

Turnbull lacks Cameron's wit *Piers Akerman* / Drinks with Nigel Farage? *Laura Jayes*

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THE SPECTATOR AUSTRALIA

DISHLICHER'S DIARY
LUKE FOLEY

THE AGE HOAX
NEIL BROWN

PYNE'S COMEDY
DAVID FLINT



THE WEST IS HISTORY

**CIVILISATION IS DOOMED BY THE ELITES,
SAYS MICHAEL BUHAGIAR**

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THE SPECTATOR AUSTRALIA

Muslim immigration

The outrage over the on-air comments of Channel Nine's Sonia Kruger, in which she called for an end to Muslim immigration to Australia and was thus roundly condemned as 'racist', a 'bigot' and far worse, naturally misses the point.

Ms Kruger's comments had little to do with race or religion, or even culture, but everything to do with 'feeling safe'. Over the last year in particular, Islamist terrorists have managed to achieve what was once unthinkable: a never ending parade of ghoulish horrors in which everyday families and citizens engaging in fun, harmless, and apolitical activities find themselves butchered in the most brutal and savage means possible. Whether watching a rock concert, going to the footy, taking the kids to the fireworks, hopping on a train, or simply having a hot chocolate in a café, no citizen in the West can any longer feel certain that they will make it home in one piece.

So what to do?

The inquest into the at times seemingly shambolic police response to Sydney's Lindt Café siege and murders gives little cause for reassurance. When a senior officer comes out with a comment like 'terrorists have rights too' it is little wonder that the average citizen is nervous and suspicious about not only the ability but also the will of our supposed law enforcers and authorities to protect us. When our Prime Minister

chooses to celebrate dinner with a group of Islamic homophobic hate preachers only days after the butchery at the gay nightclub in Orlando, it is little wonder that the average citizen has next to no faith in our political class to seriously confront the vexed issues at stake.

As Andrew Bolt pointed out in the *Herald Sun*, and as Ms Kruger reiterated, the empirical evidence of the link between large-scale Islamic immigration and terror is inescapable.

Again: so what to do?

In a nutshell, there are only two responses. One, popular with the Left, is to simply accept the fact of terrorism (blame it on the West, natch) and live with the mathematical chances that hopefully it won't be you or your loved ones who next get beheaded, run over, stabbed or raped. At the same time, rely on government and law enforcers to 'deradicalise' or thwart the actions of any jihadists they happen upon. This is the preferred approach of Hollande, Obama, Merkel and (philosophically) Turnbull, Shorten, Clinton *et al.* For reasons that only the French could find logical, Hollande also believes that flexing his military muscles in Syria and Iraq is the key to keeping his people safe. Running up the white flag, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls proclaimed 'times have changed, and France is going to have to live with terrorism.'

Our own Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, made the ludicrous comment only hours after Nice that she hoped this would

be the last such outrage. This can best be summed up as the 'keep your fingers crossed' approach to terrorism.

The other response is to try and put up some kind of physical barrier between the Islamists and ourselves. This is the instinctive approach of Netanyahu, Trump, Abbott (who stopped the boats and mooted prioritising Christian Syrian refugees), some Balkan states and, in a more abstract way, those who voted for Brexit.

Between these two extremes, acceptance or barrier, a solution will inevitably be found; not so much because our political class are looking for it but because our citizens – as epitomised by Ms Kruger – will demand it.

So again: what to do?

As Gary Johns wrote in the *Australian*, 'With respect to the ban, the problem arises as to how to know, in advance, whether extremism comes from only the fundamentalists or those who cannot reconcile Islam with modernity and, indeed, who they are.'

At some point, an Australian government will have to make tough choices about how to solve this conundrum. Whether through imposing a geographical, or cultural, or religious, or educational filter upon our immigration intake, there will have to be a formula that succeeds in separating quality migrants from those individuals who may potentially import the deadly ideology and practices of Islamism.

Strong Flat White

Readers are invited to fill in the long gaps between drinks, er, issues by clicking onto *Flat White*, part of our new website, at www.spectator.com.au

(google Spectator Australia.) There you'll find additional thought-provoking articles and commentary under the editorship of Christian Kerr, from the tal-

ented pens of Terry Barnes, Trisha Jha, John Slater, Michael Potter and many others. Indeed, you may even feel like contributing yourself.



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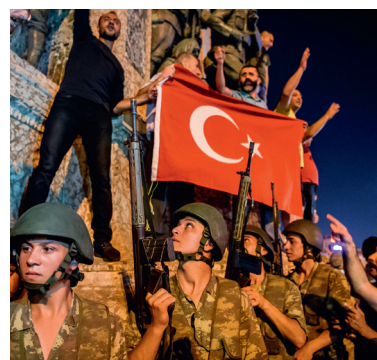
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BROWN STUDY

Neil Brown



Brown study, n, a mood of deep absorption or thoughtfulness; reverie

Melbourne is rejoicing today in a wonderful literary hoax that rivals the 1943 publication in *Angry Penguins* of the spoof poems of Ern Malley. This harmless prank has revived, for a brief and glorious few days, the ancient art of parody and debunked the pretensions of hipster and high fashionista Melbourne and its loyal muse, the *Age*. But best of all, it showed that the real success of parody is to hit your target and, boy, the authors of this gem certainly scored a bullseye when the *Age* swallowed an entire journalistic and photographic presentation without question. Better still, when it realised days after everyone else that it had been stung and had made a complete fool of itself, it lashed out with furious rage and succeeded in the even more difficult task of making a parody of itself.

