. Just as Menzies had

tried to eradicate the Communist Party, the CPA planned to get even by denigrating and discrediting Menzies.

There were rank-and-file activists aplenty to support such a campaign. Left-wing unions such as the Seamen’s Union could be counted on. The same militants who had campaigned hard for a “No” vote in the 1951 referendum were ready to support the proposed anti-Menzies sortie in 1952.

Eventually someone came up with a bright idea. The Communist Party would be bound to make an impact if it could transport demonstrators from various parts of the nation to Parliament House in Canberra, where they could confront the Menzies government. Demonstrators were recruited from within the party, at meetings in factories, and at other working-class localities in Melbourne and Sydney and in other places in New South Wales, including Newcastle and the Illawarra.

The first thing the Coalition knew about the anti-Menzies cavalcade to Canberra was when it turned up. On Wednesday October 15, 1952, some 500 demonstrators arrived in Canberra in eight tourist coaches and a fleet of motorcars. When the protesters arrived, there was no security presence to block entry to Parliament House. After gathering in front of the building, the demonstrators swarmed into the King’s Hall lobby, where they buttonholed senators and members of the House of Representatives.

A deputation of three trade unionists, which included the militant maritime union leader and well-known Australian communist Jim Healy, drove to Yarralumla, where they presented a petition to the Official Secretary of the Governor-General, the ex-Labor Premier of New South Wales, Sir William McKell. The petition, which had 16,412 signatures from unemployed people, called on the Governor-General to terminate the commission of the Menzies government. This bizarre request, needless to say, was not acceded to.

Back at Parliament House, the demonstrators' enthusiasm did not waver. After leaving King's Hall they regrouped on the front steps of the building. They hooted and catcalled when some Liberal and Country Party worthies, including the federal Treasurer Arthur Fadden, appeared on a balcony.

The Leader of the Opposition, Labor's Dr H.V. Evatt, did not support the protest. He had led the 1951 campaign against the proposed proscription of the Communist Party but he was now keen to distance himself from the communists. Evatt branded the demonstration, correctly, as a "Communist-inspired stunt".

By day's end the demonstrators has gone, but their unsettling presence was still felt. Just before the House rose for the night, the stridently anti-communist New South Wales Liberal MP W.C. Wentworth railed against them. The day's events, he insisted, were part of a "plan to oust Menzies and put in a caretaker Labor government and then ride to revolution".

For their part, the communists regarded the unopposed takeover of King's Hall as an impressive achievement. The communist newspaper *Tribune* thundered, "It was a significant milestone in the march to People's Power."

The Communist Party was keen to capitalise on its successful springtime invasion of the capital.

For leading CPA apparatchiks it was important to maintain the anti-Menzies momentum. A second march on Canberra was fixed for Wednesday March 11, 1953.

The repeat performance was widely advertised in the Communist Party press. Prior publicity meant that the second rally would be bigger but it also meant that the vital element of surprise was lost. The Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) opened up a dossier on the impending demonstration. The lack of security back in October would not be repeated. Far tighter precautions were evident once the second interstate cavalcade entered Canberra. Parliament House was now off limits. Well before the protesters arrived, a line of police formed in front of the building. On the orders of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate, all but three entrances were locked. There was an explicit ban on admitting anyone connected with the demonstration. For good measure, ASIO hired a newsreel camera to film the events.

In all, almost 1000 demonstrators arrived in Canberra on March 11, this time also including contingents from Brisbane, Wagga Wagga and Lithgow. The demonstrators came in two trains as well as in buses and private cars. *Tribune* hailed the convoy as "the biggest deputation ever to invade Canberra".

The protesters congregated at a central Canberra location, the Albert Hall, where their fervour was stoked by copies of the latest issue of *Tribune*, which was emblazoned with a photograph of the Soviet tyrant Joseph ("Uncle Joe") Stalin, who had died a few days earlier. The demonstrators then marched *en masse* to Parliament House, where they ranged in lines thirty deep across the main entrance to the blocked building. They raised banners bearing slogans such as "We Want the Right to Work" and "Stop Murder in Korea". They set up loudspeakers to allow selected militants to vent their anger.

In a curious act of symbiosis, all this action was filmed not just by ASIO but also by a rival film unit deployed by the Communist Party. The presence of these duelling film crews showed that what was happening was a significant event.

As the afternoon drew on, the demonstrators marched back to the Albert Hall where, before leaving Canberra, they passed a resolution protesting against their exclusion from Parliament House. In con-

trast to their October 1952 outing, they had been unable to lobby members and senators in King's Hall and were not allowed to present Governor-General McKell with a second petition, which this time called for an immediate dissolution of the House of Representatives.

The heightened security measures may have frustrated the demonstrators but for some senior government ministers the restrictions were not severe enough. External Affairs Minister (and later Governor-General) Richard Casey was alarmed by the communist presence outside Parliament House. As Stephen Holt has recently discovered in another National Library document, Casey noted in his diary that it was "a bad thing that these meetings should be allowed to take place". He clearly felt that this "large mob of several hundred Communists" should have not been allowed to demonstrate at all.

But the anti-Menzies campaign had already begun to lose momentum. The wider political climate was becoming less congenial to anti-

The demonstrators had reminded the wider Australian public that, for a while, the post-1949 record of the Menzies government had been characterised by involvement in war and recession.

government elements. The worst effects of the 1952 recession wore off and the level of unemployment fell. Positive and negative feelings about Menzies were now balanced. A half-Senate election held on May 9, 1953, reflected this situation. Labor polled more votes overall, but Menzies retained control of the Senate.

There was no third communist march on Canberra. The “Oust Menzies Campaign” of 1952–53 was allowed to peter out. Menzies had not been ousted, but in some communist and militant left-wing quarters the campaign had served its purpose by provoking considerable media interest and a serious conservative response. The demonstrators had reminded the wider Australian public that, for a while, the post-1949 record of the Menzies government had been characterised by involvement in war and recession. In the spring of 1952 communists in the Australian labour movement asserted their willingness to act as an aggressive campaigning force. They were not timorous Cold War victims.

Leftist militants saw the “Oust Menzies Campaign” as a useful training-run in campaign logistics. Consequently card-carrying CPA members, crypto-communists and their fellow travellers

were well primed to team up again with Dr Evatt when he swung to the left in October 1954. This followed the Petrov Russian spy affair and a narrow Labor defeat in that year’s federal election—which, in large part, Evatt blamed on the activities of the fervently anti-communist, Melbourne-based Catholic layman B.A. Santamaria.

This lurch back to the left precipitated a huge split in Labor ranks in the mid-1950s, which was accentuated by an increasingly unstable and often paranoid Dr Evatt. The dramatic Labor Split was a self-inflicted wound that made the ALP unelectable for almost two decades. As a result, life became easier for Menzies.

The years up to 1954 were by way of contrast extremely testing. The “Oust Menzies Campaign” was very much part of this contentious period in Australian political history which should not be forgotten. Knowing about it makes us realise even more just how impressive the Menzies era’s longevity eventually proved to be.

Ross Fitzgerald is Emeritus Professor of History and Politics at Griffith University and the author of thirty-nine books.

Sestina

There was her diary unveiling my father’s secret,
she was aware of his visits when she’d left the house

on nights that she’d worked. Because on her return home
he was very elated, my bedroom door not quite
closed, the pink bedspread held the form of his secret.
She knew of his strange gaze on me when we played.
Feared loss of their marriage and remained pleasant,
told friends repeatedly of her husband’s manly virtues.

Now I house no secrets, and as I watch my children play
discover joy in quietness, family life so pleasurable:
harbour no secrets and know hope is a virtue.

Bright memories now housed in my mind, children playful,
owls hoot calling at night when it’s quiet darkness pleasurable.
Now no secrets I rejoice in a life real not virtual.

Cecilia Morris

Neil McInnes

1924–2017

Occasionally one finds, despite familiarity with someone for several years, that the person's full life story was quite different from what one imagined. For many who knew Neil McInnes during his later life as a senior public servant in Canberra, that is likely to be true of his earlier days.

Neil McInnes's career as a Commonwealth public servant began in early 1978 when he took up the position of Deputy Director-General (Economic) at Australia's leading intelligence analysis authority, the Office of National Assessments (ONA). The ONA was only then beginning under Director-General Robert "Bob" Furlonger. It was established as a consequence of a review of the nation's international intelligence capabilities; that royal commission had been instituted by the Fraser government and conducted by Justice Robert Marsden Hope. So, although then aged in his mid-fifties, McInnes seemingly launched upon a significant role in Australian intelligence and security.

Consequently, for most, at that time McInnes might have given the impression of privilege and long-standing political conservatism. Indeed, he was not only an elitist in the best sense of that term, but he was clearly a well-dressed sophisticate unafraid to display his proclivities overtly. McInnes's fellow Deputy Director-General (Political and Strategic), career diplomat David Sadleir, coined the nickname "The President" for McInnes. McInnes gave regular endorsement of such a title by bringing single roses into his office and placing them elegantly in a specimen vase.

More significantly, McInnes was worldly, well travelled and fluent in French. For those in the know, this was explained by his occupation as a journalist in France (Veneux, Fontainebleau, Paris) for some years before he joined the ONA. Quite without cant, he displayed an informed, lively and robust intellect, even among a youthful and highly qualified group of recently recruited ONA analysts, many from university faculties. He was

clearly at home, if not dominant, in that company. So, he was a figure of distinction who enjoyed considerable professional respect. It would be a mistake, however, to presume that Neil McInnes had always been just as his later instantiation presented. Notably, his career at the University of Sydney gives the lie to any such presumption.

Born at Ashfield on September 6, 1924, and one of seven siblings, Neil Donald McInnes subsequently lived with his family at Randwick, convenient for his school years at Sydney High School. In addition to being school captain there (in 1941), among other distinctions McInnes was awarded the John Waterhouse Prize for the prefect displaying the most "character". He enrolled in Medicine at Sydney University, having won an "exhibition" at the 1941 Leaving Certificate (in which he achieved first-class honours in English and French). But any career in medicine was not ultimately to develop. While he was enrolled in the Faculty of Medicine for the academic years 1942 to 1945, and Science for 1946, his university papers were then marked, "Left university and state late 1946—no thesis presented". He had left the university without taking a degree of any kind.

The reason likely lies with the influence of John Anderson, Challis Professor of Philosophy at Sydney from 1927 to 1958. Anderson was a notorious influence on the young, and had a significant following among those formally enrolled in Philosophy as well as others. According to Anderson's ASIO file, and somewhat cryptically: "he [Anderson] is described as a young man of enthusiasms in some directions and representative of [*sic*] school of thought evidenced in the letter to the paper mentioned [*Workers' Weekly*]. He is stated to be regarded very seriously by his colleagues ..."

Contrary to the aspirations of McInnes's parents for their son, he yielded to this bohemian overture and intellectual temptation, dropping out of Medicine and Science and joining the radical

(indeed, somewhat amoral) Philosophy dialogue centred on Anderson. Those who participated were reportedly called the “Poseurs Push” (not the “Sydney Push”) by Anderson, a Scot whose philosophical doctrine was empiricist and realist. Anderson developed his own rejection of British idealism, finding the criticism offered by Cambridge philosophers Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore to be deficient. And, over time, Anderson weaned himself from the allure of Marxist communism; he became an ardent anti-communist, liberal and pluralist.

Because he succumbed to Anderson’s influence for a time at least, it is a little puzzling that McInnes never took a degree in Philosophy; he formally studied only Philosophy I. This is even more difficult to understand when it is realised that McInnes was subsequently to publish several articles in the well-regarded *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*; among other issues, they cover Marxism as well as feature pieces on Engels, Morales, Lukacs and Sorel (who had strongly influenced Anderson).

By contrast with his somewhat dilettante approach to formal qualifications, McInnes was to take more seriously his romantic attachment to Julie (June Berenice Turner), a sweetheart from school-age days (resident of Bondi and pupil at Sydney Girls High) and fellow Science student at Sydney University. McInnes left Sydney University in late 1946; and, together with Julie, he was to leave Sydney altogether. In 1947 McInnes was writing for the rural newspaper the *Cairns Post*. (The well-known Australian journalist Murray Sayle was a colleague of McInnes at the *Post*.) But Neil and Julie established themselves only briefly in Queensland. His journalistic career was to gain significant momentum from 1948 when he went to Calcutta to become Deputy Editor of India’s oldest newspaper, *The Statesman*. McInnes’s intellectual interest eventually turned to economics; and he became editor of the Calcutta-based financial newspaper, *Capital*. In Calcutta their first child, Ross, was born; two weeks later, on March 21, 1954, Neil and Julie married.

McInnes’s developing expertise in economics was confirmed by his move from India to Europe in 1955 where the biographical trail goes cold for about a decade. (One rumour has it that McInnes was to benefit financially from advice he had

provided in Calcutta to a maharajah, and that this sustained him in France for that decade. But that is unlikely to be the full story.) In 1965, McInnes returned to Australia, writing for the *Australian Financial Review*. But he was not to remain away from Europe for long, reporting in Paris from late 1966 as European Editor of the *Wall Street Journal* and *Barron’s Financial Weekly* (both published by Dow Jones). Notably, during this period in Paris, McInnes wrote four significant books on the development of communist parties in Western Europe, analysing their theoretical foundations.

Now, this is an account of an enigmatic life, where a highly sophisticated (yet formally unqualified) intellectual, working in Europe and specialising in Continental philosophical and economic writers, became a senior bureaucrat in Canberra. As if to confirm that enigma, as a former journalist McInnes returned permanently to Australia from Paris in order to take up his ONA position from 1978; he was to serve the Commonwealth in the cause of international intelligence and security. (The journalist Brian Toohy claimed in the *Australian Financial Review* that McInnes was recommended by Cyrus Vance, American Secretary of State from 1977 to 1980, for his ONA appointment.)

After four years at ONA, McInnes was appointed head of Policy Coordination Division at the Department of Defence (1982 to 1983), and then Deputy Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (1983 to 1986). From 1986 McInnes became the inaugural Inspector-General for Intelligence and Security. He held that position until September 1989, at the age of sixty-five. But, and again enigmatically, when did he retire?

Between 1990 and 2005, McInnes returned to his deep interest in political philosophy and international relations. He published articles in Australia (*Quadrant*) and America (*National Interest*). But that was not all he did. At this point perhaps the most that can be said publicly is that until 2010 Neil McInnes continued as a consultant in the field to which he had devoted his later career, at least; he served as ombudsman for the Australian Secret Intelligence Service. When he retired from that role he was eighty-five.

The McInnes home was blessed with three

In 1955 the biographical trail goes cold for about a decade. One rumour has it that McInnes benefited financially from advice he had provided in Calcutta to a maharajah, and that this sustained him in France for that decade. But that is unlikely to be the full story.

children. All attended school in France. Ross (born 1954) is an Oxford graduate and Chairman of the Board of Safran, an aviation, space and defence industry company; he is also France's Special Representative for economic relations with Australia. Genevieve (born 1958; two children) graduated from the University of Bristol and Imperial College London; she is currently with the OECD. Berenice (born 1963; three children), a graduate in economics from the Australian National University, is a senior Australian diplomat.

Like McInnes, his wife Julie never graduated from Sydney University. But she worked in stimulating environments: British Commission, Calcutta (1948 to 1953), British Embassy, Paris (1973 to 1978) and Hansard, Canberra (1979 to 1989). Julie died in Canberra on December 24, 2005; she was buried at Gungahlin Cemetery. McInnes resided at Campbell (conveniently near the Defence offices at Russell Hill) from 1978 until 2008 when he moved to Kingston; he then lived at Barton from 2013 until his death on April 28, 2017. He was buried without religious ceremony, also at Gungahlin Cemetery, on May 2. He had been honoured as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) on June 12, 1989.

To conclude, with the benefit of this brief

description of Neil McInnes's life and career, it is not surprising that the question might arise as to the complete nature of his extensive activities in Europe as a journalist. It is well known that some holders of such positions contribute from time to time to the activity of intelligence gathering. Could McInnes have been an operative for the Western intelligence effort while he was a resident of Paris and elsewhere? And was that a contributing factor in his recruitment to the ONA? Would this have made McInnes even more attractive to the ONA at that time (and facilitate his ASIO security clearance)? Indeed, precisely what contribution did McInnes continue to make in the field of international intelligence and security until very late in his long life? What was the total of his influence in this field?

As with numerous other questions about Neil McInnes, few people anywhere would know the correct answers. Very few; for everyone else, the enigma continues.

Dr Peter C. Grundy, a philosopher at ANU, is a former colleague of Neil McInnes at the Office of National Assessments. In part, this obituary draws upon advice from the McInnes family.