It all started with Tara Kenny, a freelance writer who does a column for the *Age* called *Street Seen* which depicts the quirky ups and downs of hipster dress and style in Melbourne. Tara got together with her buddy Sam Hains, and between them they created the character 'Samuel Davide Hains', 'web developer, mystery blogger and jazz kitten', dressed him in high hipster couture and concocted a mock-serious interview that delved into the profound sources of his philosophy and lifestyle. Young Sam got toggled up in blue Osh Kosh B'Gosh overalls that, as he disclosed to Tara, 'I found in Tokyo', but which were really from K-Mart, put them on back to front, added a black turtleneck jumper from Uniqlo, a raffish beret 'given to me by my dear uncle' and a Feeling Myself tote bag 'by my favourite feminist provocateurs Ladies of Leisure' and, lo and behold, Melbourne Man was born (he already had the beard). Tara had Sam describe himself as a 'bucolic socialist with improvised elements (like jazz)', admiring 'the style of Trotsky in leather, Albert Einstein, John Coltrane' and adding that he liked mixing K-Mart basics with his Chanel cape, but would never be caught dead in 'neo-hippie bush-doof couture', a 'small inefficient beanie' or 'anything less than extraordinary'. His dress style: 'Sometimes I just wear something random, like a lab coat!' Then,

this gem: 'I'm not only inspired by people, but places and ideas. I spend a lot of time down at the docks and source inspiration from the architecture.' It was obvious from beginning to end that it was a good natured spoof or parody, as it took hold of reality, gave it a good shake and made fun of it.

Tara submitted her piece to the *Age*, which rushed to judgement that here was, not a spoof or a parody, but a literally true picture of radical chic Melbourne couture and life and that the world deserved to see it. Taking the bait, it gave Tara's creation half of the front page, complete with the grandiose headline 'Meet Melbourne Man' and a mischievous photo of Sam in a typically grungy lane. With a



sense of taking part in history in the making, it then profoundly observed that in a week when 'Australia's political fate is on a knife edge, Hains may be the antihero the country, nay, the world, needs.' Phew!

As I read this over my kale and goats cheese omelette and tumeric latte, I was

thrilled that the *Age* had rediscovered its long lost sense of humour and was presenting us with its own brilliant parody of hipster Melbourne, skilfully placed as news on the front page. I could see through it all and that it was a spoof. And so could everyone else who read it. But not, apparently, the *Age*. After subjecting Tara to some heavy cross examination, as anything humorous in the *Age* is instantly suspect and calls for an explanation, it dawned on it that the whole thing was invented, and a wicked lie. It then became slowly and painfully obvious that the *Age* was not the perpetrator of an hilarious parody, as I had fondly hoped, but its victim.

Its response was furious. Goodbye parody, satire and humour; hullo pompous condemnation and retribution. It was outraged that a journalist had 'concocted' this gross deception, promptly branded her in public as a 'liar' and a 'fraud' and sacked her - all for writing a parody which had worked. It was as if the *Age* had just discovered *Gulliver's Travels*, condemned it as an attack on dwarfs and called for Jonathon Swift to be sent to the Human Rights Commission for punishment.

And that is the really sad part and it explains why the *Age* is dying. This once great newspaper is now so dull, so pedestrian, so devoid of life and humour, so enthralled by its pet left-wing causes and the rigid discipline of political correctness, that it does not realise there is such a thing as parody or, worse still, that it is now a parody of itself in its pompous outrage, branding anyone it disagrees with as a racist, a denier or a Hansonite. That is why it could not understand, and never will, that Tara and Sam had given it a gem of a parody. It is not often you get the chance to write an epitaph for a dying newspaper. So to mark the death of the *Age*, here is one from me:

This is the way the *Age* ends
This is the way the *Age* ends
This is the way the *Age* ends
Not with a bang but a yawn.

DIARY

Piers Akerman

Boarding QF1 three days after the federal election with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's shredded Liberals still pondering his bizarre election night address to arrive in London as Prime Minister David Cameron made his witty self-effacing abdication speech to the Commons was to witness an extraordinary contrast between the two egos. Turnbull came off second best. His ill-favoured midnight fulminations revealed a petty man obsessed with the *picayune* and unable to engage in the self-examination essential to the civilised soul. His audience hope no doubt that time will erase all memory of his self-absorbed raving. Cameron's generosity of spirit, his humour, will be long remembered and those who were present will regard themselves fortunate to have been party to such a quintessentially British moment.

Of course, he managed to be self-effacing where Turnbull just seemed self-important and it was to cheers and a standing ovation that he finished with a reference to his memorable jibe at Tony Blair during his first Prime Minister's Questions appearance in 2005, when the now exiting PM said: 'Nothing is really impossible if you put your mind to it. After all – as I once said – I was the future once.'

Cameron was humble and humorous, both attributes absent in Turnbull. Australia unwillingly was subjected to an excruciating election it did not want, it endured a campaign that was unintelligible and lost the Liberal Party votes, not that Turnbull associated himself with the Liberal Party – he created his own brand, an act which effectively distanced much of the core of the party from his presidential clique.

Brexit, which brought Cameron down, was a similar own goal but Cameron managed the aftermath with sufficient wit and charm to have both his supporters and opponents giving him a standing ovation.

Turnbull learnt nothing and his appointment of a bloated Cabinet



shows he is incapable of learning. Trying to cloak the blow the Liberal party received behind the claim that his is the first conservative government re-elected since 2004 is a shallow contrivance. His party is only in government because of the strength of its Coalition partner, the Nationals.

The incoming British PM, Theresa May, showed the same grace as Cameron when her only real rival for the job, Andrea Leadsom, cast aspersions on her lack of children. It was not the most graceless of Leadsom's utterances but probably the most revealing and forced her exit from the race. Brexit distracted from the release of the Chilcott report into the deployment of UK troops to Iraq, despite Blair's bumbling remarks. Former Australian Prime Minister John Howard again demonstrated how a leader should respond to such inquiries with his accurate observations on the realities as they were presented at the time the decision to go in was made. To the disappointment of *Guardian* and *Independent* readers, Chilcott was defunct even as it was released.

Unusually, it didn't rain in London, and despite the doomsayers, the country didn't collapse in the wake of Brexit, in fact, it seems little will change for some time though Europe has been put on notice that the people are tired of being told how they should think by unelected bureaucrats in Brussels.

After a speedy Chunnel trip to Calais to spend time with cousins in *la France profonde*, it was heartening to hear stolid farmers with roots deep into Picardy and Normandy talking of their loathing of *les*

fonctionnaires and fondness for more *régulées*. If they could they would launch a *Frexit immédiatement*. Francois Hollande's popularity is around 16 per cent, there is no front runner to replace him in next year's election though there are rumblings about the minister for the economy, Emmanuel Macron, a former merchant banker and *naturellement*, a socialist.

On Bastille Day, tanks rattled through the intersections toward the Place de Concorde for the parade as we taxied to Montparnasse station and the TGV bound for Bordeaux. Much later that night we learnt of the maniacal attack on families attending the July 14 fireworks in Nice. Not as many leaders trotted out the now familiar line 'this has nothing to do with Islam', in the aftermath as Isis claimed credit for the savagery.

No doubt the inquiry will ask how a giant freezer truck was permitted to remain parked so close to an area which was going to be packed with defenceless civilians, and why there were no barriers or gates which would have reduced the numbers in its path when the killer launched it into the helpless crowd. At least the horror of this attack seems to have stalled the annual ritual of car burnings in the *banlieues* but there is everywhere evidence of the impact the fear of terrorism has caused in France.

Popular tourist destinations such as Notre Dame are almost deserted. The square before the cathedral, usually jammed with a snaking line of patient pilgrims, has a handful of people waiting to view the interior. There are fewer buskers and more police. Notably absent are the American tour groups and the Chinese.

The breezes still blow along the Seine, as they do here down here on the terrace beside the Vézère, and as they did after the last Ice Age before the creative and peaceful Neanderthal population declined with the arrival of Cro Magnon.

The barbarism, it seems, is a comparatively recent phenomenon.

AUX BIEN PENSANTS

David Flint

There is a disturbingly authoritarian trend in Australia, an insistence that out-of-touch politicians know best. Decisions are made reducing or even taking away the savings, businesses and property of law-abiding, tax-paying Australians without free and open discussion and without those targeted having any genuine chance to make their case and have it seriously considered. And without the people being able to review those decisions. Had this been done in relation to superannuation, it would have been realised that a solution to the alleged problem had been found years ago, and as polling confirmed, proceeding like thieves in the night would destroy the trust that people of all ages had that governments would never stoop to using superannuation as a money bank. Had this been done in relation to greyhound racing, errors in the McHugh report would have been exposed, reforms put in place and law-abiding peoples' rights not be taken away. Had this been done in relation to stopping live cattle exports, subsidising foreign owned wind farms, imposing native vegetation or water controls, imposing mining onto prime agricultural land or separating water rights from the land, the lives of so many farmers would not have been ruined. Had this been done in relation to NSW Council amalgamations and the secret KPMG report released, the suspicion that this is being rammed through to advantage power-brokers' clients would be negated. Had the Treasurer raised the backpacker tax in a country pub, and after farmers stopped rolling on the floor with mirth, he would have learned the obvious – like the mining tax, it would produce next-to-nothing.

As they survey the destruction wrought by their double dissolution, Malcolm Turnbull and Christopher Pyne should develop a vaudeville act about their 'victory'. This could include a ditty about the \$50 billion on obsolete submarines which won't even be ready for the 2045 centenary of V-J Day but which didn't save Mayo.

This could include Mark Textor's insult that conservatives have nowhere else to go. And just imagine the mirth when they mention that Turnbull was forced to copy Clive Palmer and stump up millions for election advertisements because Liberal Party members, fed up with what they saw as his treachery, had firmly closed their wallets. Recalling his 1999 republican ads which helped the No case, the audience would be rolling in the aisles when reminded that these ads told Australians not to vote for Pauline Hanson. Her vote shot up.

Because it came without any deaths or even violence and through the votes of the people, the achievement of our Federation is still unparalleled in world history. This was because colonial society was then exceptionally sophisticated politically, while Sir John Quick worked out how to take the process out of the hands of the warring politicians and give it to the people. His Corowa plan for an elected convention drafting a constitution which would then be voted on by the people worked superbly. Every school student (and every immigrant) should know how remarkable this was, as well as the fact that this is the only continent in the world not to have known slavery. But they don't, no doubt because there isn't enough time between learning about the 1788 'invasion' to establish a 'British gulag' and that Marxist programme about gender fluidity, penis tucking and breast binding.

At the last Premiers' Conference, known by the hideous acronym, COAG, Turnbull put off for years any chance of restoring the Federation as the Constitution intended. Although this would have ensured better governance and a significant increase in GDP, the commentariat played down this disaster by their protégé; pretending it was nothing compared with that harmless knighthood or Bronwyn's helicopter flight. There's still hope. One organisation still seriously campaigns for the restoration of our federation, the Samuel Griffith Society. With speakers including Tony Abbott and James Allan they're holding their annual conference in Adelaide, 13-15 August. It promises to be one of their best.