Mespilus germanica

(for GT)

Indigenous around the Baltic Sea
 The Balkans, the Caucasus and Asia Minor
 Lives the long forgotten medlar tree.
 Yet, the ancient Greeks found no fruit finer.
 Hemispheres of foliage and ragged white flowers
 The oddness begins when the leaves fall in winter
 Revealing daggy hanging fruit, which tastes sour
 The trick is in the timing and the prize is quainter.

It's a rare fruit that undergoes bletting, the term
 For getting better beyond ripe. Sure, they go
 Brown and wrinkly and all squashy not firm
 But, the blessed bletted flesh will set you aglow.

I like medlars' approach to time
 I have improved since my prime.

Saxby Pridmore

BOOKS, ARTS & LIFE

You Can Always Blame the British

NICK LLOYD

Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India
by Shashi Tharoor
Scribe, 2016, 295 pages, \$32.99

At its height in the 1920s, the British Empire was the largest and most populous empire in world history, with up to a quarter of the world's landmass coming under the British flag. A central component of the empire was the Indian Empire or Raj, which contained the bulk of Britain's imperial subjects, estimated at over 300 million people in 1914. It was situated between the borders of Afghanistan and Thailand and included the present-day states of Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Burma. What began from extremely humble beginnings—a cluster of isolated trading posts and “factories” along the coast—had by the late eighteenth century turned into a huge, sprawling Asian empire and the “jewel in the crown” of Britain's overseas possessions.

The Raj has often been seen as one of the most impressive examples of imperialism in modern history. Winston Churchill called the Raj “the finest achievement of our history” and remained steadfast in his admiration of how India had been “defended against invasion from the north; famine has been gripped and controlled ... Justice has been given—

equal between race and race, impartial between man and man” and, most impressively, how science “has been harnessed to the service of this immense and, by themselves, helpless population”. Even those who were not so staunchly imperialistic could still recognise the enormous achievements of British rule in the subcontinent, particularly the introduction of a modern system of law and order, state bureaucracy, railways and communication networks, an impressive civil service, and a professional and non-political Indian Army.

Not so, argues Shashi Tharoor, in a new book, *Inglorious Empire*, which is based on a speech he gave at the Oxford Union in May 2015 on the subject of whether Britain owes reparations to its former colonies. Tharoor—a Congress MP and former minister in the Indian government—who spoke for the motion, has converted his argument into a lengthier summary, although it has lost none of its bite. Tharoor believes fervently that the British (or “Brutish”) Empire in India was a catastrophic and evil imperialism for which Britain should make some kind of amends. In one stinging phrase he longs for the day when “a British Prime Minister will find the heart, and the spirit, to get on his or her knees at Jallianwala Bagh in 2019 and beg forgiveness from Indians in the name of his or her

people for the unforgiveable massacre that was perpetrated at that site a century earlier”.

It is a book filled with Tharoor’s outrage at “what the British did to India” and his determination to expose imperial rule. Much of the book continues in a similar vein and all the old Indian nationalist criticisms of the Raj are recycled with aplomb. So Britain looted India’s economy. It adopted a merciless policy of “divide and rule” that ultimately sowed the seeds of partition. It relied on ruthless and bloody repression to terrorise the Indian people into submission. It did nothing to prevent famines from ravaging India’s population, and so on. All this adds up to a detailed and seemingly overwhelming critique of British rule that has impressed reviewers and tapped into a deep seam of postcolonial guilt in Britain and the West. In one particularly vicious swipe, Tharoor claims that British schoolchildren should be taught what he calls “the lessons of empire”—“just as German children are shepherded to concentration camps”.

The comparison of the British Empire in India with the Nazi death camps is just one of many deeply offensive, and frankly bizarre, statements that pepper the book. Famines in India in the late nineteenth century are compared with the deliberate policies of mass starvation and collectivisation in the Soviet Union and China. Railways were nothing but “a big colonial scam”. British education had “very little to commend it”. The British grew tea for themselves, “not for the locals”. British colonial rulers “had no interest in the well-being of the Indian people”. Nothing escapes Tharoor’s wrath, not even cricket. “Yes, the British brought it to us,” he admits, “but they did not do so in the expectation that we would defeat them one day at their own game ...”

Tharoor indulges in repeated counter-factuals to “prove” his point about British iniquity. So had the British not conquered India in the late eighteenth century, then he contends that the Marathas would have extended their power “under a titular Mughal emperor”, which “would have led to an inevitable transition to constitutional rule, just as England transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy”. Such sleight of hand is used repeatedly throughout the book alongside a strange form of moral reasoning. Because British motives in India were (in Tharoor’s assessment) always self-interested and based on exploitation (whether building railways, hospitals or an impressive legal

system), they can be swiftly rubbed out from the ledger on the benefits of British rule. If anyone in India benefited from British rule, then it can be safely ignored as an unintended consequence.

The problem (among many with this book) is that India and the Indian people did benefit from railways and better communications, whether Tharoor likes it or not. They did benefit from the massive irrigation projects and dams, the work of forestry conservation and disease control—and even Tharoor admits that the British introduced a free press into India. Gandhi famously went around India on the railways, which gave India a tangible unity it had never had before. Indeed, very few of these examples benefited British rule directly. Irrigation cost money and resources. So did building dams. Trying to control the outbreaks of cholera or plague in parts of Bombay or Calcutta was even unpopular and resulted in outbreaks of anti-British violence, mainly because of misgivings about what the British were trying to do (which had been deliberately spread by Indian nationalists). Perhaps Tharoor thinks that it would have been better if the British had kept their knowledge of infectious diseases to themselves—and left Indians to die in the streets.

Moreover, what Tharoor fails to understand is how in the latter stages of imperial rule, India was increasingly being run for the benefit of India. The Government of

India repeatedly came into conflict with the British government over a host of issues, including the deployment of the Indian Army and the nature of tariffs on imported goods (particularly cotton). It was clear, at least by 1917, that India was increasingly to be run, not as a colony for the benefit of its imperial rulers, but as a self-governing entity with its own interests that sometimes came into conflict with what the government wanted back in London. But Tharoor sees none of this. He lambasts the British for “betraying” India after the First World War (by not giving full self-government) and then berates them again for leaving India too quickly in 1947.

The lop-sided nature of the book continues in Tharoor’s discussion of the violence of empire, always a favourite subject of Indian nationalists, past and present, eager to dwell on alleged “imperial terrorism”. For example, when discussing how the British put down the Mutiny of 1857, Tharoor details the incidents of British brutality, but without

Tharoor lambasts the British for “betraying” India after the First World War (by not giving full self-government) and then berates them again for leaving India too quickly in 1947.

making any mention whatsoever of the violence that sparked the Mutiny. There is nothing on how European women and children were butchered, nothing on Cawnpore, Lucknow or Meerut. This is combined with the crudest caricatures of British officials and soldiers, while Indians are—without fail—honourable, truthful and committed to nothing but the highest ideals.

One of Tharoor's favourite subjects is the Amritsar Massacre of 1919, an event that, he believes, sums up British violence and oppression. His interpretation of the massacre largely repeats Indian national myth and avoids asking awkward questions about the origins of what were known as the "Punjab Disorders of 1919" and the wave of anti-British violence that it produced. General Dyer, the man who committed the shooting, is condemned as an "efficient killer"—despite significant evidence that he was surprised and panicked—and whose actions were blindly supported by his superiors. That he was denied the right of a court martial and became the subject of an exhaustive official inquiry, which then accused him of an "error of judgment" and ended his career, Tharoor oddly describes as a "whitewash".

Throughout the book there seems to be little understanding of the reality of law and order in India, either historically or in the present. Tharoor's claim that British rule in India was based on overwhelming and unnecessary violence is simply not true. While the British certainly did not shy away from resorting to (short-lived) repression if they felt it was necessary (as every other state, imperial or otherwise, did in the same period), the level of violence visited upon the Indian population between the Mutiny and the Partition of India was remarkably low. The Indian Army was tiny (just 250,000 before the First World War) and was clustered almost exclusively in the north-west of the country and rarely used on internal security matters. When it had to be deployed it was always done reluctantly and under the clear understanding that "minimum force" was to be used.

It is worth bearing in mind how often the Indian government has engaged in violent repression since 1947, which helps to put the British period in context. For example, throughout the 1980s, the agitation for a Sikh homeland of Khalistan provoked a vicious response from New Delhi. This culminated in the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar; an action that resulted in over 500 dead. Moreover, at this time the Punjab was placed under a far more extensive and rigorous form of martial law than anything the British had ever put in place (particularly the much mythologised "imperial terrorism" of 1919). Thousands of troops, police and

paramilitaries were deployed to the province and there were reports of widespread beatings, extortion and looting. About 25,000 people were eventually killed in the violence and up to 45,000 were illegally detained. An Amnesty International report of 1992 criticised the Indian government for failing to acknowledge what was going on and turning a blind eye to the extensive use of torture and intimidation in the province.

It was not only in the Punjab that the Indian government has shown itself willing to use force to control dissidents. Against the Naxalite insurgency in the east of the country, New Delhi has been accused of engaging in "extrajudicial execution of alleged Naxalites", unfair and prolonged arbitrary detention without trial, the deployment of heavily-armed paramilitaries, and the clandestine support of armed vigilante groups.

Thus the claim that the British period of Indian history was more violent than others, and that British rule was based upon little more than the sword, seems highly suspect. It is also worth bearing in mind that the Indian army (not including the armed forces of Pakistan, Burma or Bangladesh) is currently one of the largest in the world, with over three million active and reserve personnel and another million members of paramilitary units. If British violence could perhaps be justified as a necessary result of very limited numbers of troops, the Indian government has no such excuse.

Because Tharoor's history ends in 1947 we lack any kind of meaningful comparison between how Britain ran the subcontinent and the successor states. Simply listing everything bad with the Raj is meaningless without an understanding of the historical context, either with contemporary empires or their successor states. Tharoor gets around this by talking about the "messy afterlife of colonialism"; blaming the problems that many post-colonial states in Africa and Asia have experienced on their period of imperial rule. "We have to realise," he says, "that sometimes the best crystal ball is a rear-view mirror." Therefore, according to Tharoor, countries can never really escape their past—perhaps the most depressing sentence in the entire book.

This idea of the inescapable and enduring impact of imperialism seems to be particularly noticeable when discussing the economy. Tharoor is keen to dispute any attempt to show that imperial rule developed India or provided economic assistance. Using statistics plucked from the internet, he claims that in 1 AD India accounted for 33 per cent of global GDP, while the UK, France and Germany "scored barely 3 per cent". However, by 1870, India had (supposedly) been reduced to 12.5 per cent,

while the three European powers countries hit 22 per cent, which fits in with Tharoor's argument about India's "impoverishment" under colonial rule. But this is, frankly, nonsense. Tharoor seems unaware of the fact that Britain, France and Germany did not actually exist at the time of Christ, nor were there legions of trained economists dutifully recording economic data and trade figures. But even if we forgive Tharoor this statistical alchemy, they point not so much to the destruction of India's economy, but to the monumental transformation that European powers underwent during the Industrial Revolution. Such basic misunderstandings (not to mention a somewhat cavalier use of sources) scar much of the book.

Tharoor neglects to mention how British rule provided India with a series of significant economic benefits, including the creation of an integrated market, the promotion of private property (which did not really exist across large parts of India), low taxes (which were significantly lower than their predecessors), an efficient system of communications, and extensive irrigation. The case of the Punjab, which by 1900 could boast one of the most impressive irrigation schemes anywhere in the world, with highly productive agriculture and rapidly rising land values, finds no mention in the book. Yes, it is true that the British could have done more to develop the Indian economy and fight poverty, but this overestimates the time and resources available and the extremely limited number of officials who could dedicate their time to developmental work, which in any case might not have been appreciated by those whom it was supposed to help.

Famines are another subject that reveals Tharoor's incomplete grasp of Indian history. He argues that during the Bengal Famine of 1943-44 Winston Churchill deliberately starved Bengal because of his crude racism. Here Tharoor (as he tends to do) largely repeats the claims of prominent South Asian critics of British rule (in this case Madhusree Mukerjee) and recycles their arguments uncritically. Yet such a blanket condemnation of Churchill's actions shows an unfamiliarity with the historical context (a world war and a shortage of shipping owing to operations in the Pacific and Mediterranean) and with recent research that has shown how badly the local (Muslim League) administration handled the famine and how damaging the actions of local trad-

ers (who hoarded rice) were to the Bengali people. In Tharoor's eyes, the British, and only the British, were at fault.

Such simplistic judgments are evident when Tharoor turns to the end of British rule. Partition is, he claims, the greatest indictment of British rule and "the direct result of the deliberate British policy of communal division". Blaming the horrors of Partition solely on the British is an old Congress tactic and one that has been repeated regularly since 1947. But, ultimately, it doesn't stick. Tharoor shows no appreciation of the dynamics of political violence in India, the growth of non-cooperation that had brought with it growing antagonism and violence since the 1920s, or the difficulties of controlling communal violence (which was very different from dealing with non-cooperation). By the 1940s, Indian nationalist leaders had been undermining law and order for decades and, to suddenly turn around and demand that Britain suppress widespread communal disorder (which was being directly stoked by India's political leaders), was hypocritical and unhelpful.

Such misunderstandings stem from Tharoor's partial reading of Indian history. He tends to rely on published secondary sources—there seems to be no original archive material here—and cites anyone who has ever criticised British rule. While this might be justifiable in places, Tharoor tends to quote well-known opponents of the Raj uncritically. For example, he quotes Jawaharlal Nehru on the evils of British rule, or Gandhi on how the railways spread plague, and expects the reader to simply accept this at face value. There is no nuance here; no understanding or acknowledgment of bias. Ultimately Tharoor attributes too much to the British, who are presented as almost superhuman: being able to dominate an enormous subcontinent at ease, to reconstitute and recreate Indian society at will, and to divide a people that were (supposedly) unified and economically vibrant. Needless to say, such a contention is wildly inaccurate, totally unrealistic, and deeply paranoid.

The problem is that Tharoor (like many of the critics he relies on) shows little or no understanding of how the Indian Empire actually functioned. He repeats Indian nationalist myths about the "non-violent" non-cooperation movement, the Muslim League's apparent betrayal over Pakistan (helpfully fostered by the Machiavellian British), without ever really appreciating how the British ran India and

The British are presented as almost superhuman: able to dominate an enormous subcontinent at ease, to reconstitute and recreate Indian society at will, and to divide a people that were (supposedly) unified.

the motivations of those who did so. His attempt to smear the reputation of the Indian Civil Service—the “heaven born” “steel frame” of the imperial state that carried out all the administrative functions and was never more than 1200 strong—makes all the old criticisms of the organisation, but fails to mention how important it was to Indian unity and how it was deliberately maintained after 1947 because without it—in the words of a leading Congress politician, Vallabhbhai Patel—“I see nothing but a picture of chaos.”

Inglorious Empire is riddled with serious problems including a lack of balance and fairness. More interesting perhaps is the reaction it has received. Reviews have been laudatory and many general reviewers have accepted Tharoor’s accusations without quibble. The *Financial Times* calls it “well-argued” and urges “nostalgic Brexite[er]s” to “examine the blood-soaked history of their country’s relationship to India” if they think trading with India “will in some way compensate for the costs of leaving the EU”. Similarly, for the *Irish Times* it is “a timely reminder of the need to start teaching unromanticised colonial history in British schools”. Tharoor “should be applauded for tackling an impossibly contentious subject” (*Literary Review*) and Matt Ridley in the *Times* says that it “makes very uncomfortable reading for Brits”. *History Today* finds his argument “persuasive ... with telling examples”.

Many of the reviews of Tharoor’s book refer to Britain’s recent decision to leave the EU, and reviewers have not been able to resist making connections between Brexiteers and the general positivity among the British public (if various surveys are to be believed) towards the British Empire. For Tharoor, Brexit is just another example of how the British people have failed to understand their place in the world and accept a subordinate position. They should (in his opinion) have a worldview that is suffused with a sense of remorse, sadness and contrition for Britain’s sins. In the book, Tharoor talks of “history’s revenge”; as if Britain’s currently reduced circumstances are somehow justice for its history of overseas expansion.

Why reviewers have singularly failed to bring out the lack of balance and the serious problems of interpretation in the book is disappointing, although perhaps not unexpected. The Indian nationalist critique of the Raj has become deeply entrenched in Western and South Asian academia and continues to be recycled regularly. It is also dominant in the presentation of the empire in films and movies, not least in the recent movie on the Partition of India, *Viceroy’s House*, which was based on the conspiracy theory that Britain partitioned India to

use Pakistan as a bulwark against the Soviet Union. This has meant that Tharoor’s criticisms, like many others, have not been subjected to the scrutiny they deserve.