The founders borrowed the Swiss referendum so that the people – and not just the politicians – would have to approve any constitutional change. South Australian Premier Kingston wanted to go further with citizen-initiated referendums allowed on any new legislation. Clearly the Constitution must mean what reasonable people intended it to mean at the time it was adopted. Otherwise we'd be signing a blank cheque to activist judges. The danger can be seen in the 1857 US Supreme Court Dred Scott decision which found the Constitution upheld slavery. It was a catalyst for the civil war. All this is relevant today. The much maligned Pauline Hanson points out that rather than a non-binding plebiscite on same-sex marriage, we should have a referendum. She is right. Until changed by a referendum, 'marriage' in the constitution obviously still means what it meant when the constitution was adopted. In the meantime, a campaign is being waged to stop the people having any say on this. Wasting money, they say. But they don't worry about the fortune that is wasted on disability pensions for *jihadists* and the able-bodied, or to fund polygamous marriages. Nor the billions filched from the defence budget to buy votes, or the billions spent to stop the global warming that stopped years ago. Every year the Swiss vote in several referendums including those they initiate. The result is Swiss politicians are not some privileged class hypocritically endowed with enormous CO2 footprints, as well as vast staffs and sumptuous offices operating from some distant Versailles. Swiss politicians are mostly part-time, low paid and without separate gold-plated superannuation and health schemes, accountable to the people all of the time and not just in confected elections with candidates too often chosen not on merit but for their allegiance to some powerbroker. And although they're not sitting on vast mineral wealth, Switzerland's GDP per head is about 25 per cent higher than Australia's. I'd say that's because decision making is not the preserve of the elites but is in the hands of the rank and file.

BREXIT NOTES

Laura Jayes

On Friday night a week before election day, we are all complacent about #Auspoll and fascinated by #brexit. Everyone but Bill Shorten, it seems, thinks Malcolm Turnbull is going to win. So all eyes are on the UK - they've just voted to leave the EU, David Cameron is stepping down and Boris Johnson has been touted as his successor.

Within hours I am at the airport on my way to London, enjoying the only five consecutive hours of uninterrupted sleep I will get over the next week. In-flight wifi proves a rude awakening. What happened to the glorious peace of being uncontactable whilst on a flight!?

We land at Heathrow at 9.30pm - greeted by a late London summer sunset full of the promise of Pimms and lemonade on the Thames. But nothing says reality like a phone call from the Commonwealth Bank informing you that some dodgy character has skimmed three grand out of your account whilst you were enjoying a small screen movie marathon. (Has anyone seen the movie *Legend* with Tom Hardy - is he not the best looking man you've ever seen? The East London accent and his penchant for a good suit and a tie bar? Amen! But I digress.)

Yet to check-in or offload my luggage, I'm straight to the CNN studio until 3 am. My head hits the pillow for a few hours then up again at 6am for *PM Agenda* and hosting my show *The Latest* out of Westminster. It feels like the world's media is jammed onto a patch of grass barely the size of a football field. Some of the more ambitious, recognisable, and relevant MPs make their way across the road for various interviews at all hours of the day and night.

The UK press is vastly different to ours. British TV is very conservative (nothing like their sensationalist tabloid cousins) and senior reporters are the top dogs and want to see the hierarchy observed. British television's own little aristocratic clique! Suffice to say no one is interested in friendly banter with an unknown reporter from Australia. So how do I work out who some of these 650 MP's are? The best way is bluffing... or 'blagging' my way through. I find a



familiar face in Nine's Tom Steinfert - he's a good mate and I trust him. So, after a few hours of live crosses, Tom runs over, sympathetic to my need to get some cracking guest on my show, and says 'see this guy in the trench coat? I don't know his name but he's just done an interview with Bloomberg and he's very good. He's an ex-staffer for the Tories'.

Acting on that intel, I go for the intercept. 'Excuse me Sir, my name is Laura from Sky News Australia. Sorry, I just saw you on Bloomberg (lie). Forgive me, who did you used to work for?' Stares blankly, signs of contempt quickly spread across his face. Replies 'Do you want to start again?'. I think, no, not really. But I've obviously bruised his ego. So I smile and mumble something about jet lag and being from Australia. After a long awkward moment he says 'I didn't work for anyone. I was the Foreign Secretary. Maybe you should do your homework'. And with that he is gone.

Over the coming days I speak to some familiar faces - no strangers to leadership instability themselves, John McTernan and Mike Rann are both back in the thick of it. McTernan who worked for Tony Blair and Julia Gillard has some choice advice for Jeremy Corbyn, who is holding on by the skin of his teeth, despite most of his party lambasting him in the press and in private - Monty Python's Black Knight indeed. Mike Rann, former Australian High Commissioner, departs from all diplomatic language as he describes Brexiters as 'deserters and cowards... a proxy vote to stage a Tory leadership coup... the electorate was manipulated into voting on what was really a dog whistle about race.' Right. My days roll on in a cycle of three to four hours sleep, live crosses, interviews with various characters pushing their barrows with the odd glimpse of naked unspun truth. In my sleep-

deprived, jet-lagged, adrenaline-driven haze, I come to a crossroad. I can either use my spare three hours a day to catch up on sleep or I can reacquaint myself with the London I love. I choose the latter, carefully mapping out my minutes window shopping down Sloane St., en route to my happy place - Harrods for champagne and oysters. An absurd indulgence and a world away from my days pulling pints at the Marylebone Tip for 6 quid an hour. My body doesn't know what time of day it is - it even seems somehow normal to have a glass of Pinot Noir at 10.30 am wrapped in a terry towelling robe.

My week is coming to an end and my requests for interviews with Boris Johnson, David Cameron and Sadiq Khan have been politely declined. My bags are packed, when I get a call from a guy called Gawain (no, not a typo). With a name like Gawain, he could only work for Nigel Farage.

Boris Johnson has just pulled out of the race for the Tory leadership, having been undermined by Michael Gove. Nigel Farage has just returned from giving the European Council one of the best ever 'I told you so' sprays. He isn't speaking to any of the British press but he'll speak to me. I have an hour to get to his office. Compared to the barely-lived-in surroundings of his office, the Ukip leader is splendidly sartorial, with the gritty charm of a man who obviously enjoys a good drink and a smoke. Respect. Declining the offer of a drink I make my way out of the office, only to bump into Liz Hayes from *60 Minutes*. Nothing kills off an 'Exclusive' like the presence of a rival network. And with that, I too, was Brexiting. On my way home in time for election day, back to relative political stability; where the PM expects to be returned with a sizeable majority and a clear mandate, the electorate rewarding the genius of an early double dissolution election and allowing the PM to pull dissident conservatives into line.