Far from being a daring and far-reaching argument, *Inglorious Empire* walks a well-trodden path, essentially recycling a series of stale arguments and playing to the gallery of contemporary views on imperialism. Thus it tells us little about Britain’s empire in India and much more about its author. It is sad that such bitterness should still be indulged; India has no need of it now; Britain even less.

Nick Lloyd is Reader in Military and Imperial History at King’s College London. Among his books is The Amritsar Massacre: The Untold Story of One Fateful Day (2011).

PATRICK MORGAN

Exodus from Vienna

Fault Lines

by David Pryce-Jones

Criterion Books, 2015, 364 pages, \$24.95

While living in Czechoslovakia for six months in 1994 after the collapse of communism, I became aware of a group of aristocratic families spread over Central Europe, the Kinskys, Harrachs, Lobkovitzes and others, some returning to claim their palaces and castles around Prague. One of them, Prince Karl Schwarzenberg, became Foreign Minister in President Havel’s government. In parallel with them there existed in Central Europe a group of assimilated Jewish families who had made fortunes as Europe industrialised in the nineteenth century. On his mother’s side David Pryce-Jones came from a family of this kind. His great-grandfather, Gustav Springer of Vienna, created a baron by Emperor Franz Joseph, had accumulated such an immense fortune from coal and railways he could afford to hire his own train, and to send his shirts to Paris to be laundered. The family owned a grand house in central Vienna and another next to the Emperor’s Schönbrunn Palace on the city’s outskirts. In Paris their town house was next to the President’s Élysée Palace, and their country house was formerly the abbot’s residence at a Cistercian monastery. These Jewish families had business interests and houses spread across the continent, in this case horse studs in Hungary, farms in Slovakia, businesses in Austria and France, and holidays in

the Tyrol.

Baron Springer's daughter Mitzi married first a French Jew and then an English gentile, a representative progress as these families often moved westward from Austro-Hungary to France and England as they assimilated. Western Europe had higher esteem and was more secure than places further east. Mitzi's decision to marry out of the Jewish community was not uncommon at the time. The succeeding generations of these families could not normally hope to marry into the old aristocracy, but their daughters could marry into the rising Europe-wide cultural aristocracy. The new artistic establishment, with its raffish bohemian outliers and *fashionistas*, determined high taste in the twentieth century. This was a neat solution—the wives had security and the husbands cultural cachet.

One of Mitzi's daughters, Thérèse, David Pryce-Jones's mother, married Alan Pryce-Jones in Vienna in 1934. The Welsh Pryce-Jones family had business and political roots. The great-grandfather had built up his draper's business into an international trading company, the Royal Welsh Warehouse, which pioneered mail-order marketing along the lines of Sears Roebuck. Alan, a novelist and travel writer, became for a decade after the Second World War editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, close to the top of the English cultural tree.

Between the wars this well-off set lived fortunate but frivolous lives which David Pryce-Jones vividly recreates from recollections and family letters. Louche parties in London were all the rage. Even better was hopping into a roadster and driving at high speed through France to the sunny Riviera, where the ménages of Somerset Maugham and Cyril Connolly, with Noel Coward and others in tow, set the tone. This was what we know today as celebrity culture.

David had a grandfather, two uncles (a Springer and a Rothschild), and a father-in-law who were all barons. The index of this book reads in part like extracts from the *Almanac de Gotha*, *Debrett's Peerage*, and *The Tatler and Country Life*. Once when David was staying at a Welsh family retreat, Svetlana Stalin was in residence and Princess Margaret popped in. In his early days at Magdalene College he had Greta Garbo as a guest on the lawns. The college master, accompanied by Peggy Ashcroft, came across anxious to meet the famous film actress, but averse to publicity, she slipped away. At a party after the war

Enoch Powell, Cyril Connolly, Sacheverell Sitwell and Jascha Heifetz were among those present. Such gatherings were all in a day's work.

Mitzi's first husband was bisexual. When he died she, remarkably, married his gay lover. David's father, Alan, was gay all his life (Harold Nicolson was one of his early lovers) except for the bisexual period of his short marriage—his wife, nicknamed Poppy, died young at thirty-nine. The Jewish wives had to rationalise these marriages by saying gay men were charming, courteous and no threat. But the apologies didn't fully work—Poppy was given to fits of unexplained weeping. There was a lot of neuralgia leading to depression around, partly caused by having plenty of money but nothing much to do in life.

More major worries were the multiple fault lines of the book's title. The family was Central European moving to Western Europe, business marrying into culture, Jewish moving to Christian or agnostic, upper class moving to *déclassé*, heterosexual but accommodating homosexuals. Together these strains threatened to tear the family apart. Hitler delivered the final blow, as the extended family moved to their houses and businesses in France as a refuge, and then desperately fled to England at the last moment in the early 1940s.

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Among the many family members whose lives are recalled in this memoir four portraits stand out, two sympathetic ones of women, and two unfavourable ones of men. Mitzi, David's Viennese grandmother, kept the family going, supporting her children through

recurrent family crises while managing a vast business empire. Her two marriages were not a recipe for success or peace of mind. Her long life, 1886 to 1978, saw unimaginable changes in Europe, many of which affected her disastrously, but she never wilted, until near the end when as a Christian she succumbed to religious mania. David's mother Poppy comes across as innocent, lovable but unhappy, not seeking her own ends like some others in the family, and finally a victim of her marriage, and of a cancer which rapidly overcame her. Her early death left the young David, who was close to her, to make his own way in an increasingly difficult family and security situation.

The portrait of his father must have been the most difficult for the author to handle. In it he maintains detachment, but the facts are hard to face. His father had no firm core, being weak,

indolent, fashion-conscious, a personality who sought luxury but avoided pressure, and became as a result a failed writer and husband. David could never work out whether his opaque father admired or envied his own successful career as a writer. Behind the filial loyalty the reader senses the son was appalled by his father's lifestyle. But with the portrait of Baron Elie de Rothschild, who married David's aunt, the gloves are off. He is shown to be a ruthless, domineering personality, who won't be brooked as he, the lawyer dispersing the family fortune after Mitzi's death, sequesters part of it for himself: "a forceful, lawless and very rich man was on the loose".

Like Hal Porter in his autobiography, the young David adopts the role of watcher, as growing up entails making sense of a dysfunctional background. He reacts by becoming serious, not frivolous, normal, not bohemian, and a successful writer. So far from revelling in the fashions of the day, he disdains during his undergraduate years the standard Left groupthink of the post-war decades. Isaiah Berlin, whose family had fled from Riga after the Russian Revolution, agrees with him on this privately, but won't say so publicly for fear of offending certain sections of public opinion. David becomes a journalist covering, among other events, the 1967 Arab-Israeli Six-Day War, the US counter-culture of the 1970s, and the Balkan wars of the 1990s. As well as working for newspapers like the London *Financial Times*, he engages in higher journalism by writing for *Encounter*, the *Spectator*, *Commentary*, *Quadrant* and Roger Kimball's *New Criterion*, publisher of this book. He becomes an articulate defender of Israel, and part of a worldwide network of those who, during the Cold War and subsequently, have effectively defended Western values at times when they have been under attack.

I happened to have recently read Alexander Waugh's equally enthralling *The House of Wittgenstein: A Family at War*. The similarities are remarkable—another assimilated Viennese Jewish family who made a fortune in industry but who in later generations became shattered and scattered, some of whose members moved to Western Europe, to Christianity, to gay life, and to the arts and intellectual pursuits. Both books provide us with unforgettable insights into less known but important components of European society between 1850 to 1950, all the more enthralling because told through family histories rather than through general historical surveys.

Patrick Morgan's most recent book is The Vandemonian Trail: Convicts and Bushrangers in Early Victoria (Connor Court).

ALISTAIR POPE

Peter Ryan's Patrol

Fear Drive My Feet

by Peter Ryan

Text, 2015 (first published 1959), 336 pages, \$12.95

I first read *Fear Drive My Feet* in the mid-1970s while on secondment from the Australian Army and serving with the Papua New Guinea Defence Force. This was thirty years after the end of the Second World War fighting in PNG and just as the last of the PNG veterans that Peter would have known were retiring.

Many years later I bought my second copy of his memoir and found it just as fascinating and evocative of the sights, scenes and smells of PNG as I had the first time. Although Peter lived just a few kilometres from me I could not think of a good reason to knock on his door, introduce myself and shake his hand. When I did find an intermediary it was too late, as Peter was in terminal decline and was not receiving visiting strangers. Peter died less than three months later on December 13, 2015. I felt I had lost an opportunity to meet a real soldier, a true Australian character and an admirable man.

On completing his basic training, eighteen-year-old Private Peter Ryan was promoted to warrant officer and posted to Port Moresby to join "M Force" of the Australian Intelligence Bureau (AIB), an intelligence-gathering operation of remarkable individuals operating alone or in pairs deep inside Japanese-controlled territory. They were spread throughout the mountains of the Huon Peninsula overlooking the main Japanese base at Lae in northern New Guinea and at various strategic points along the coast. One possible flaw in the plan to send Peter into this hinterland was that he had never been to either Papua or New Guinea (the two parts of what is now Papua New Guinea were separate administrative areas in those days). His main qualification for the job was that his father had taught him to speak some of the native language of Pidgin English while he was growing up in Australia!

In 1942 Australia's defences were in a parlous state: most of New Guinea had been lost to the invaders and only a few combat-ready Australian units were available to stop either an amphibious landing on the Papuan south coast or a land invasion of Port Moresby over the Owen Stanley Ranges. Knowledge of Japanese dispositions, capabilities and preparations for further operations was

of vital importance if the available troops were to be deployed effectively.

After a short induction briefing, Peter was sent forward to work with an already legendary figure, Jock McLeod, who was operating alone in the mountains behind Lae. However, there were a few problems with this deskbound plan: Peter was despatched with insufficient rations for the journey, and armed with a damaged rifle and a pistol with only ten rounds. It was clear the military hierarchy did not expect him to survive, so there was little point in providing him with valuable scarce resources.

Yet these were minor matters compared to the real handicaps. He had no radio with which to communicate the information he obtained, no map, and no compass by which to navigate to an unknown destination in unmapped territory, as nobody actually knew where Jock was. Peter was "supported" by a native police-boy who knew nothing of the country into which they were venturing. He also had some natural concerns about the patrolling activities of the 13,000 Japanese soldiers spread around various bases in his proposed area of operations. With a broad-brush plan like that, what could go wrong and how could he fail?

With the optimism of callow youth, Peter set off to find the forward Australian commando camp, cross the massive Markham River, then search the immense Huon Peninsula for the elusive Jock.

Fortunately, there is an amazing bush-telegraph between the mountain villages by which information on every happening is passed by travellers on every conceivable subject, particularly the movement of strangers. Having stocked up on supplies and trade goods Peter crossed the Markham into the unknown. Two days later he entered the village of Bivoro and found Les Williams resting while he recovered from a malarial fever. Once Les recovered they moved deeper into the mountains to find Jock, who was said to be at a village called Gain. The news received there was not good, as Ian Downs, a Coastwatcher reconnoitring amphibious landing beaches on the north coast, had been betrayed and had only just escaped after several very close calls. He had been injured crossing a river, but refused to leave for treatment. Also, the hoped-for meeting with Jock at Gain was not to be as he had moved a further four days walk away. The chase continued with two more failures to meet before Peter finally caught up with his leader. After such a long chase they parted the next day, as Jock was intending to

cross the formidable 3900-metre Surawaged Ranges to reconnoitre the north coast, and he needed all their supplies.

Peter returned to the forward base, replenished his supplies and retraced his steps into the barely known mountains, this time with a hand-drawn map. Having reached the friendly Wain country Peter moved about from village to village gathering news and information about Japanese activities. Apart from trading such commodities as newspaper (which the natives prized for making cigarettes from local tobacco), salt and razor blades, one of Peter's tasks was to dispense rudimentary medical aid to cure tropical diseases such as ulcers caused by yaws, hookworm and assorted wounds. This aid would ensure a steady flow of assistance and information.

This was a passive way of gathering information, but Peter was also active. On one occasion, with two police-boys, he penetrated right to the edge of the Japanese base at Lae and interviewed Chinese internees about Japanese operations. He escaped back to his mountain lair before the Japanese found out. When they did, they were so angry that they posted a reward for his capture of two cases of meat and five pounds cash. His fellow spies sardonically threatened to turn him over for the reward by saying a case of meat was worth more than he was. Unfortunately, the valuable intelligence he had obtained on hidden targets would take three or four days to reach the air force command centre in Port Moresby as the army hierarchy still refused to give them a radio.

Peter had now spent more than a year in these mountain villages. From his fastness he could often observe Japanese activities at their main base at Lae and their airfield at Nadzab. Apart from Peter, there were about a dozen other men criss-crossing the mountain tracks, carefully observing, but avoiding the increasingly active Japanese patrols intruding ever deeper into the mountains. Some of the New Guinean clansmen began to come to the conclusion that the Japanese were here to stay and that it was time to change allegiances. The level of danger as a result of betrayal markedly increased. On one occasion Peter and his patrol partner, Captain Les Howlett, were traversing a high mountain track when shots from a Japanese patrol on another track several hundred feet below interrupted their journey. They reported the incident and that the enemy were heading for the operational zone of Harry Lumb, another lone operator in the Kaiapit area. Harry was

Their orders were now to evade and escape by whatever means and route they thought best. No support was available. They were on their own a hundred miles from safety.

a long-term resident of New Guinea who Peter had met a few weeks before when Lumb was passing through on his way to Kaiapit.

As movement between villages was becoming very difficult, information was harder to obtain and their operational value was diminishing in inverse proportion to the increasing risks. The situation was resolved when a message was received that the experienced Harry Lumb had been betrayed by the natives in the village of Ofofragen and killed by a Japanese patrol. Apparently the AIB had not warned Harry of the advancing Japanese patrol.

Their orders were now to evade and escape by whatever means and route they thought best. No support was available. They were on their own a hundred miles from safety in an increasingly unfriendly and dangerous environment.

Having weighed the options, Les, Peter, their police-boys and carriers took the longest route to go around the most likely occupied areas. This would require crossing two high mountain ranges, the Surawaged and the Finisterre. Just crossing both of these would be an achievement, but then they still had to pass through more Japanese-controlled territory before finally reaching and crossing the mighty Markham River to relative safety. The journey was the most difficult they ever made in a country in which the minimum rating for an average track is "difficult". Finally, they cleared the mountains and entered the village of Ewok on a tributary of the Markham.

At Ewok, they paid off the carriers by giving them most of their remaining gear, as Peter, Les and their police-boys were now on the last long leg of their run to safety. Peter was now barefoot and wearing the few rags that remained of his rotted uniform. Unfortunately, the news at Ewok was bad, as it appeared that Japanese patrols were everywhere, but their exact locations were uncertain. The decision was made to move as fast as possible before news of their presence reached their enemies. This resulted in a twenty-eight-hour march by day and night, which took them under halfway to their destination of Chivasang village. From there it was a further few hours to the Markham River crossing. They also discovered that another lone "escapee" from the north coast, the wounded Captain Basil Fairfax-Ross, had passed through only two days before. The next morning their party set off for Chivasang.

At Chivasang they became suspicious of the natives' uncooperative behaviour but after a short reconnaissance they moved into the village. They were met with a burst of machine gun and rifle fire. Captain Howlett was shot and wounded. With bullets clipping the grass around him, Peter jumped

into a stream, losing his Owen gun and most of his shirt before escaping into the long kunai grass on the far side. He did not go far, but dived into a stinking pig-wallow and buried himself in the mud up to his nose. He heard the voices of the Japanese and the squelch of their boots as they hunted for him. He lay there for another half an hour, then he heard natives calling out that the Japanese had left. Fortunately he ignored them, as he soon also heard Japanese voices. He waited until nightfall before moving off nearly naked in the direction of the Markham River. Despite his best efforts he could not reach the Markham in the darkness, but spent another mosquito-infested night in the bush. At noon the next day he finally crossed the river and later that day reached the forward outpost at Kirkland's Camp.

When the ragged Peter reached Bulolo, the quartermaster refused to issue him with a new uniform because he had lost his paybook! It required the intervention of a senior officer to countermand the rigidities of the bureaucratic mind.

One would think this is where Peter Ryan's war should end, but there was more to do. Peter was given the assignment of observing an undefended twenty-mile stretch of the Markham between two new airfields constructed by American army engineers. Just as he was about to set out an American, Tex Frazier, asked if he could come along. Peter reluctantly agreed, but it was a decision that produced amazing results. As usual, the Australian army could not spare a radio, so reports still had to be sent back by courier. Tex found this bewildering, so he had the natives cut a short airstrip out of the bush then returned to Bulolo where he obtained a Piper Cub and flew in it back to their base. Peter remained for several more months assisting with the organisation of native carriers and helping Tex build his airstrips.