Assumption the mother of all....

Laura Jayes is anchor of 'The Latest with Laura Jayes' on Sky News Live

DISHLICKEER'S DIARY

Luke Foley

Mr Tom, pet greyhound of Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia (1762-96), shared a bed with her lover, the colossal Grigory Potemkin. The greyhound was one of the best loved animals among the royalty and nobility of Europe for centuries, as hundreds of portraits in the great galleries and houses of Britain and Europe attest. The greyhound is an ancient and intelligent breed of dog, almost unique in its man-made evolution for our own purposes – and that, I believe, is what gives us a special moral responsibility for its welfare and preservation.

There is nothing inherently cruel in greyhound racing as such. Any failure to stamp out acts of cruelty is a failure of government responsibility for proper laws, regulations, supervision and the provision of adequate resources to ensure animal welfare. Rather than improving the regulation of the greyhound racing industry in New South Wales, Premier Mike Baird's Liberal/Nationals government will outlaw it altogether, a tyrannical response masquerading as a humane gesture.

I pass up an invitation to the State of Origin at ANZ Stadium in favour of a night at the Grafton Dogs. I want to express my solidarity with the good men and women whose love for their greyhounds dominates every day of their lives. It is an honour to be called on to make the presentation to the owners of Major Jackpot, winner of the prestigious Village Green Sprinters Cup Final (first prize \$7,000). Local husband and wife duo Robert and Tammy confide that they don't know what they will do when their shared passion - training and racing their greyhounds - is made illegal.

Ask liberals and conservatives what it is that unites them under the banner of the Liberal Party and invariably they will tell you of their shared commitment to freedom. Yet a Liberal Premier leads an administration that will criminalise a whole sport and industry. Mr Baird has chosen to demonise and make pariahs of an entire group of our fellow citizens, those who own and race greyhounds.



Courtney Houssos, Luke Foley, Sandra & Christopher Spratt, Trent Gilbert with greyhound Ivy (Nangar Miss) at the Grafton Greyhound Racing track

There is an unmistakable whiff of class prejudice in all this. For generations, dog racing has been a working man's sport, part of a culture that is dwindling in the face of the immense changes inevitably taking place in our way of life. The greyhound may not be as popular in Balgowlah as in Blacktown, but outlawing a sport that provides a livelihood to thousands and enjoyment to many tens of thousands of our state's citizens is an arrogant, cruel, irresponsible and unnecessary decision.

The Labor Party has won a majority of House of Representatives seats in New South Wales. Forgive me for mentioning this, but it has been quite a while between drinks. Nine years to be precise. Those years were best described as character building for those of us flying the NSW Labor flag. Five straight elections across federal, state and local tiers of government delivered us results that ranged between sound beatings and a massacre unprecedented in Australian electoral history. Credit for the NSW Labor revival on July 2 goes firstly to a Victorian.

The experts had agreed that in Australia's largest city Bill Shorten would not hold a candle to Malcolm Turnbull, supposedly the embodiment of modern, upwardly-mobile Sydney. Yet over the last year Shorten bobbed up everywhere here. He would spend weekends in Sydney in between parliamentary sitting weeks in the national capital. He made himself known in many suburbs of western Sydney by just constantly turning up. Shorten's striving contrasted with Turnbull's

insouciance. On the morning of July 2 Bill phoned me - from a polling place in Lindsay. The seat fell to Labor later that night, as did two other western Sydney seats.

On Turnbull's home turf of Sydney's eastern suburbs, Labor's member for Kingsford Smith Matt Thistlethwaite recorded a swing in his favour of over six per cent. The major local issue was the destruction of grand old trees around Centennial and Moore Parks by the state government. For months Thistlethwaite has fought to save the historic fig trees. Throughout the federal campaign, and since, much has been made of state government decisions concerning volunteer firefighters in Victoria. Comparatively little analysis has dwelt on state factors north of the Murray. Mr Baird's forced local government mergers and mass sackings of elected mayors and councillors played a significant role in Labor's wins in the regional NSW seats of Eden Monaro and Paterson. The failure to deliver more than one million dollars for a promised \$380 million upgrade to the overstretched Nepean Hospital in outer western Sydney was crucial to Labor's upset win in Lindsay.

Grafton Cup Day, the biggest day of the year for the communities of the Clarence River Valley. A half day public holiday sees almost half the population of the Jacaranda City head to the track to watch the horses. I regard my attendance as a duty far from onerous. Twelve months ago here I chatted convivially with Prime Minister Tony Abbott, who went down well with the punters at the track. Bob Hawke was a Grafton Cup regular throughout his prime ministerial years. It's hard to picture Malcolm Turnbull - or Mike Baird - fraternising a country racing carnival.

At the horse races the topic on everyone's lips is Mr Baird's dishlicker debacle. Across the afternoon hordes of locals approach me, incredulous at the ban. This is National Party heartland. The Nats alliance with the Greens and Mike Baird to wipe out this traditional Australian industry will not be quickly forgotten.

Decline of the West, a hundred years on

The 'parasitical, contemptuous city dweller'? We've seen him before

MICHAEL BUHAGIAR

The first volume of Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*) was published in 1918, followed by the second volume in 1922. It caused a sensation at the time. Spengler's thesis is that all great cultures have direction – that is, that they bud and bloom and then die. The image suggested by the word *Untergang* ('undergoing') is of a ship sinking slowly and inexorably beneath the waters. Spengler argued that the decline into moribundity begins when culture is succeeded by civilisation – that is, when the megalopolis, with its commercial, materialistic and anti-religious values, triumphs over the town. He saw the Great War as marking this point for the West. As the centenary of the first appearance of *Untergang* approaches, it might be worth enquiring as to whether the symptoms of decline may have got worse, the signs more monstrous.