Although he had no more close encounters, Peter saw much of the death and destruction of war as the Australians and Americans advanced, often leaving their dead foes unburied as there was no time to stop the war for such niceties. Eventually, the tropical diseases, fevers and his wasted body caught up with him and Peter was evacuated to Port Moresby and then to Australia. At twenty years old his active participation in the war was over. For his work he was awarded the Military Medal and was mentioned in despatches.

The war went on and order must be maintained. Tuya, the native from Chivasang village who had betrayed and then murdered the wounded Captain Howlett, was publically hanged at Lae in February 1944.

Peter never forgot the police-boys and villagers who had helped him survive his private war, and in later years often returned to PNG to meet and support them. He raised money for schools (and has one named after him).

The final unique twist came during one of his visits to PNG forty-one years after the end of his war. He noticed a group of Japanese dining at another table in his hotel conversing in Pidgin English. He introduced himself, as he guessed they were Japanese war veterans. He told them about his war in the mountains. They explained they had been members of a signals platoon whose job it was to intercept the radio calls from these spies and send patrols to their location to eliminate them. One mentioned a particularly elusive call sign who always successfully evaded them. Peter replied, “Em mi tasol!” The former enemies roared with laughter and as old soldiers do, they shared many a whisky together as they reminisced about a brutal war now firmly in their pasts.

The character of Peter Ryan was forged in the horrors, degradation and losses of war but he survived and emerged a better person. Peter was self-reliant, principled, trustworthy, willing to sacrifice everything, and the embodiment of the best of the Australians of his era. Australia has changed and there are few like him today, yet we will need his kind again.

Alistair Pope is a retired Australian Army officer.

JANE SUTTON

A Century in Portugal

The High Mountains of Portugal

by Yann Martel

Text, 2016, 352 pages, \$29.99

“You won’t tell me to shush!” The words rang out around the Misericordiae church, in Olivença, Spain, on the Portuguese border. Everybody stilled.

The group had been hacking up steep cobblestone streets in a thirty-eight-degree scorcher. A few days earlier, eucalyptus fires had burnt acres of forest inland from Lisbon. The leader was ahead—keen to describe the blue-and-white eighteenth-century tiles and a Manueline side door. The scholarly purpose of the tour was to examine a particular Portuguese decorative form that fits between the Gothic and Renaissance styles; a marvellous gesture to the maritime explorations of Vasco da Gama, the so-called

Manueline form. The tour was made up of a cluster of Australians, a lone Canadian and the remainder, British.

Two Englishwomen were at odds, one from the Cotswolds, the other from Merseyside. The first carried two cameras with extended lens that made her look as if she had an extra pair of arms. The second had a habit of wandering from the group. We were working out the various pious actions of the Misericordiae—visiting the sick, the dying and the incarcerated. Abraham was opposite a Daniel in the lion’s den—in brilliant blue and white framed with baroque-style flourishes. Suddenly there was a lapse of travellers’ etiquette, “Will you stop walking in front of my camera!” said the first Englishwoman. “Shush,” said the second, eager to wear her monitor’s badge. And so on. Everyone else studied their fingernails or the porcelain tiles in detail. The two flushed women moved outside to continue—“Shush” and “You will not tell me”—in fizzed dialogue, fingers daggered. In a distant past, with tripods and exposed film, travellers were aware of the cost and photographers were patient. Now we wander across the field of the lens, there is always the delete button and another click for amateurs. It is etiquette in transition.

The first part of the tour from the university town of Coimbra inland towards Castelo Branco follows in part the journey from Lisbon to Bragança described in Yann Martel’s novel *The High Mountains of Portugal*. The book brings together three related novellas set in 1904, 1938 and 1981. One of the themes is the despair of men following the death of a loved woman. Another is the mystery of the north-east plateau of Portugal. Martel sees the ancient Iberian Peninsula as central to the idea of Portugal. It is the most westerly step into the unknown from Europe, where the extinct Iberian rhinoceros roamed. The prehistoric monument Cromeleque dos Almendres is a case in point. Built in the so-called Neolithic Revolution between the sixth and eighth millennia BC, a hundred or so “menhirs” are arranged in an ellipsoidal formation on slanting ground overlooking the later Roman city of Évora to the east. Aligned to the west is Lisbon. This is one example of megalithic cultures in the Alentejo—as if Neolithic Man got to the end of Europe, faced west, dropped his suitcase and built monuments to the cyclical movements of the sun and moon.

Martel has three protagonists: Tomás, a curator at the National Museum of Ancient Art, Lisbon; a pathologist in the northern city of Bragança; and a retired Canadian senator. Tomás is the more engaging of the three as he chooses to assuage his grief on the loss of his lover and son by walking backwards. This quixotic gesture has some precedence for psychiatric

relief but it would be perilous in Lisbon. Walking backwards in Istanbul might be even more hazardous, but Lisbon is a nine-out-of-ten. Forwards is hard enough. I notice the Portuguese women clumping off the plane in high platform shoes because, unlike Paris, Lisbon has retained its cobblestones. No stilettos or dancing pumps for me. Besides, I want to taste as many custard tarts as possible, gliding between *pastelaria*. The production of *pastel de nata* and wine seems to be Portugal's main industries and I decide to assist the economy. Others have that view too—the queue for the very special *pastel de Bélem* is longer than that for King Manuel I's *Mosteiro dos Jeronimos* and cloister.

Tomás is driving to the high mountains in his uncle's 1904 Renault. An inept novice driver, he is in search of a crucifix from the slave-trading Portuguese islands of São Tomé in the Gulf of Guinea. A resident priest, Father Ulisses, had described the artefact in his seventeenth-century diary, purloined by Tomás from the archives. Deftly, Martel links the history of Portugal's slave trade with an odyssey to find the elusive icon. It is also a story of despair and of an assault against modernity. The Renault is attacked *en route* by the suspicious and finally abandoned by Tomás in a sorry state.

The other novellas are set on the eve of the Second World War and after the death of António Salazar. Neither Portuguese wartime neutrality nor the dictatorship is explored overtly but Martel is a disarming writer who rewards close reading. The pathologist's interest in the detective fiction of Agatha Christie in the second novella is intriguing. He has Christie's back catalogue in translation and is keen to read her latest publication. Translations of English novels at the time had a ready market in Spain and Portugal but often text was missing from the original. Christie wrote a murder mystery on the cusp of the war, *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe*. At the denouement, Hercule Poirot was unusually affected with doubts but, true to form, he exposed the killer, a banker of national importance, and reluctantly freed the main suspect, a fascist. With that in mind, the pathologist's wife reflects on Christie's writing:

Agatha Christie's world is stark. Who among us lives a life so beset by murders as Hercule Poirot and Jane Marple? And behind these murders, so much conniving evil! Our world is not like that, is it? Most of us know neither so much good nor so much evil. We sail a tempered middle. And yet murders happen.

Unlike Tomás, who follows the River Tagus to Castelo Branco before motoring northwards, we approach it from the north-west. Driving east

to Castelo de Vide, the landscape changes to straw-coloured grass with dun-green holm oaks. Martel writes:

Now an element of wilderness begins to intrude. Great outcrops of round rocks. Dark green vegetation that is dry and scrubby. Wandering flocks of goats and sheep. He sees the High Mountains of Portugal foreshadowed in these extrusions of rocks ...

We turn south towards Évora, passing through villages with little activity. The holm oaks are pruned to give maximum shade for livestock and the acorns are harvested for pigs. Old men sit around drinking coffee but they aren't reading newspapers—Salazar has left an awful legacy of under-education. To cheer everyone, lunch is at the fortified hill town of Marvão in a *pousada* or former monastery. We tuck into *trouxa de queijo cabra com frutos secos*—goats' cheese in pastry with fruits and honey. And I begin to worry about the food stains on my clothes.

Évora is a gem. A stand of fluted Corinthian columns remains at the western end of a Roman temple. In front was a forum and now a formal park with a bar selling almond cakes, *queijada de Évora*. Local archaeologists have dismissed the idea that the temple was dedicated to Diana but they have agreed it had a reflecting pool around the perimeter. How wonderful. There is a rumour that a bar nearby was briefly the home of Vasco da Gama. This is irresistible; we skate down another perilous slope to eat sliced fruit with a *vinho licoroso do Alentejo*. The next day we slide downhill from the other side of the temple to the former sixteenth-century Jesuit university. It was closed in the eighteenth century when the Jesuits were expelled from Portugal. The building had various uses before re-opening as a university in the twentieth century after the country became a democracy. It is enrolment day and clusters of robed students with their proud but ill-at-ease parents are gathering in the courtyard. Salazar's vision of a "timeless Arcadia" seems distant and yet present—it involved a docile and uneducated poor.

Beside the temple is a banner: "Everything is a story". For his, Martel has chosen dates that glance at decisive political changes in Portuguese history—a stuttering republican movement, the lengthy dictatorship and a post-coup democracy. Yet Martel has titled them "Homeless", "Homeward" and "Home". Is the novel a metaphor for Portuguese democracy and its difficult birth? Tomás has driven into the unknown, the magical ancient north-east. He struggled with the ignorance of others and his own well-being. At the end he is a broken primitive man, covered with vermin. His uncle's servant

returns to the High Mountains to salvage the battered Renault, but no more is known of Tomás. He found the artefact but left it—another twentieth-century story.

It is the end of the tour. I decide to stop looking for culture and head to the beach—it is said Figueira da Foz is suitably wide and windswept. I will camp at a laminex table in a café in the shadow of a rusting apartment building and learn to slur *mais um gin tonica se faz favor*.

Jane Sutton is a regular contributor.

ROBERT MURRAY

Down Wrote a Daughter

Up Came a Squatter: Niel Black of Glenormiston, 1839–1880

by Maggie Black

NewSouth and State Library of Victoria,
2016, 320 pages, \$49.99

Without Banjo Paterson’s “Waltzing Matilda” the good old word *squatter*, in its pastoral sense, might have disappeared from general usage. These productive old pioneers of the bush have had a bad press over the years: ruthlessly greedy land-grabbers; rural snobs; mass murderers of Aborigines; despoilers of a pristine environment; drivers of poor old swaggies to suicide over stolen sheep.

Maggie Black’s biography of her great-grandfather helps provide balance. Niel Black arrived from Scotland in 1839 at thirty-five at the peak of the southern Australian grazing boom and became an industry leader in Victoria’s Western District, perhaps the best fine-wool country on earth.

When he struck out on horseback into the immensity of the bush “his spirits were elated by the sense of space and freedom”—thousands of level, almost treeless, seemingly uninhabited acres.

He took up relinquished land near today’s Terang and established the Glenormiston and Mount Noorat stations while living alone in a wattle-and-daub bush hut. The fine pastures and his skilled management turned his relatively small flock into many thousands, annually loading whole trains of drays and wagons with wool for the port in Geelong. The stud quality Shorthorn cattle herd he was building up helped him through the turmoil of the gold-rush years by bringing unheard-of prices for meat. In the 1890s, after his death, the family turned to dairying, for which the land was suitable,

and refrigeration was by then sufficiently advanced. Glenormiston estate was a pioneer of the butter export industry.

Within a few years of his arrival, Glenormiston was a community, with a large workforce, babies arriving, and producing its own food. Many of the staff were Scottish shepherds whom Black or colleagues recruited and brought to Australia, reimbursed under the bounty arrangements of the government immigration fund system. He preferred these men, regarding them as steadier (except sometimes with alcohol) than the thousands of ex-convicts from Van Diemen’s Land who provided the biggest workforce locally. Some freed convicts were “scoundrels”, Black wrote.

Later than he hoped, he built a rambling, verandahed one-storey homestead in the best Victorian style. He could also afford a mansion in Melbourne. Towards the crusty end of his life, he built, but regretted for the expense, a more European-style two-storey station homestead.

It is a minor, very welcome miracle that Maggie Black has been able to produce this wonderfully vivid window into the rural world of more than 150 years ago. Good illustrations enhance the time-machine effect.

Niel Black had a way with the pen. He preserved his correspondence, bits of journal and other papers throughout his Australian life. They lay in a trunk until about seventy years after his death when Margaret Kiddle drew on them for her book *Men of Yesterday* (Black’s self-effacing phrase as his world changed around him). Today they are a treasure of the State Library of Victoria.

Life was shearing, mud, droughts, heatwaves, bushfires (sixty men fighting one once), good and less-good stock sales, tragedies, welcome family and other visitors, and new immigrants from home but also unhelpful remittance men. Much of the book is concerned with land ownership, which was more complicated—and better explained here—than one would expect. The early squatters had only grazing licences for public land. These licences cost ten pounds a year, but had to be renewed annually. The area allocated depended the number of animals to be grazed. Unsurveyed and largely unfenced, the borders were poorly defined; disputes with neighbours over exact borders and straying or diseased animals were common.

This rough and ready 1830s “squattling” regulation, imposed to control the boom, proved extremely difficult to undo. The squatters complained that they had no security of tenure, but had to spend hugely to develop their runs, with fences, buildings, dams and pasture improvement. The swelling population,

especially after it grew five-fold in the golden 1850s, clamoured to “unlock the land” for small farms.

Melbourne politicians, under strong competing pressures, messed around with the British 1847 Act that provided for fourteen-year leases and it was never properly implemented. There were various provisions for purchasing land, which sometimes worked—at a cost—for the squatters and sometimes did not.

The climax came with the faulty “selection” legislation of the 1860s. Though it was gradually improved, it at first encouraged corrupt dealings, including “dummy” selectors taking up land on the squatter’s behalf instead of farming it. Despite official intentions, the squatters became increasingly proprietorial over the years about “their” land. Black felt “degraded” by some steps he took to hold land.

It seems that the squatters often actually wanted more people and townships—but not yet, and on their terms. They often thought tenant farmers on their estates, as back in Britain, might be good.

Black’s near-apoplexy at the continual assaults on his estate colour many of the letters: “mobocracy”, “the wild torrent of democracy”, the “tyranny of the majority”. It induced him to be elected for the South-Western Province of the Legislative Council in Victoria. The Council, the upper house, was based on property or educational qualifications, as opposed to full democracy in the Legislative Assembly. He was one of the propertied MLCs who in many a famous encounter opposed or amended the buoyantly democratic and “levelling” bills from the Assembly.

There were further cuts to the squatters’ broad dominions as the selection system settled down, and then with later schemes for closer settlement. But they nevertheless emerged with extensive and secure freehold of some very decent land. To this day their inheritors remain a cosy rural elite.

Black’s generation and to a declining extent those who followed them were preoccupied with “home”. With limited capital of his own, he emigrated with financial support from three better-off Scots as a salaried managing partner. Much of the correspondence deals with him wanting more capital to back his judgment for expansion or his Scots backers wanting more dividends from their investment.

As with any substantial business, Black’s station brought in a lot of money, but a huge amount went out as well. Many squatters less experienced and astute than Black, less well financially backed—or less lucky—went broke.

Black and many other emigrants of the day hoped

to make good money in the colony and go home to live in style. He spent lengthy periods in Scotland after long voyages, but from a mixture of emotion and obligation he always returned to Victoria, as the Port Phillip District became in 1851. (He was a strong supporter of separation from New South Wales.)

He wooed and married his wife Grace in Scotland when he was over fifty and she was twenty-two. Shortage of women in the early colony was always a problem, but he seems not to have been blessed by luck in previous wife-finding forays locally or in Melbourne or Scotland. But he did seem to hanker after a Scottish Mrs Black of suitable class. Grace blessed him with three sons, a happy marriage and an orderly household, with morning service and stylish dinner.

They sent the boys to Geelong Grammar, though Niel had at first sniffed warily about a “squatter’s college”. Cambridge followed. Increasingly, “home” became Oxbridge and the Home Counties, rather than the Scottish hill country.

His own family were well-to-do tenant farmers and livestock dealers from the middle ranks of Scottish society in Argyllshire. He was conscious of not being quite the educated gentleman. His facility with the pen notwithstanding, he was a native Gaelic speaker, like many of his workers and neighbours. About a third of the Western District squatters were Scots, often younger sons of similar background to Black. Another big contingent were “Cross Straiters” from Van Diemen’s Land. These men seemed to handle ex-convicts better. But even the stuffiest squatter had to treat surly ex-convicts tactfully or he would lose workers, such was the early labour shortage.

The book says disappointingly little about Aborigines. Black arrived as a new chum at the peak of the worst period of racial conflict in southern Australia, 1838 to 1843, on the edge of one of the worst areas, caused by a perfect storm of factors. He acquired the run from a squatter who had run from the law after an appalling massacre. Shocked, Black wrote of the indigenous people being “quietly slaughtered in unknown numbers”.