This subject deserves a book of its own; but perhaps we can isolate some features that may cast some light on contemporary issues in Australia. The succession of Greece by Rome was for the Classical culture what the Great War is to the Western. Spengler said about such transitions that:

In place of a world, there is a city, a point, in which the whole life of broad regions is collecting while the rest dries up ... [there is] the parasitical city dweller, traditionless, utterly matter-of-fact, religionless, clever, unfruitful, deeply contemptuous of the countryman ...

I suggest that this might be a useful lens through which to view the dichotomy of Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull: the former, the yobbo from beyond the pale, as crudely caricatured by the usual suspects; the latter, the city man whose will, being that of the megalopolis, has brought him success on its terms. The inner city dweller Elizabeth Farrelly once asked 'Why do we love the Turnbolls?' Spengler could enlighten her. I interpret



pret the successions of Barry O'Farrell by Michael Baird, and of Steve Waugh by Michael Clarke in cricket, as manifestations of the same phenomenon. The legendary dust-up between Clarke and Simon Katich in the Australian dressing room in this light has a deeply symbolic import.

Spengler argued that as civilisation succeeds culture, sensibility and intellect triumph over wisdom. Jane Austen, author of *Sense and Sensibility*, is an Enlightenment figure, of which age A.N. Whitehead said, 'It was the age of reason, healthy, manly, upstanding reason; but, of one-eyed reason, deficient in its vision of depth'. I seem to be alone in seeing the revival of interest in Austen as a sinister phenomenon. Hers is the kind of reason to which Jonathan Green referred in a recent tweet: 'Our best defence is our cultured reason. Our tolerance. Our audacious confidence in the goodness of others. Why do they hate this idea so?' The answer to his rhetorical question is that some people are wiser than that. I take the vicious antipathy on the part of the usual suspects towards John Howard, and George Brandis in the bookshelves episode, to be expressions of the contempt of city intellect for cultured wisdom.

The American *Chronicle of Higher Education* tells the story of the Spenglerian end game. The typical university campus in the US, with its safe spaces, no-platforming, and contempt for due process in prosecuting sexual assault allegations, is an extreme expression of modern fragility. Streetwise is what the 'snowflake' generation is not. There are danger signs that universities in Australia may be approaching that state: witness the Indigenous safe space at Queensland University of Technology, which led to an incident which is the subject of ongoing legal action. The triumph of sensibility over wisdom is sanctified in Section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act*. Spengler said of the Romans that they were 'unspiritual, unphilosophical, devoid of art, clannish to the point of brutality, [and] aiming relentlessly at tangible successes'. The words 'offend', 'insult', 'humiliate' and 'intimidate' in s18C are all latinate words, and as such are mere tools, inert and lifeless in themselves, standing in relation to human meaning as a paintbrush does to a masterpiece. Turnbull, Shorten, Gillian Triggs and their kin may be educated in the latinate ways of the law, but the deeper heart of things escapes them.

A favourite aphorism of my mother's is, 'You can take the girl out of the country, but not the country out of the girl'. This puts Spengler's attitude to race in a nutshell. I interpret the modern hypersensitivity to questions of race as arising from a horror of the scientific approach to it, from which the concept of a master race is but a short step. Spengler had a similar horror. He despised Hitler, and Hitler returned the compliment, suppressing him, thankfully, rather than applying the final solution. For Spengler, culture *is* race: race derives primarily from the landscape, and is expressed through cultural production. Pauline Hanson is undoubtedly a girl of the country, who feels race and culture in her bones. Spengler's words ring true in relation to her persecutors: 'To the world-city belongs not a folk but a mob'.

Throughout 2015 there was a screen in the Wentworth food court at Sydney University which read, 'Why does Tony Abbott hate students?' On the contrary, the wise person can discern the fate that must be visited upon later generations if the fragility of modern life, which is largely city life, is not addressed.

Spengler said that the Romans stood 'between the Hellenic culture and nothingness'. His *The Decline of the West* can help us avoid a similar fate.

Michael Buhagiar is an educator in the higher education and vocational systems

Business/Robbery etc

Position vacant: Liberals require a policy salesman

MICHAEL BAUME

Malcolm Turnbull, already weakened by his narrow election win, has no option but to stick to the substance (excepting unintended consequences) of his budget repair reforms, particularly in welfare and superannuation. Otherwise, he would not only suffer an ultimately fatal loss of prime ministerial authority, but, even worse, any serious attempt by his government to pursue essential and urgent budget repair would be hostage to the political anarchy of pressure groups, of dissident Liberal parliamentarians using proxy issues to undermine his (questionably gained) leadership, of a skittish Senate and of a Labor opposition bereft of any skerrick of principle.

Labor's Bob Hawke was right when he proclaimed there could be no significant economic reform in Australia without the consensus that was given to him by the trio of Bill Kelty's union movement, by the big end of town and, more importantly, by the Coalition (when John Howard was Leader or Deputy). After the latest evidence of Labor's irresponsible electoral populism by buying votes through handouts that would increase the already untenable budget deficit (some of which the Coalition foolishly matched), the prospect of getting consensus for meaningful cuts to spending looks bleak.

Back in 2014, Bill Shorten's budget reply was attacked in *The Spectator Australia* for his 'brazen dishonesty in refusing to acknowledge the seriousness of the debt issue and the need to address it'. And for shamelessly exploiting (as unfair to ordinary Australians) the 'box of fiscal nasties' when then Treasurer Hockey, in the words of *The Speccie's* Rowan Dean, sought to impose 'a long-overdue focus on returning the welfare safety net to being just that.... Without the kind of action Mr Hockey is urging, Australia faces never-ending budget deficits'. He added: 'The budget is not the problem; it's the way it was sold. Or rather, the way it wasn't'. So while the narrowly re-elected Turnbull government will be able to save \$2 billion of the mounting welfare bill by using regulations to implement its anti-fraud program, the remaining \$3 billion of the \$5 billion it seeks by reviewing welfare

entitlements will need to be legislated – through the non-government majority in the Senate. Claiming a mandate will not attract the sort of consensus that is likely to get the super reforms through, particularly as Labor was happy to include Turnbull's \$6 billion super 'savings' in its own election costings.