Like some others who have drawn on these papers, Maggie Black seems inadequately aware of the context; she generalises in the usual black-arm-band way as if the situation was typical, when it was not. As so often happens, the Aborigines appear briefly as dramatic victims and then disappear from the story.

*Robert Murray is the author of *The Making of Australia: A Concise History* (Rosenberg).*

Full-Witted Women, Decorum and Comedy

Witty women are one of the great delights of life. To smile at an epigram in a Jane Austen novel; to burst out laughing at the droll creativity of the English ventriloquist Nina Conti or the much weirder performances of Australia's Kransky Sisters; to open a Flannery O'Connor book seeking the zest of her disturbing humour and never being disappointed is to sample the riches of women's intelligence and wit.

However, too many of the new comediennes, especially the cruder variety, leave me both disturbed and unamused. It isn't just their crudity that offends me. I like earthy humour because it appeals to something about incarnated life in the world that we all share, but when earthiness becomes obscene—and it's a fuzzy border between the two but one we all recognise however variously we may draw it—then the attempt at humour best works in small doses and even then is subject to a strict law of diminishing returns. Nor is it that so many contemporary comediennes are so often politically correct, which bores me, and keen to be “transgressive” when there is so little left to transgress after decades of mocking every custom and habit except the custom and habit of mocking custom and habit. Such comedy has become hackneyed. I wonder what remains to transgress other than the politics and dogmas of those committed to transgression.

I don't like the endless swearing of either male or female comedians because it quickly becomes apparent that the less-talented wits (by far the majority because in any human endeavour exceptional talent is exactly that: exceptional) have packed their monologues with swearing to eke out meagre material and to give their delivery a patina of bravura. As Clive James has written, in these cases laughter is less drawn out of the audience than *conceded* by the audience who have the eager expectation—since they've paid their money—to enjoy themselves on their night out even if what's on offer is less than they'd hoped.

My impatience with some comediennes isn't

misogyny. I have two sisters whose banter is sharp and funny, and two adult daughters whose conversation and observations often have me proudly chuckling. And, as G.K. Chesterton observed (and such an obvious fact is easily forgotten, oddly by feminists as much as by men), every man, including me, is blessed to be conceived, nestled and framed within womanhood for the most important formative years of life: the gestation and infant years. I was introduced and educated “in the flesh and spirit of femininity from the first like the four walls of a house”. It was years later that I was introduced to and educated in the more limited realm of men. Every man begins life “womanised”. The reasons for my impatience with crude comediennes lie elsewhere.

It was when I re-read Chesterton's *What's Wrong with the World* that I noticed a statement that helped me understand why I liked some female wit so much but disliked female attempts at lewd humour equally as much, and why I didn't feel so strongly about male attempts at lewd humour, although I don't like that comedy very much either. Chesterton wrote that when men make the effort to be presentable, they are under the influence of a woman: the man has been subtly or not so subtly coached by a woman, or there is a woman somewhere he wants to impress. This observation led to the broader principle:

Women generally have the strong sense that if they don't insist on correct behaviour no one will. Babies are not strong on points of dignity, and grown men are quite unpresentable.

I think Chesterton is right; and I agreed with him intuitively long before he helped me to articulate my intuition. This is one reason why it is so scandalous and disturbing to see badly behaving women, but rather less so to see badly behaving men or naughty children. Drunk ladettes vomiting into the gutter outside a nightclub; the high jinks in high heels of Melbourne Cup revellers; the foul-mouthed delivery of a postmodern comic telling the audience about

her vaginal yeast-infection caught after a one-night stand with her best-friend's ex-fiancé: these women are all contributing to the furtherance of bad form, and it is at odds with women's innate sense that firm decorum is necessary to ensure a tolerable sociality.

It is certainly possible for a comedienne to be contemporary, very funny, and insist on correct behaviour. It is, in fact, one of the best ways for women to be witty. Nina Conti uses ventriloquism to achieve this complex combination. One of her dummies, a little primate with an Anglo-Indian accent, called Monk, says cheekily rude and insulting things while Nina attempts to control his witticisms and direct him towards kindness and prudence. By design, she fails, yet she tries, and so Conti is funny without violating common community standards. Instead, she seeks to uphold them, and the contrast she provides to Monk is the source of much of the humour. Her inventive comedy is a success without needing to rely on the thin cliché of a *succes de scandale*.

Nina Conti is following a tradition of women's wit that has Jane Austen as one of its notable exemplars. In all her novels Jane Austen demonstrated that she had a keen understanding of the potential for humour if indecency sat next to decorum. The crass behaviour of Lydia Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* gains in dramatic and comedic value because Lydia's indifference to deportment is juxtaposed with the steady modesty of her sisters Jane and Elizabeth. The comedy is intensified because Lydia, increasingly shameless, doesn't seem to care in any deep sense about her and her family's reputation and consequently causes her mature sisters unceasing mortification. We laugh at Lydia's carelessness because her sisters can't laugh at it. Lydia and her silly mother rub Lydia's outrageous behaviour in the face of the rest of the family by assuming that Lydia's emergency marriage has fulfilled social expectations and that everyone must therefore, like Lydia and Mrs Bennet, be pleased. Again, we laugh at their shallow understanding of decorum's inflexibility; unlike them we know, as does any sane segment of society, that decorum isn't amenable to such compromises. The contemporary comedienne who relies on self-revelation of her private and shameful acts trashes her decorum and may imagine that the social success of bigger gigs and a book contract has made the loss worthwhile. It's the Lydia Bennet bargain.

Mary Bennet has a greater sense than Lydia of sexual propriety but Mary has little sense of

social modesty: she doesn't understand that there are certain times and places for the display of one's interests and accomplishments and other times and places inimical to this display. Thus she embarrasses her family, and provides amusement for her snooty neighbours, by innocent but inept pianoforte playing and singing. In a similar way, Lady Catherine de Bourgh is funny because she assumes that the status of aristocracy graces her with dignity but this is subverted by her pride and meddling arrogance.

The possibilities for a loss of decorum are as varied as the circumstances, and therefore the possibilities for comedy are equally rich as long as the manners are non-negotiable and commonly understood. Comedy begins when characters lose moral balance and allow vanity, hedonism or status to eclipse decorum. It's in the nature of the case that we don't laugh with them, we laugh at them.

But if all the Bennet family and the rest of their society were as delinquent as Lydia about decorum then the opportunities for and the sharpness of the comedy would be greatly reduced. This is why the *Bridget Jones* books, for example, have to work so much harder for their effects; the comedy is clunky and heavy-handed compared to Jane Austen's because modern Western society is relatively indifferent to firm manners. Bridget Jones isn't the exception in her society; her indiscretions and dysfunctions are the rule; they are

*The Kransky
Sisters' modesty does
not limit comedy;
it creates it by
providing something
firm to measure
aberration against.*

commonplace. Folly and indecency can't readily sit next to decorum if decorum is constantly being shoved into a tiny corner. It will be no surprise if comics leave less and less unsaid and undisclosed in the search for elusive laughter which must be hounded out of a diminishing reserve of dignity and modesty.

Chesterton's other statement that helped me understand my relative impatience with lewd comedienues compared to lewd male comedians is this: "For the two things that a healthy person hates most between heaven and hell are a woman who is not dignified and a man who is." Chesterton saw not only that women had the good sense to insist on good manners; he also saw that personal dignity was more precious for women than it was for men and that women especially could not throw away their dignity without demeaning themselves. I want women to maintain their firm, astringent dignity. The world would be a bleak place without the impressive dignity of women to remind us of how much better we can be: clean, sober, conscientious,

brushed, washed, considerate, polite, nice-smelling, attentive, affectionate, and eager for all kinds of beauty. I need that feminine influence. I don't want it smeared. Chesterton noted that we paid silent honour to the dignity of women by dressing men in types of feminine apparel when the men have an important role: for example, the long, flowing robes of bishops and the ornate wigs and gowns of judges.

The dignity of men is a much more elastic quality than the dignity of women because in men dignity is a less obvious quality. As a rule, men are much less concerned with outward dignity than women. Hair extensions, false eyelashes, the routine of a weekly manicure or pedicure; creams to minimise cellulite, hair curlers and hair straighteners, microderm abrasion, cherry-flavoured lip glosses; pantyhose that firm the buttocks and thighs; rouges, blushers, concealing unguents and moisturisers; such things, and there are hundreds more, belong to an arcane science that is a deep and unappealing mystery to most men. Generally, men are much more complacent about deportment, appearance and physicality than women, and are thus more inclined to buffoonery and grossness; men may be more readily forgiven for it because it is expected. In women, fastidiousness about appearance and deportment is expected, but when these characteristics are found in men beyond a certain point then a comic or sinister figure emerges: the dandy or the seducer.

Dignity, and especially the dignity expressed in modesty, is natural, that is, essential to women in the same way that indignity, and especially a degree of bodily grossness, is natural to men. When men or women seek in their existence to act in ways that are contrary to their essence, the result is grotesque. The further the departure from essence, the greater the grotesqueness. These categories are no doubt a bad joke to most of the new generation of comediennes because their faith (likely to be an unconscious faith) is that human essences are a social fabrication and therefore negotiable rather than foundational and persistent across time and cultures. But as the Estonian Christian existentialist Ignace Lepp notes, this hostility to pervasive and enduring human essences cannot be justified by any fair or extensive phenomenological survey or analysis.

Modesty in sexual matters is one of these essential qualities, and comediennes who accept this framework and then play against it have another rich field for comedy compared to their colleagues who don't recognise the framework, or who obliterate it and thus lose the opportunity for humour born of contrast. The comedy of the Kransky Sisters is founded in large measure on their sexual modesty, expressed in their anachronistically-styled clothes:

long-sleeved white blouses buttoned up to the throat and ankle-length black shapeless skirts leave little flesh to be seen other than pale hands and pale faces. It's as if a scion of the Addams Family had been hibernating since the 1950s in the rural Queensland town of Esk—where the Kranskys were raised—and then woke decades later to bring their idiosyncratic amateur music and odd family history to audiences around the world.

Their insistence on an almost obsessive modesty allows the Kransky Sisters to hint at some rather small improprieties and indignities by other members of their extended step-family and make them hilarious. Their modesty does not limit comedy; it creates it by providing something firm to measure aberration against. They do not mention their periods, their one-night stands, their nipple-piercing experiences or STDs because all this is foreign to them, and not one swear word passes their lips as they unfold their family history and sing their songs. Indeed, it is hard to imagine the Kranskys swearing or indulging in any grossness at all. It would be badly out of character. Even when they sing Marvin Gaye's "Sexual Healing" or the 1970s hit "Afternoon Delight" the performance gains in strange appeal because they appear to be oblivious to the sensuality of the lyrics. What they sing is weirdly at odds with how they look and behave. We relish the incongruity.

The Kranskys seem virginal and our assumption of their amorous inexperience works to their advantage. A highpoint of their show is getting male audience members to join them on stage as honorary Kransky sisters. The men are quickly garbed in the unflattering Kransky costume and provided with black, face-framing wigs. They are then asked to provide accompaniment by swinging ribbon-fluttering tambourines as the Kranskys sing Beyonce's "Single Ladies". The ensemble looks like a demented Salvation Army band. The younger, quieter sister seems to be smitten by the man she has dressed in her image; she smells her palm after shaking hands with him and casts him longing looks and shy smiles throughout the song and for some time afterwards. The audience laps it up; coyness and restraint are funny in a way that unrestrained sexual disclosure can never be.

The American writer Flannery O'Connor also understood that a firm framework of modesty and dignity provided for comedy and that this framework had a spiritual foundation. In this O'Connor, a Catholic, is at one with every major religion and the customs of nearly every traditional society, and she is at odds, as she well knew, with the faddish values of the secular West.

In O'Connor's short story "A Temple of the Holy Ghost", emerging teenage sexuality—and proud impoliteness—sit next to expectations of sanctity, with comic results. A shrewd, sharp-tongued girl watches two older but dull girls explore their interest in boys. "Neither one of them could say an intelligent thing and all their sentences began, 'You know this boy I know well one time he ...'" The girls are introduced to two lanky-limbed farm boys for company. "They sat like monkeys, their knees on a level with their shoulders and their arms hanging down." Together the four teenagers go to the county fair; they sneak into the "adults" sideshow and see a hermaphrodite who, with great dignity, tells those who've come to stare at the open-skirted display of mixed genitalia that she accepts her body as God's mysterious will and that the best a person can do is to make the best of what they've been given. The

excited teenagers return home to tell the younger girl what they saw and what the "freak" said. The child is confused by how a person can be a man and woman both and not have two heads, but she begins to understand her convent teaching that one's body is a temple of the Holy Ghost. O'Connor said the story conveyed all she wanted to say about purity. Characteristically, she said it with wit and with an eye to strangeness that hid wisdom.

In the best and funniest of women, wisdom and comedy are allied as they are in the work of Jane Austen, Nina Conti, the Kranskys and Flannery O'Connor. Fortunately, such women are still plentiful in daily life even if they are becoming less fashionable on stage.

Gary Furnell, a frequent contributor, lives in rural New South Wales.

Little Blue Book

We were both eleven or twelve,
shared desks at St Mary's Bible study class,
reading our little blue Catechism books.

One time he dragged me in a brown wagon
across town, straight
down the centre of a dangerous
five-lane intersection, somehow
avoiding whizzing traffic.

My mother was waiting for me,
at our front gate, holding
the wooden pasta spoon that spoke
when words weren't enough.

A few weeks later, he didn't come to Bible study.
I watched his empty desk,
as the nun told us he had been hit
by a car and killed on his way to class.
She said the last thing he said
to the ambulance attendant was

Where is my blue book?

Three months after the burial,
the empty desk filled,
I heard his father, struck
with grief, had shot himself,
through the mouth, with a shotgun,
over the small grave.

Joe Dolce

An Episode of Global Significance

The appearance and success of the film *Dunkirk* have added to the list of war films that are both impressive and harrowing, but the film has not done much to explain the significance of the episode. Indeed, precisely because of the film's overwhelming focus on the beach and on the immediate military conflict, there is a failure to consider the wider military context let alone the political one.

In 1940, the world was provided with its greatest geopolitical crisis of the last century, one that was even graver than that in 1917-18, serious as that was. In 1918, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk between Germany and Russia posed the threat of a new alignment, one that would enable Germany to turn all its efforts on the Western Allies (Britain, France and the United States), while Bolshevism was able to establish itself with German help. In January 1918, Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, suggested that the Allies help anti-Bolshevik movements in Russia that "might do something to prevent Russia from falling immediately and completely under the control of Germany ... while the war continues a Germanised Russia would provide a source of supply which would go far to neutralise the effects of the Allied blockade. When the war is over, a Germanised Russia would be a peril to the world." The challenge was not ended by the close of the war. Indeed, in July 1919, the British General Staff argued, "taking the long view, it is unquestionable that what the British Empire has most reason to fear in the future is a Russo-German combination".

The threat recurred in 1940, but in a more acute form. By the end of 1939, Germany was allied with Japan, Italy and the Soviet Union, and had co-operated with the Soviet Union in conquering Poland and determining spheres of influence in Eastern Europe, which left the independent states there with few options. The United States was neutral. Britain and France, while supported by their mighty empires, were reduced to dubious hopes of long-term success, in particular through a blockade that was in practice not going to work due to the Russo-

German alignment.

German successes in early 1940, first against Denmark and Norway, and subsequently against the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Britain, were a product of the existing geopolitical situation, because Germany was able to fight a one-front war and thus maximise its strength. In short, Stalin was the root cause of the German triumph in the West in 1940. In 1939, by allying with Hitler, Stalin had followed Lenin in 1918 by joining the cause of international communism to that of state-advancement in concert with Germany.

This process was greatly facilitated by a shared hostility to Britain and its liberalism. This hostility stemmed from a rejection of liberal capitalism as a domestic agenda for liberty and freedom, but also hostility to it as an international agenda focused on opposition to dictatorial expansionism. Just as Britain had fought to protect Belgium in 1914, and had intervened in favour of Estonia and Latvia in 1919-20, so it went to war in 1939 in response to the invasion of another weak power, Poland.

The past rarely repeats itself, as comparisons between the German offensives in 1870 and 1914, and 1918 and 1940 indicate, or, indeed, between the Russo-German combination in 1939-41 and more recent relations between the two powers. German success in the field in 1940 owed much to the serious deficiencies of French strategy and planning, especially the deployment of mechanised reserves on the advancing left flank so that, in practice, they were not available in a reserve capacity, and, linked to this, the absence of defence-in-depth. French failures magnified German efforts at innovation, efforts which were subsequently in the war to be revealed as inadequate against defence-in-depth.

And so to Dunkirk. The problem with war is ultimately that of forcing opponents to accept your will. That is the outcome sought. Output, the "boys and toys" of killing and conquest, is important to the process, but only if linked to a political

strategy that will deliver the outcome. That strategy involves maximising international advantages, as the Germans did in 1939 and continued to do in 1940 with Italy's entry into the war, and dominating the political agenda of your opponent's society.

There is no inevitability about either process. In particular, in 1940, Germany proved far more successful with France than with Britain in this respect. Many French troops fought bravely, notably at the Meuse, Somme and Aisne, and also at Lille, a key position in protecting what became the Dunkirk defensive perimeter. However, the necessary political will to fight on, while displayed by the Free French under Charles de Gaulle, was largely absent. With the Commander-in-Chief, General Maxime Weygand, critical of the political system and pressing for an armistice, and Marshal Henri Pétain, the Deputy Prime Minister, also pessimistic about the future and opposed to fighting on, the cabinet, on June 15, agreed to find out what armistice terms the Germans would offer.

This sold the pass. There would be no union with Britain, no attempt to mount continued resistance from a Breton redoubt, no guerrilla warfare, no retreat of the government to the North African colonies from which they could have continued defiance.

This collapse was of global significance. French control of Syria, Lebanon, Madagascar, French North and West Africa, and French Indo-China created the possibility of German and Japanese penetration into the Middle East, Africa and South-East Asia. The aircraft that sank British warships off Malaya in 1941 operated from bases in Indo-China.

This collapse also made the British decision to fight on of greater significance, and also far riskier. German naval and air forces could now be moved much closer to Britain. German hope for a negotiated settlement with Britain reflected the difficulties of invasion but also Hitler's interest in war against the Soviet Union. Redressing the 1919 Versailles peace settlement was at best a tactic for Hitler, as was co-operation with Russia in 1939-41. The ideological thrust of his policy would be served by a peace by which Britain retained its empire in return for accepting German dominance of the Continent.

There was interest in Britain in a compromise peace, but it was pushed aside by Churchill. In part the weakness of the far Left was an element. Left-wing trade unionists looked to the example of Stalin, but communism was relatively weak in

Britain, while both the Conservatives and Labour were characterised by robust patriotism.

The ability to save so much of the army from Dunkirk was important. It created an impression of heroic resilience, but also ensured that there were not, as there might otherwise have been, a quarter of a million prisoners to provide as it were German hostages.

Evacuations are one of the most difficult military activities. They are a form of combined operations, always problematic, but one in which the other side has set the agenda. They are also strategic, an element not really captured in the recently-released film. You withdraw in order to fight again. This is a key element in military history, one that

The ability to withdraw after failures on land became even more difficult in the Second World War due to hostile air power, and this was a major factor at Dunkirk and at Crete in 1941.

at sea is best handled by powers with a strong amphibious capability. The ability to withdraw after failures on land, for example from Germany in 1796, Holland in 1799, Corunna and Walcheren in 1809, and Gallipoli in 1915, was important. It became even more difficult to do so in the Second World War due to hostile air power, and this was a major factor at Dunkirk and at Crete in 1941. Nevertheless, in each case, large numbers were withdrawn. A failure to evacuate could be a disaster, as with Singapore and the Philippines in 1942 and, for the Germans and Italians, Tunisia in 1943. Each reflected the local superiority of opposing sea and, in particular, air power.

As a result, large numbers of men were lost.

In the event, 338,226 men were successfully evacuated from Dunkirk. Lots of equipment was left behind, but it was replaced. Survival was enough, a point mentioned in the film's dialogue.

The film is notable for not hiding Churchill's comment that it was a military catastrophe, but that was not the key element. There was the important effect on domestic morale, notably the realisation that everyone, even those who messed about in boats, could do something useful. The voices urging Britain to seek terms with Germany would have been a lot louder if Britain had lost its army. Moreover, German confidence would have been higher, and this might have encouraged the Germans to stage the invasion had there been no negotiations.

Mass had a value of its own, at sea, on land and in the air. The mass of troops available, thanks to Dunkirk and other evacuations, despite defeat in France, to help protect Britain from invasion, was important. So was the size of the navy that survived

having taken part in the evacuation. Only six out of forty-one destroyers were sunk. The Royal Navy took much less damage in evacuating Dunkirk than the Germans had done invading Norway that April: ten German destroyers had been destroyed at Narvik, the heavy cruiser *Blücher* in Oslo fjord, and so on. This was highly important as far as the invasion was concerned, and offset some of the advantage Germany gained in winning the support of Italy and taking France from the British side. Moreover, as the Germans advanced, 170,000 tonnes of French warships in construction, including the cruiser *Joffre* and the battleship *Clemenceau*, were sabotaged.

The film contains errors, not least failing to note the significance of the East Mole for the evacuation, to explain the role of the weather, and to emphasise that most of the troops were evacuated by warships, mostly from the East Mole. In contrast, the Little Ships, the occasion of another fine recent film, the intelligent romantic tragic comedy *Their Finest*, lifted about 5 per cent at most.

Dunkirk is very well acted. It is vivid, ably shot, and brings in land, sea and air, co-ordinating the three very well. Shot on the beach used in 1940, the film captures the difficulty of the task and the fortitude involved. Withdrawal is particularly difficult for troops who do not know what is going to happen, but can clearly hear the menacing sound of approaching foes. That was certainly the case with

the Dunkirk perimeter which was under serious attack and bombardment.

Inevitably the film has been drawn into controversy. *Le Monde* has complained that the role of the French is underplayed, which possibly is not the wisest of approaches, not least given the obvious contrast with political steadfastness in response to German offensives in 1914, 1916 and 1918. A friend e-mailed me: "The greatest tragedy of the narrative that we have created nationally for ourselves regarding Dunkirk and the Battle of Britain and indeed WW2 as a whole ... it has contributed to our inability to be a true team player in the European context."

This opinion is but part of a wider argument that the British live in the past and say too much about "the war", an argument then somehow linked to support for Brexit. That, however, is to run together many different elements. First, history is in part the trust between the generations, and that is very much seen with memorialisation and commemoration. Second, in 1940 the British did act in a fashion that was significant (to them and others) and impressive. Third, the Brexit vote reflected a wide range of factors, the vast majority of which had nothing to do with "the war". Go and see the film. It is impressive.

Jeremy Black is Professor of History at Exeter University and the author of over 100 books, many of them on military history.

Waiting for Willie

I waited for Willie to take him to school
 He was always late and I jangled my keys
 The apple of our eyes—Mary's and mine
 Just, some kids mature slower than others

As I waited I jangled my keys
 But wait, he left school a decade ago
 Some kids mature slower than others
 Some fathers relive the best parts of life

But Willie left school a decade ago
 The apple of our eyes—Mary's and mine
 Sometimes I dream the best part of my life
 I like waiting for Willie to take him to school.

Saxby Pridmore

NEIL McDONALD

Dunkirk Revisited Again

Even with the strict wartime censorship it was obvious to everyone that the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk in May and June 1940 was a disaster. Winston Churchill—who had been Prime Minister for only a few weeks—may have celebrated the deliverance, but was careful to include in his speech to the House of Commons the warning that “wars are not won by evacuations”.

The legend of Dunkirk began early. Late in 1940 Paul Gallico’s story *The Snow Goose* was published in the *Saturday Evening Post*. It told of Philip, a crippled artist who comes to love a young girl after she brings him a wounded snow goose that he nurses back to life. The bird returns regularly to its saviour and is with the artist when he takes his boat to Dunkirk and saves some hundreds of soldiers. In the best tradition of romantic fiction the artist lives in a lighthouse and is a skilled sailor.

The Snow Goose is outrageously sentimental. Philip dies heroically, leaving only a portrait and soldiers’ stories about his courage and the bird that stayed with him until the end. It was enormously popular. I recall hearing a moving radio adaptation as a boy in which the artist was played by Herbert Marshall. There was also a famous reading of the story broadcast in 1944 by Ronald Colman. Both men had served in the Great War (Marshall lost a leg), had magnificent voices and were always truthful, if at times romantic actors.

The story, only slightly expanded, became a best-selling novella and is arguably the beginning of the Dunkirk legend of ordinary men rescuing their army; although in fairness to Gallico, in the book Philip is ferrying the men to the transports. Even in Christopher Nolan’s 2017 *Dunkirk*, which emphasises the vital role of the Royal Navy, there is a touch of this same legend when Kenneth Branagh’s Commander Bolton puts his binoculars to his eyes and the “little ships” come into focus. He is asked, “What do you see?” “Home!” he replies. My friend, the cinematographer David Brill, observed that there are not quite enough boats in the wide shot; but it is a great moment nevertheless.

The first portrayal on film of Dunkirk as a civilian triumph was by Hollywood in *Mrs Miniver* (1942). The screen is filled with increasing numbers of small craft, the sound of their engines rising to a dull roar. Their orders to take their boats across the channel are from a disembodied voice coming from a ship. The sequence may have been staged with models on the MGM lake—the lake later used for the Esther Williams water ballets directed by Busby Berkeley—but it was very powerful; a symbol of Britain reaching out to reclaim its own. A report from the British Navy corrected the film’s inaccuracies, but it got nowhere at the time; the film, directed by the great William Wyler, was too useful to the British-American alliance, and was very effective propaganda much admired by President Roosevelt. A more reluctant admirer was Dr Goebbels: “It makes you want to go out and kill Germans. Why can’t we make German films that will make audiences want to go out and kill the British and Americans?”

Mrs Miniver’s Dunkirk sequence is a companion to one of J.B. Priestley’s most famous radio postscripts. These were devised by the BBC as a response to the broadcasts by William Joyce from Germany that were sometimes very acute. It was decided to counter them with late-night postscripts, commentaries delivered by well-known personalities such as Robert Donat, Leslie Howard and Priestley. After Dunkirk, Priestley gave one of his best-remembered broadcasts in which he described the paddle-steamers and ferries that went to Dunkirk, evoking memories of summer holidays and very British picnics. The sound survives and it is clear that the pleasure boats represent the British people. It is now a people’s war. This too was the final message of *Mrs Miniver*. The film’s rousing last speech by the local vicar, urging his congregation to fight this new people’s war, and delivered in the film in the bombed church with Spitfires flying in a V formation overhead, accompanied by “Land of Hope and Glory” on the soundtrack, was written by the British actor Henry Wilcoxon, who played the vicar, and William Wyler. The film’s “Britishness”

may have been enhanced by uncredited contributions from the British playwright and screenwriter R.C. Sherriff.

The first feature film to portray the Dunkirk story itself was released in 1958. Directed by Leslie Norman, it was one the last of the Ealing films and came at the end of a series of unpretentious war films made by the men and women who had experienced the war. *Dunkirk* (1958) was based on *The Big Pick-Up*, a novel by Elleston Trevor, plus what appears to have been a factual account, *Keep the Memory Green*, by Lieutenant-Colonel Ewan Hunter (also credited as an adviser to the film) and Major J.S. Bradford. (I have not been able to locate a copy of this book.) The adaptation was by David Divine and the veteran screenwriter W.P. Lipscomb.

The film cuts between two narratives. One comes from the novel. It is a journey through the Dunkirk experience by a platoon of five soldiers whose officer has been killed and who are now led by a corporal. Trevor, who had been in the RAF—the subject of his first novel—decided to advertise in the press for Dunkirk veterans to give him background. He seems to have evoked a good response. Almost certainly the characters in the book reflect real people. They are well drawn, and this has carried through into the screenplay. John Mills portrays the main protagonist, Corporal Binns. The growth in his authority as he leads his men to Dunkirk is conveyed with the kind of subtlety and sensitivity that allow the character to grow before the viewers' eyes. We often forget the late Sir John Mills's gallery of working-class characters that extend back to the 1930s and how well he played them. The humanity of this portrayal makes it one of his best.

The second strand of the narrative is dominated by two civilians who take their boats across the Channel to rescue the troops—Bernard Lee's Charles Foreman and Richard Attenborough's John Holden. Foreman is a disillusioned reporter disgusted by the “phony war”. The film, even in 1958, is unusual in giving vent to this bitterness. During the war such expressions were censored; or at least the government tried to discourage them. There was a bureaucratic campaign against Powell and Pressburger's film *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943). The campaign failed, but the bitterness in the wider community about the earlier bungling, not to mention appeasement, was real and can be found in the Mass Observation reports at the time.

Although not explicit, these attitudes are implied in the portrayal of Mr Foreman and all he stands for, as he battles with an information policy more concerned with covering up disaster than allowing people to come to terms with bad news.

The scenes at the Ministry of Information are very fine, with Anthony Nicholls smoothly evasive and untrustworthy as a military spokesman.

The character of Holden could easily have degenerated into a stereotype—the weak man with an overly dependent wife and a new baby, in a reserved occupation benefiting from the phoney war as a buckle manufacturer. But Attenborough, helped by some deft touches from the writers, makes it all work. He was one of the finest screen actors of his generation, and like Mills gives a beautifully understated performance portraying the character's developing sense of responsibility. Clearly for Leslie Norman the characters mattered. As he said himself, he was a council boy who rose to be a major and thought Dunkirk was a very gallant effort.

Ealing films had been influenced by the documentary movement—real locations whenever possible, stories about believable middle or working-class characters. Norman was not able to use Dunkirk or the original beaches, so these were recreated reasonably accurately in Britain. They did make skilful use of actuality footage. In one shot there is even a paddle-steamer. The film uses only a few images of the deadly Stukas, concentrating on the sound and the effect on the ground.

No doubt Leslie Norman would have given anything for some of the German footage that has surfaced recently. A compilation film of the Stuka attacks on Dunkirk from the German perspective has been uploaded on YouTube and is very good. Much of this material appears in the German propaganda film *Stukas* (1941) directed by Karl Ritter. One terrifying shot, at least for German viewers, shows what seems to be a squadron of Spitfires peeling off and going into action. (It could have been more—at one stage of the air battle Air Chief Marshal Dowding was sending planes to France four squadrons at a time.) For anyone brought up on tales of the Battle of Britain the sequence is inspiring and is superbly photographed by the German combat photographer.

Both films emphasise the role of the RAF in the evacuation, a subject of bitter dispute at the time. Not many British planes had been seen by those on the beaches, as the dogfights were fought at such high altitude they were invisible from the ground. Moreover, the bulk of the RAF was concentrating on the airfields being used by the Germans further inland. In Norman's film this is explained in a conversation on the beach with a pilot who has been shot down.

Dunkirk also dramatises Vice-Admiral Ramsay's role in planning the evacuation, and the commander of the BEF, General Gort's determination to act independently. They are well played by Nicholas

Hannen as Ramsay and Cyril Raymond as Gort, but tactfully the moment when Gort, without reference to either the British government or the allies, decided to get his army back to England and abandon the French is omitted. Gort made many mistakes in France but this was his great moment and it should have been in the film; although what it might have done to Anglo-French relations at the time one shudders to think.

The film's budget was quite small but Norman managed some exciting action scenes on his British locations. Above all he had lots of boats that he sailed triumphantly down almost every waterway in Britain with recognisable landmarks. On the soundtrack is Malcolm Arnold's Elgar-like score. The film makes the Royal Navy's part absolutely clear but the legend is alive and well. Shot in an unostentatious style in black-and-white, the 1958 *Dunkirk* gets the people and the history right.

The legend and the history are also in good hands in Christopher Nolan's 2017 *Dunkirk*. His main protagonist is the rock-like civilian Mr Dawson, played splendidly by Mark Rylance. He and his son beat the Navy to their boat and head to France. We get more boats later but the civilian story is well established from the outset, and of course the Navy is in the very best of hands when Kenneth Branagh's Commander Bolton appears. This version concentrates on the experience. There are no strategic debates, just the suspense of who will or won't survive and a little exposition.

Nolan filmed in Dunkirk and on the beaches using Imax 65mm and large format 65mm film. The aim is to surround the viewer with the experience visually and aurally. The idea of creating the sound of real battle goes back a long way. Chester Wilmot, advised by Damien Parer, recreated the authentic sound of Japanese machine guns for the timbered-knoll sequence in *Sons of the Anzacs* (1944). William Wellman took his cast and crew into the snow and recorded the sound of real rifles for *Battleground* (1949). Leslie Norman seems to have done much the same in *Dunkirk*, although there was no snow! In 1998 Steven Spielberg used the full array of modern sound technology to create a soundscape for *Saving Private Ryan* that surviving participants found disturbingly authentic. Nolan does much the same but adds a pulse to screw up the tension and a powerful musical score by Hans Zimmer. Some veterans of Dunkirk have found the movie louder

than the real thing. However, they added that the film was true to the experience as they recalled it.