It was considered good policy (but badly sold) in 2014 to hit welfare recipients and lower income earners in the name of budget repair, but in 2016 it is now seen by the same people as bad policy to hit high-income earners who are misusing a specific tax benefit for other purposes. Apart from the 'retrospective' furphy, the main thrust of the attack on the reforms relates to damaging confidence in the future of superannuation, with the government's own supporters leading the charge; it ducked for cover when the first shots rang out. So Turnbull lost the potential political benefit of using the super hit on high incomes to counter Labor's synthetic cry of 'unfair' on the Coalition's company tax cuts. It was left to people like the BCA's Jennifer Westacott to make the point: 'The tightening and better targeting of superannuation tax concessions, is a sensible approach to finding savings while ensuring the system remains focused on reducing reliance on the age pension and providing comfortable retirement'. But the government did nothing to spread the word of such influential business leaders, leaving the field to be dominated by critics; it couldn't even summon up enough bloggers to inundate the 'comments' section of on-line newspapers, where ill-informed scare campaigns dominated. And there was no effort to let the million or so beneficiaries of \$3 billion of support for lower income superannuation and other improvements, know what they stood to gain. To extend Dean's 2014 analysis, the Turnbull campaign made no attempt to 'sell' the long overdue focus on returning retirement income tax concessions to being just that – to provide enough for retirement, rather than being unintended unsustainable open-ended wealth-creating devices subsidised by future generations though budget deficits. Again, 'The budget is not the problem; it's the way it was sold. Or rather, the way it wasn't'.

CULTURE BUFF

Donald McDonald



Archibald Prize finalist Lucy Culliton, *Lucy and fans* oil on canvas, 170.5 x 170 cm, (c) the artist

'A portrait is a painting with something wrong about the mouth' is a quotation attributed to John Singer Sargent, painter of the most glamorous portraits of the early 20th century. His remark came to mind when viewing this year's winner of the Archibald Prize; Louise Hearman's portrait of Barry Humphries. It is a strikingly executed portrait but oddly, not immediately recognisable as Barry. But the Archibald (since 1921) wouldn't be the Archibald without something for us to talk about. It's really a three-ring circus - the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prizes - with the finalists of each all on show at the same time.

The Wynne primarily for landscapes, founded in 1897, was this year won by the Ken Family Collaborative for *Seven Sisters*. The Sulman, established in 1936, for 'subject or genre painting', was won by Esther Stewart for *Flatland Dreaming*. This year all the prize winners were women; indeed the Wynne went to a family of women. And there was one woman, Lucy Culliton, who remarkably, was a finalist in all three prizes. In her Archibald entry, a handsome self-portrait *Lucy and fans*, she depicts herself surrounded by her collection of fan-tail pigeons. Pigeons without fantails are the subject of her striking, limited palette Sulman entry. My favourite is her Wynne finalist: a 170cms square landscape *Monaro/ Ando* painted on a property near her home where she spent her childhood. It is utterly beautiful and deeply felt.

AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

Slaying sacred cows Rebecca Weisser

Worth Fighting For: Insights and Reflections

by Andrew Bolt

Wilkinson Publishing, \$24.99, pp. 228
ISBN 9781925265774

It is a measure of Andrew Bolt's ignominy that it takes a certain courage simply to walk into Dymock's and buy a copy of his book. Will the bookseller sneer? Will one's reputation be tarnished by the purchase?

How did Andrew Bolt achieve this pariah status? Quite simply by being right and being Right. It started, Bolt reveals, in his new book – *Worth Fighting For* – when he began writing columns two decades ago. There were plans to introduce heroin-injecting rooms in Victoria even though evidence from abroad showed that drug overdoses would be likely to increase as a result.

'It was scary to go against the media pack, the experts and politicians but the facts were clear,' writes Bolt. 'Amazingly,' he says, 'the sky didn't fall in.' Instead, the Liberal government dropped the plan, deaths from heroin overdoses fell and a campaigning columnist got off to a winning start. Since then, Bolt has enraged the Left, not just by slaying their sacred cows but by turning them into hamburgers and eating them with relish.

On border security, for example, Fairfax journalists denounced Bolt as a 'village idiot' and 'a worthless blood clot' for warning that Prime Minister Rudd would restart the people smuggling trade by reversing the Howard government's policies. Yet when he was proved right by the tragic drownings at sea and the huge numbers of boat arrivals he was accused of 'distasteful triumphalism'.

Indeed, Greens leader Bob Brown called on Bolt to resign saying Bolt had 'blood on his hands' because he had 'stridently insisted on the invasion and killings in Iraq which led to millions fleeing', some of whom, Brown claimed, had drowned off Christmas Island. That Bolt should then call for Prime Minister Gillard's resignation while bodies were still in the ocean 'lacked human decency' Brown said.

It is all too obvious that it was the Labor

government's policy, eagerly championed by the Greens and left-leaning commentators, that had led to the 1,200 deaths at sea, and eventually the policy was repudiated by Labor, but with no acknowledgement to Bolt of course, that he had been right.

Bolt's relationship with Labor is revealing. The journalist worked for the Hawke government on two election campaigns. That Bolt is now reviled by so many Labor politicians is a measure not of how much

*Bolt delights in skewering
pampered moralists who
indulge in finger wagging from
First Class, rather
than helping others*

Bolt has moved to the Right but how far Labor has been moved to the Left by middle class activists who despise the values of ordinary Australians.

Bolt guiltily confesses that he liked to tune into the ABC on Sunday mornings on the way to record his *Bolt Report* for the Ten Network, because he's a fan of *Australia All Over* which connects him to the Australians he's sticking up for – the early risers, the slow talkers, the hard workers, who feel glad about a new day and excited about what can be done with it.