Dunkirk cuts between three interconnected narratives, each with a differing perspective and time frame. On land the action covers one week. At the outset we follow Tommy (Fionn Whitehead), a young soldier who first comes under fire in the streets of Dunkirk then tries to get onto a ship on the beach. Although the film doesn't use the experiences of any particular soldier or group of soldiers, his adventures are similar to incidents that did occur, while Branagh's Commander Bolton represents the actions of a number of naval commanders involved in the evacuation. Exposition dialogue explaining the situation is perhaps a little too abbreviated. Having Bolton at the end stay behind to embark the French rearguard could have been even more effective than it was but we needed to know they had been holding the line so the British could escape.

At sea the film covers the events of a single day, with Mr Dawson rescuing a downed Spitfire pilot, taking on troops from a sinking ship, and duelling with German fighter bombers.

In the air Nolan is arguably the first to dramatise the dogfights over Dunkirk where the Spitfires had only minutes of flying time before they ran out of fuel. It is well done with authentic machines and the

action deftly woven into the main narrative. Even the splendidly executed landing on the beach is based on a real incident. The shortage of planes and the desperate attempts to repair shot-up aircraft as soon as they landed could have added much-needed context. Nevertheless these interwoven strands make for effective film-making and give events that have been described so often by participants a disturbing immediacy. The British film record of Dunkirk is understandably meagre but there are some fine stills. Cinematographer Hoyte Van Hoytema used these as the basis for the spectacular long shots of the air attack on the beaches.

My main criticism is the sometimes frantic intercutting between storylines before each thread of the plot has been resolved. Doubtless it was done to increase the suspense but at times it spoils some fine film craft.

Each version of *Dunkirk* explores an aspect of the experience and does it very well. Only a few fiction films can enhance the teaching of history. But if I were back in the classroom or lecture hall I would screen both of these fine works for students studying the Second World War.

Some veterans of Dunkirk have found the movie louder than the real thing. However, they added that the film was true to the experience as they recalled it.

On Valentine's Day

LIBBY SOMMER

You had to get out of them occasionally, those Australian country towns with the funny names: Wagga Wagga, Wee Waa, Woy Woy. Once, after a devastating week wiped out more than \$4 trillion from the global stock exchanges, one of the local papers boasted a banner headline: WAGGA WAGGA WOMAN WEDS WOY WOY TOY BOY. You had to make an effort from time to time to get out, even if it meant flying all the way across the Nullarbor to go to a Valentine's Day party.

In the centre of Wee Waa, across the road from a church and the graveyard, was a small primary school and a scatter of classrooms used for adult education. For the last four years Joanne Stephenson had been a teacher at the school. She loved those kids. At forty-two, with no relationship in sight, the probability of having a child of her own had become increasingly remote.

She also taught "Vision Boarding as a Tool for Memoir Writing" in the evenings. She presented the course to men and to women, although attending the sessions and handing in the final assignment wouldn't help her students get a job. Even though her student evaluations had been slipping the last year or so—*Joanne Stephenson has let everyone know in no uncertain terms how fed up she is with students arriving late for class or not doing their homework*—all in all, the college was pleased to have her.

Living in Wee Waa was difficult for her, they knew. Once at the beginning of the year, she had turned all the lights off in the building and for twenty minutes had her students chant "om" at the start of class. The manager had called her into his office, but did not say any words of criticism. Well, not exactly. *Joanne Stephenson thinks cutting pictures out of magazines and pasting them into a scrapbook is a creative act. Is this an activity we should be paying for?* He asked her how things were going and patted her on the wrist. She said, "It's a big ask expecting adult students to sit in those tiny children's chairs," and he studied the way she tightened the scarf at her neck as she said it. He wouldn't describe her as attractive, although her eyes were honest and reflected a willingness to listen mindfully when conversing with others. There wasn't enough effort with the untidy hair though, and her scarves—worn so often to take the emphasis away from her face—were over the top, decorating her neck like a collage of bright parrot feathers.

"I'm losing my marbles in this place," said Joanne to her younger sister Penny in Perth. Joanne phoned her every Sunday.

"You're always harping on," said Penny, "but then you take yourself off somewhere and then you're happy to be back home to your routines and you're content for a while and say you have the perfect life, and then after a while you say you're pulling your hair

out with boredom, and you start up with the whining again.”

Penny was a part-time caterer for the film industry. She'd turn up on location with her big food truck, set up trestle tables and canvas chairs in the middle of nowhere. She thought her life was “pretty cool”. She was living with her husband of many years, who had recently taken a redundancy package. Penny and Henry had a twelve-year-old daughter, and recently moved to Perth from Sydney into a luxury high-rise apartment with large balconies overlooking the Swan River.

“We like to have friends over for barbecues on the balcony.” Penny was always gloating, as if to let Joanne know that, unlike her, she had a life outside of work. It wasn't Penny's social life that made Joanne envious however, it was the fact Penny had a child. Although the child's determined nature brought Penny to tears of frustration. This Joanne didn't envy.

“Living away from the city has been good for my allergies,” said Joanne on the phone. She used to say it was to get away from petrol fumes, but now she said it was to avoid the dust mites. *What have you run away from?* a student once asked her. *Bed bugs*, she said and grinned. He looked dubious.

Her adult students were mostly salt-of-the-earth country people, spaced-out with endorphins from large quantities of good clean air. In class they'd share stories of their childhood struggles, of adolescence, the death of loved ones. They seemed vulnerable at these times, often carrying a deep grief. She was good at encouraging them to open up on the page, but the outpouring of emotion that sometimes followed was difficult to contain. She wished she had the counselling skills to support them.

“I'm flying over to visit you next weekend,” announced Joanne.

“I was hoping you would,” said Penny. “Henry and I are having a party for Valentine's Day. It falls on a Saturday this year. It should be fabulous. A dress-up party.”

“I'll dust off my devil horns and tail and shiny red tights.”

“Not that outfit again.”

“I've worn those horns so many times I'll probably end up giving birth with them on.”

“Ha, ha,” laughed Penny. “I really want you to come, but we've got a full house,” she apologised. “All the beds are taken.”

“That's a shame.” Secretly, Joanne was relieved. She liked her own space, no matter how small. “Don't worry, I'll book a hotel somewhere. And anyway, I don't like sleeping in other people's houses.”

“I'm not just anybody. I'm your sister. Next time you'll stay with us. Okay?”

“Okay.”

“You sure you haven't got anything else to wear? And for goodness sake, you're not expecting are you?”

“No.”

“Unless there's someone in your life you haven't told us about?”

“I tell you everything. Why not be a single mum though? It doesn't look like the whole marriage and baby thing's going to happen for me, so why not?”

“Don't do anything stupid.”

“You're only saying that because Virginia has always been a handful.”

“You're forty-two, woman. You've left your run too late. By the time you meet someone and decide to have a child you'll be too old.”

Should she say that one of her gay friends had said he'd help out if she decided to take the IVF option?

“You'd never be able to handle a baby on your own,” Penny had exploded once when Joanne had mentioned the possibility of going it alone. “Without a guy how

would you manage?”

The thing was, Joanne hadn't given up on the whole baby thing. But she knew better than to say that to her sister.

That morning she'd woken up feeling decidedly unwell. It must have been the previous evening's pig-out on Indian food. She'd wondered, though, if that's what morning sickness would feel like.

Joanne had been out with two men since she'd come to Wee Waa. One of them was a tennis coach. "Tennis is excellent for upper body strength," her gynaecologist had told her. "Fresh air and sunshine. It will do you good." The tennis coach had stopped giving lessons when he fell and broke his wrist. He'd asked her out for a drink. At first she thought he was wonderful—someone who shared a common interest. But soon the tennis coach had become elusive and unreliable. One autumn day in his old Merc, when she'd asked him if there was a problem, he'd said, "Have you tried wearing makeup?" She'd stopped using cosmetics since the allergies. She brushed a leaf out of her hair.

"And don't leave that on the floor," he said, driving. "You know the rule about eating in the car."

She rolled her eyes and sighed deeply. "I wasn't eating a leaf, for goodness sake."

He slowed down at an amber light and frowned. "Same thing. No crumbs, no bits of anything to be cleaned up."

"Oh really! You're so anal!"

The second guy was more of a realist, more practical. His name was Joe Maddigan and he cleaned the windows in her three-storey walk-up. His ladder couldn't reach her top floor unit, so he had to get her phone number to arrange a suitable time to come and clean the outsides of the windows by hanging out on the window ledge. One evening when he'd forgotten to collect his cleaning rags, she'd had to let him in again. He'd said something about missing the last train, so she'd let him stay over—after he'd promised to sleep on the couch. In the end, they'd both slept on the sofa. She'd dated him for a few months, but the thing was, what did they have in common? He was on the outside looking in and she was on the inside looking out.

"There's something I have to ask you," said Penny. "I know there's meant to be a man-drought but I meet plenty of men."

"What are you saying?"

"Are you dating anyone? I'm asking for a reason, I'm not just like Dad was."

Dad. Good old Dad. He couldn't understand why Joanne wasn't married. It brought back painful memories. The smell of urine in the old family house—when he had become decrepit with dementia to the point that their mother had to place him in a home—then two years later, the death of Mother from cancer. We're orphans now, Penny had said.

"I'm dating myself. I take myself to the movies, or out for a walk."

"The reason I'm asking is that I know someone I think you could be interested in," said Penny. "He's a laugh a minute. Fun. Heterosexual. Not currently married. That's about it."

"I don't tend to do things just for fun. I want to come over, sit on your balcony, and watch black swans on the river."

"Well, whatever you like. You can do both. Play it by ear. Don't forget your devil's outfit," said Penny.

"I take those red stockings with me everywhere."

Joanne found a hotel overlooking the jetty, with its row of ferries bound for Rottnest Island. The few scattered shops, cafes and restaurants were set among the road works

that Perth council had promised would transform the area. A woman her own age manned the reception desk. This woman gave her the key to a cheap, old-fashioned room on the top floor. There were a multitude of grimy windows that could keep someone like Joe Maddigan very busy. She brought to mind his soft face and the way his chin gathered into a dimple when he smiled. She'd always been a sucker for young and cute.

How many weeks had it been?

She went for a walk along the marina's boardwalk and then up the steep steps behind the hotel that led to Kings Park and the Botanic Gardens. Bold banksias, boronias and kangaroo paws as she made her way to the top where she could see the city skyline and the Swan River. The western coast was just like she'd remembered it: native orchids, Federation houses, the light of the sun setting into the ocean. What would it be like to live there? She kept herself occupied with the mathematics of what another move would entail, and also with ideas of how to earn money in some different way, a contrast to all the things she'd done before. Working in a shop would be monotonous, but reception could be okay. How much an hour would a hotel receptionist get paid? She wouldn't mind being cut off, living in Australia's most remote city. After all, that's where her sister lived.

A coffee bar overlooked the boardwalk at the hotel, but only one man was there, eating bacon and eggs. A waiter came in from the kitchen with a tea-towel over his arm. He asked Joanne's room number and led her to the bench where the man was sitting. The man had a lean face, a greyish-blond moustache and a downcast look. He glanced up as she approached and moved his newspaper to the side to make room for her. It was open at the sports pages. Like Joe Maddigan, who only looked at the back pages. The man gave her a friendly nod and made a comment about the sunny weather. She smiled back at him, hoping to avoid seeing any fried egg caught between his teeth. She tried to joke about the weather being perfect for all the romantics on Valentine's Day. They exchanged information on things to see and do in Perth. He suggested she catch a ferry to Rottnest Island to see the quokkas. He wouldn't mind going there again himself, if she wanted some company. When he finished his breakfast he stood up and handed her his newspaper. "Just for you," he said with a smile.

"At last!" Penny yelled through the intercom, before the click of the security gate of the block of units. Joanne took the lift to the nineteenth floor where Penny was waiting at the wide open door. Joanne stepped in and hugged her sister close. Twelve-year-old Virginia was lying on the couch in front of the television behind them.

"This is how you do it," Penny said over her shoulder to Virginia.

"She's still not hugging then?" Joanne whispered.

"No. See, Virginia," Penny said louder. "You put your arms around each other, maybe rock from side to side, then a little pat on the back."

"Was she watching us?" asked Joanne. Penny had told her about Virginia's recent aversion to affection. Maybe leaving her friends and school behind had made her resentful.

"Out of the corner of her eye I think."

The apartment was open and light, with a view across the river.

"It's great to see you," said Joanne.

"Say hello to Auntie Joanne."

"Hello darling," Joanne called out to the girl, who mumbled a greeting in return.

"Now, what would you like?" said Penny. "Cup of tea?"

Penny made them tea and a snack—toasted cheese on Turkish—and carried a tray

out to the balcony.

“So how’s life with Henry now he’s home all the time?” asked Joanne.

“To tell you the truth, I’m used to my freedom. None of this coming home in the middle of the day to make lunch.”

Joanne nodded with understanding. “If you’re not working you want to be out playing tennis. Right?”

“Exactly.”

“What is it people say? *I married him for life, not for lunch.* Something like that.”

“Yeah. But the thing is, I worry about Virginia. She’s a real homebody. She doesn’t want to leave the apartment. It’s just so hard to get her out the door.”

“Oh,” said Joanne. “I know how she feels.” She leaned back on the woven-cane couch and stared pensively across the river. It seemed unnatural for a kid to be living up in the air like this, no backyard to kick a ball around in. Although there was the indoor heated lap pool.

Penny sighed. “She comes home from school and just wants to veg out on the couch.”

Joanne sat up and adjusted the cushions behind her back. “What’s wrong with that?” she said, in a firm, maternal way. She rubbed her sister’s arm, gently, as if to reassure her.

“Really? You think that’s okay?” Penny smiled with relief.

“Kids have a lot of pressure on them these days. There’s no harm in unwinding on the sofa, but I find the longer I sit on the couch, the harder it is to get up.” She thought now of herself, solitary in her apartment; of the pesky flies that multiplied like crazy in the holes between the bricks on her terrace, landing on her coffee table, thirsty; of the second toothbrush she kept in the container with the toothpaste in her bathroom, that someone had told her would make trades people think she didn’t live alone.

After lunch Joanne joined her niece on the lounge, leaving Penny to do the final clean-up before the party. *I don’t need your help*, she’d said. *You know how I like to do things my way.* Virginia was playing a game of tennis on the Wii through the television monitor. She had a determined but fine-boned face, and long straight hair. She wore a pink-and-white all-in-one rabbit suit.

“You’re still in your pyjamas?” said Joanne.

“When I got up it was lying on the floor, so I put it on.”

“She doesn’t like getting dressed,” Penny called out from the kitchen.

Sitting on the couch watching Virginia move on from tennis to golf, then tenpin bowling and finally, figure skating, Joanne glanced over at a packet of chocolate mint biscuits on the back of the lounge that Virginia had been munching between games. Joanne stood up and motioned towards the biscuits with raised eyebrows to indicate that she’d like to have one. Virginia, silent, scowled at her aunt then shook her head, “*No.*”

All the same, Joanne felt comforted being there with her sister and niece. When Virginia finished playing on the Wii she picked up the biscuits, took them to her bedroom and closed the door.

Joanne reached inside her bag for her crochet hook and yarn. So this was what she’d become: a woman sitting in front of the television, crocheting.

At the Valentine’s party, about forty people showed up. There were people in organza tutus, genie princesses, belly dancers and schoolboys. There was a cupid carrying a bow and a group of burlesque ballerinas. Penny and Henry were in their heart-lock-

and-key-couples costume. Henry had a huge blow-up gold key hanging around his neck. “Joanne! Long time no see. Sorry I wasn’t here to greet you this afternoon.” After that he went off to take photos of the belly dancers and the ballerinas.

“Is there anything you’d like me to do?” Joanne asked her sister. “You’ve put on a fabulous party. You must be exhausted.” She patted Penny’s shoulder, softly, as if she wished they could go off somewhere, just the two of them.

“Actually, you know what?”

“What?” Joanne adjusted her flashing devil horns in the tangles of her curly hair.

“You know what you can do?” said Penny, arranging slices of eggplant on the grill. “Meet Robert. He’s the bloke I wanted you to meet. When he gets here, make him feel included. He’s a good guy but he’s in recovery from a bitter divorce.”

“Okay,” Joanne sighed. “I’ll do what I can.”

When Robert arrived, he was wearing a light-up red bow-tie and sweetheart-shaped red glasses—cute.

“Joanne, this is Robert,” said Penny.

“Hi,” said Robert reaching out to shake her hand. He stared at the blinking horns on her head. “Very eye-catching!”

Joanne nodded. “Love the glasses,” she said. She looked past him, out the sliding glass doors to the city high-rises reflected in the water; people were making the usual comments: how it looked like a fairyland out there, magic castles in the air. “There’s Peroni out on the terrace, Robert—would you like one?” Joanne asked.

“Sure. I’ll come outside with you.”

They edged past the other guests, passing a schoolboy and the cupid. The sliding door gave way in a rush, and Joanne and Robert stepped out onto the balcony, a little red devil and a spectacled romantic. The air reverberated with cool unpredictability. Joanne found the plastic esky, burrowed into it and salvaged two beers.

“Thanks,” said Robert. His bow-tie sparkled as he twisted open the bottle. “Penny tells me you’re a tutor. Where do you teach?”

“In Wee Waa, New South Wales.”

He looked surprised. “Penny didn’t tell me that bit. I’m a production manager in the film business,” he said. His cheeks were starting to redden, his glasses skew-whiff on his head.

“Do you like it?”

“Yes.” A grin, a lopsided one. “Not much money in freelance though.” He shifted his weight to his other leg. “Are you dating anyone?”

“Now? This minute?”

“Obviously not at this very moment.” He gave her a puzzled look.

Below them a ferry slid in to the old wooden dock with a gentle clunk.

“No. But since living in Wee Waa I’ve dated a tennis coach and a window cleaner,” she said. “Jason and Joe. Things didn’t seem to work out with either of them. What about you?”

He told her about the split-up with his wife and how they’d been trying to have a baby for years. Now his ex-wife was waiting for him to give approval to the laboratory to destroy their unused fertilised eggs. The breeze moistened his eyes.

Joanne looked at him sympathetically. “That’s terrible. What an awful decision to have to make.”

All the time he was talking, she was trying to think what his way of speaking reminded her of. It wasn’t one particular person, although she might have had one or two students in Wee Waa who spoke with the same rhythms, the inflection at the end of a sentence, the dropping of the *g* at the end of a word.

She wished she could think of something else to say. All she could think about was a childless woman like herself somewhere, desperate to implant those eggs.

“Want some nibbles?” Penny edged through the sliding door. She thrust forward a plate of grilled eggplant in one hand and napkins in the other.

“Yum,” said Robert, enthusiastically. He seemed fond of Penny, and put his arm around her shoulder.

“Where’s Virginia?” asked Joanne.

Penny made a face. “In her room. Where else would she be?”

“It must be the adolescent mood swings,” said Joanne.

She remembered when the whole family had been living in Sydney. She would pop in to Penny and Henry’s house every day after work to see her niece. And every weekend too. She adored the little girl. “Go home and start your own family,” Henry would say in irritation.

“You know, I’ll be back in a minute,” Joanne said now.

“Okay,” said Robert, looking perturbed. “If you must.”

Joanne hurried inside, across the lounge room, down the hallway toward Virginia’s bedroom. She knocked gently on the door then walked in. Virginia was sitting in bed, headphones plugged into her ears. Joanne flicked on the light. Virginia looked up and indicated with a lift of her eyelids that it was okay for Joanne to enter.

Joanne leant closer to the girl, put her arms around her, placed her lips on her hair. “Don’t worry; I won’t kiss you. I’m going now. I just came in to say good night.”

Virginia remained silent but gave a little smile.

“See you soon,” Joanne said, before leaving the room.

She closed the door behind her. Maybe she wouldn’t be up to the task of handling a moody child. It might be beyond her capabilities.

Joanne read for half an hour before climbing into bed. Then she went down the hall to the bathroom. It was well past midnight. The rest of the hotel was in darkness. She had left her front door slightly ajar, and returning to her room, she did not turn on the corridor light. The door diagonally opposite was also ajar, and as she was passing she heard someone whisper. She recognised the moustache and long face with tucked-in chin of the man who had given her his newspaper. He was lying on the bed watching her from his dark room and he gestured at her to come in. She ignored him and headed for her own room, shut the door and locked it.

She lay there awake for most of the night. She knew that there was a time when she might have considered walking into that room, and earlier that evening she could have given a signal to Robert. Not so long ago she might have done—or she might not have done, depending on how she felt at the time. Now it felt like an impossibility.

After all, she was in a new and unusual condition.

Her body was holding a secret, a secret she wasn’t going to tell.

*Libby Sommer’s second novel, **The Crystal Ballroom**, parts of which first appeared as stories in **Quadrant**, was published recently by Ginninderra Press. Her third novel, **The Usual Story**, will be published by Ginninderra next year.*

SWEETNESS & LIGHT

TIM BLAIR

A friend once found himself waved by police into a line of cars whose drivers awaited breath-testing. As he'd spent all day at the races enjoying a certain amount of hospitality, this development presented something of a problem.

Thinking quickly, he waited until the officer who'd directed him to join the other cars briefly looked away. And then he adroitly swapped front seats with his young daughter, who had not been drinking. When the officer's gaze returned, he immediately realised what had happened.

A dispute commenced, but my friend held firm. "Oh, no, officer," he said. "I was definitely in the passenger seat the whole time." His voice was calm, betraying no anxiety or annoyance. The officer was livid, but in that era—the early 1980s—he had no recall to any immediate video technology. My friend's daring bluff looked like paying off.

Of course, had he tried that move in 2017 he'd have likely been captured by who knows how many security cameras, mobile phones or whatever other monitoring devices police use in such situations. A few hours later he'd be under arrest and footage of the incident would be trending on social media.

Likewise, bluffing is no longer an option in the one area where it was formerly most prevalent—sport. Cricket was long a playground for the gifted bluffer, who by standing his ground and appearing unconcerned might sometimes convince an umpire that he somehow hadn't hit the ball directly into the hands of a fieldsman. Similarly, a fielding team's feigned excitement might persuade an umpire that a batsman who'd swung and missed actually struck the ball with the very centre of his bat.

At senior levels, cricket now permits video reviews. The bluff is becoming increasingly redundant.

But that is not to say it is disappearing altogether. Bluffing has simply shifted to other pursuits. Former Australian Human Rights Commissioner Gillian Triggs, for example, has lately raised the art of the bluff to entirely new levels. We've all seen her appearances before various Senate committees and all read the detailed accounts of her mistaken and inaccurate claims. Yet Triggs stepped down from

her role still insisting she was absolutely in the right throughout her entire ridiculous presidency.

During a valedictory interview on the ABC, Triggs said of evidence that she had been a little imprecise when answering Senate inquiries: "To a high degree the allegations are false." Is that not the most beautiful legalistic evasion you've ever heard? Imagine if my mate had tried the same line with the copper who'd pulled him over all those decades ago. Matters may well, as they say, have quickly escalated.

The key to successful bluffing is consistency, which is why soccer players who dive for penalties and fake agonising pain only to instantly recover the moment the penalty is awarded are so widely mocked. Behaving consistently, they wouldn't be taking a free shot at goal. They'd be in a trauma ward preparing for surgery to repair a compound leg fracture.

In 2014, I inadvertently created a consistency test for Australia's screechy feminist community by publishing an online poll asking readers to vote for the nation's "craziest left-wing frightbat". Reaction was wonderfully hysterical. In the manner of a soccer player's penalty play-acting, feminists dived for the ground in fits of pain. Apparently the word *frightbat* represented the gravest attack ever made against our delicate sisterhood.

Twitter erupted with demands I be fired from my job at the *Daily Telegraph*. The ABC actually ran a grimly serious news item on the poll. Multiple complaints, several from ABC staffers, were sent to the Australian Press Council. And then there were several of the nominated frightbats themselves, wailing and howling like common Euro kicky-ball exponents who'd just been gently nudged by a goalkeeper.

Probably the finest response came from Fairfax columnist and journalism lecturer Jenna Price. "I got the phone call about 6pm on Tuesday night," she wrote. "Mum," said the voice. "Mum, are you OK?" This breathless account ran beneath the headline: "What It's Like to Be Called a Frightbat".

Controversy ran for some months, culminating in a Sydney Opera House discussion among three

frightbats who told a horrified paying audience of their poll ordeal. One of them seemed almost on the point of tears. It was a beautiful moment.

Given the language frequently used on social media by these characters, it was a little difficult to believe that a literally meaningless term like *frightbat* had caused genuine offence. I suspected my frightbat friends were bluffing, just as a fielding cricket team will attempt to bluff an umpire with a dodgy appeal; it seemed they were using a false premise in order to remove an opponent from the field of play.

So the next year, on the anniversary of the first frightbat poll, I ran another one. The format was identical, and several previous nominees were again featured. This time the response was ... silence. They knew they'd had their chance in 2014. All of that feigned outrage didn't work, and now they'd given up.

The frightbat poll remains an annual staple at my *Daily Telegraph* site. This year's contest, by the way, is a thrilling battle for frightbat supremacy between Yassmin Abdel-Magied (15,437 votes at the time of writing) and Waleed Aly (14,534). Overall, some 50,000 votes have been cast—around 20,000 more than were cast in the first contentious poll three years ago.

Anyway, let's return to my friend's standoff with police. After the officer realised he had no way of proving there had been a driver swap, he grudgingly breath-tested the young female driver (she passed) and had a final word with her father. "I know you did it," he snarled. "I can't do anything about it, but I know you did it. Now get out of here."

The car didn't move. "Go on," the furious officer repeated. "Get moving!" But the car remained immobile.

And then the driver, several inches shorter than her dad, reached below the seat, found the lever that would allow it to be shifted, and began nudging the seat forward so she could reach the pedals ...

Imagine, for a moment, there was no ABC and never had been an ABC.

For a start, Atenolol sales would plummet. But there is always the possibility that, in the absence of the ABC, someone might propose its creation. Picture the scene inside the Prime Minister's office as one of his enthusiastic moderates bursts in with a great big idea:

Christopher: Boss! Boss! I've got it! The key to defining your era! The way to make your mark on Australia!

Turnbull (looking up wearily from the latest Newspoll): What is it now, Chris? Another South

Australian subs-for-the-dole scheme?

Christopher: Even better! Now, you know how we have all of these media outlets, right? News Corp, Fairfax, Nine ...

Turnbull: ... Seven West Media, Ten, Bauer ...

Christopher: ... and then there's all the online media: The Guardian, Crikey, access to every global title, social media. It goes on and on. But here's my idea—why don't we fund a massive media organisation ourselves?

Turnbull: What?

Christopher: Just think about it! The government could fund a gigantic media colossus spanning television, radio and the internet. It would be the largest media business in the nation. Multiple stations! Multiple platforms! Offices and studios in every capital and throughout the regions! (*Christopher swoons slightly and grabs a chair for support.*) We could have that guy from Channel 31, you know, the one who hosts *Snow Cone Tone's Junior Aussie Puzzle Time* on Wednesday afternoons. He could present a flagship panel program!

Turnbull (slowly removing his glasses): Christopher, do have any idea, any idea at all, how much this idea of yours would cost?

Christopher: Yes, boss! We can get the whole operation running for just ... (*he consults a piece of paper*) ... for just \$1 billion. Bargain!

Turnbull: You want us to give away \$1 billion when we're already billions in debt. Christopher, we don't have a spare billion.

Christopher: Actually, it would be \$1 billion every single year. Nearly \$1.5 billion if we add a multicultural component.

Turnbull (following a prolonged, intense silence): Mate, are you out of your tiny Adelaide mind? Australia has never had a more diverse media. It's everywhere, delivering information from every possible angle. Christopher, the *New York Times* has just opened an office here.

Christopher: But that's just it, boss. Our organisation wouldn't be anything like the others. We could draw up a charter requiring, by law, that it be balanced. Equal time for Left and Right! Just imagine how Australia's political discussions would be elevated by an atmosphere allowing for absolutely no bias at all. Why, it'd be like the Enlightenment, except even more visionary and beautiful.

Turnbull (pensively): But would anyone watch it?

Christopher: Why, of course they would! Well, just so long as we bought every series of *Midsomer Murders*.

Turnbull: I'll think about it. Now get out of my office. And for the love of God, please put on some pants.

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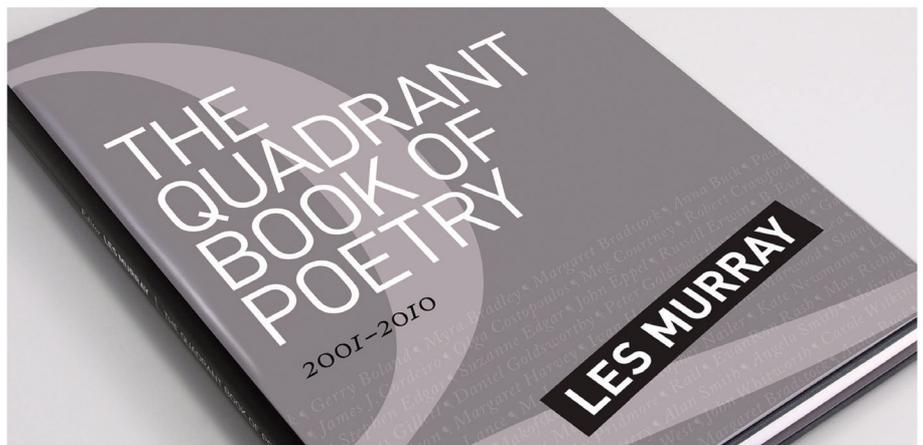


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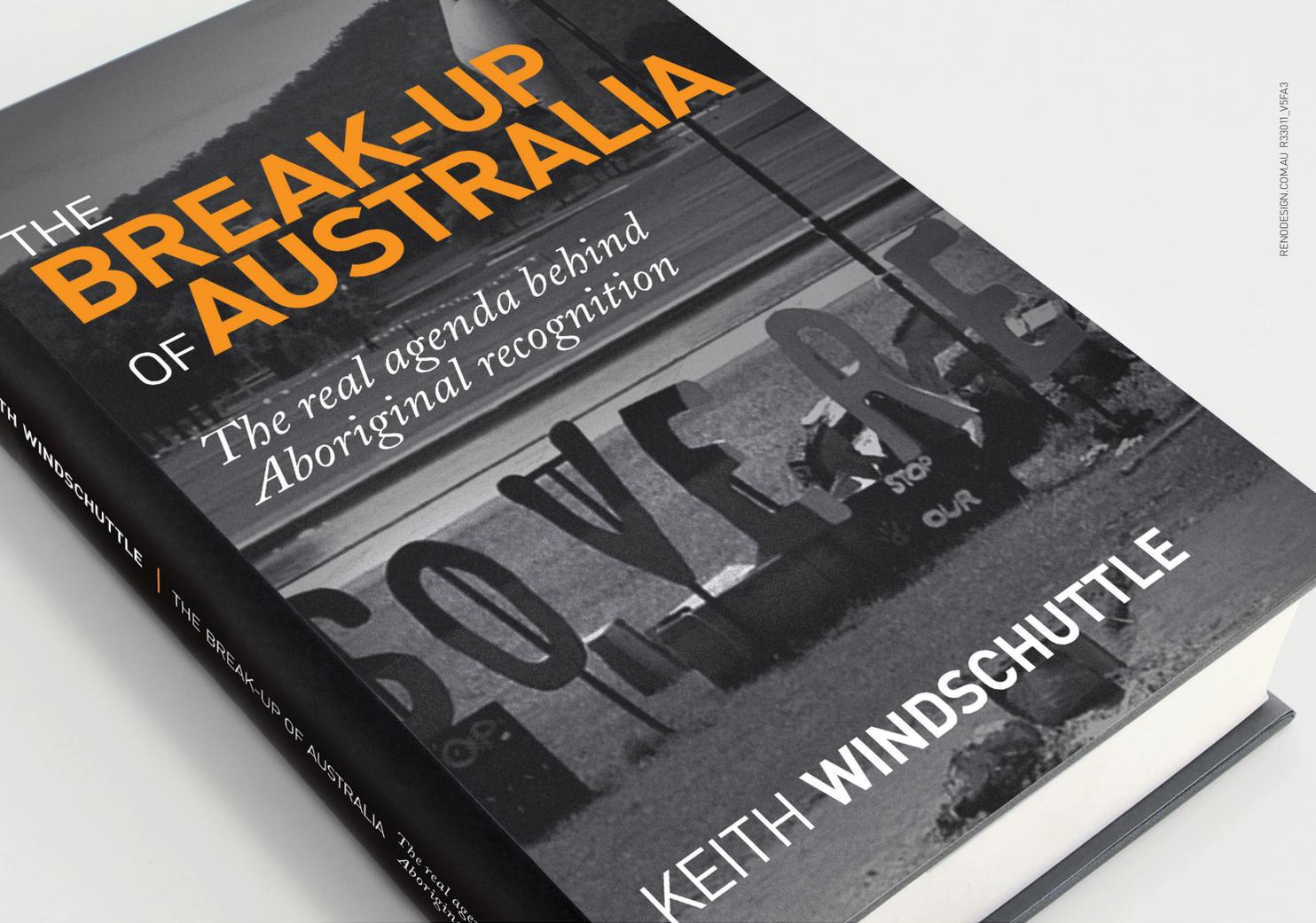
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