The demonisation of Andrew Bolt is, by extension, the demonisation not just of his many readers but of ordinary Australians who are constantly berated as racist, sexist, misogynist, violent, militaristic oiks.

Yet as Bolt points out, Australia is so much better than its self-loathing critics allow. His columns celebrate have-a-go heroes and readers who help fulfill the wishes of a dying child, those who honour our soldiers on Anzac Day for fighting for our freedoms and those who embrace the melting-pot ethnicity of the winners of *MasterChef* and *Australian Idol*, giving the lie to the slur that Australians are irredeemable bigots.

Bolt delights in skewering pampered moralists who indulge in finger wagging from First Class, raising awareness of their superior virtue rather than helping others. He takes pleasure in puncturing a cavalcade of poseurs – celebrity activists, hashtag slacktivists, global warming alarmists, race industry professionals and foul-mouthed ABC personalities. But, as Bolt reminds

readers, the moral posturing comes at a high price for the poor, since it supports dangerous policies which waste scarce taxpayer dollars, foment racial division and leave vulnerable children in homes where they are neglected, abused, even murdered.

One of the great merits of the book is that Bolt's columns are organised according to themes and pick up on the evolution of debates over many years from the threats posed by Koori courts and *sharia* law, to late-term abortion and euthanasia, from the stolen generation and the fabrication of Aboriginal history, to dud climate change predictions, from gay marriage and the slippery slope to Muslim polygamy, to Islamist violence and refugees.

Given the bitterness of the culture wars, it's a surprisingly enjoyable trip through the trenches. Bolt writes with passion and humour, mocking himself and exposing his flaws and foibles. With all that, he has an impressive strike rate. No, the planet hasn't warmed in the apocalyptic way that was predicted. No, thousands of children weren't stolen simply because they were Aboriginal. Yes, those who perpetrated Islamist atrocities came here as Muslim refugees.

But Bolt has disquieted some even in the News Corps camp. Bolt's opposition to the recognition of Aboriginals in the constitution led a former editor of the *Australian* to say he was spreading 'poison' with his 'extreme' 'xenophobic' position. But Bolt asks, 'If I must be silenced, what must be done to millions of other Australians equally appalled by these attempts to divide our country on the bloody fault lines of race?'

Bolt, and News Corp, have been made to pay for speaking out, most clearly illustrated when Bolt was taken to court for breaches of Section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act* for articles he wrote about fair-skinned Aboriginals. The punishment was not just the costs, which would bankrupt an individual, but the gruelling court process and the jeering of the elites. Bolt was put in the stocks as a warning to others. Yet, as George Orwell wrote, 'If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.' For that reason, more than any other, *Worth Fighting For* is a must-read account of the key debates in contemporary Australia.

Rebecca Weisser is a regular book reviewer for The Spectator Australia

CONSIDER THIS...

Gary Johns



Going to the dogs

Too many politicians are saying to low income and informally educated Australians, 'why don't you just shrivel up and die.' You shall not race dogs, smoke, drink, gamble, tell jokes, or in any other way offend that small band of do-gooders who wish to punish the innocent for the sins of the guilty.

The Treasurer is lifting taxation on cigarettes by 12.5 per cent per year for the next four years, this in addition to the massive taxes already imposed on cigarette smokers. The Queensland Premier has imposed lookout laws on all drinkers, including responsible drinkers, in designated precincts. All Premiers tax gambling heavily and specific forms of gambling are banned. Eddie McGuire gets hit over the head for having a crack at a journalist, probably because she was a she.

A whole class is getting cranky

Take the latest dumb decision: The Premier of NSW is closing down the greyhound racing industry. This decision was driven by animal rights activists. In February 2015, the RSPCA conducted raids on greyhound properties and registered trial tracks in NSW, Victoria and Queensland after tip-offs by animal welfare organisations of live baiting. Shortly after, ABC *Four Corners* broadcast evidence of live baiting. Fair enough, do something about this abhorrent practice: but ban the entire industry? Across Australia, the Animal Justice Party won 1 per cent of the Senate vote, 0.6 per cent of the vote of the House of Representatives in non-metropolitan divisions and 0.8 per cent in metropolitan divisions. There are 35 greyhound racing clubs in NSW. Almost all are outside metropolitan Sydney.

It was predictable to see the Greens Lee Rhiannon, speak at a rally of odds and sods in favour of the ban. It was unpredictable to see the Leader of the Opposition, Luke Foley, opposing Baird: a rare decision by Labor in favour of the little Aussie battler.

I telephoned Rex Nairn, president of the Hastings River Greyhound Racing Club at Wauchope, to ask him what

he felt about the ban. He, like so many others, was devastated. Rex has been in the game for 55 years, describing Greyhound racing as a 'meeting place' of friends, 'a culture' of shared interests. When one of his or his wife's dogs wins 'it's priceless'. They don't do it for the money. First prize at Wauchope is \$350.

How to respond: not

Of course there are serious questions to be addressed, and they were being addressed. A 2014 NSW Select Committee on Greyhound Racing recommended increased scrutiny of the industry and noted it was not economically sustainable without restructuring. The NSW Government supported almost all of the recommendations. Then came *Four Corners*. Initially, Baird did the right thing. He did not overreact, as did the Gillard government in banning live cattle exports to Indonesia, after a similar sensational ABC expose. Instead, Baird appointed former High Court Justice Michael McHugh to enquire whether the issues 'were able to be appropriately addressed'.

McHugh recommended no more than that the Parliament consider whether the industry had 'lost its social licence and should no longer be permitted to operate in NSW.' He made a further 79 recommendations, none of which suggested closing the industry. He recommended, for example, disqualification for life for any person found to be involved in the practice of live baiting.

Mind you, the Commission found no firm evidence, beyond second-hand reports, that live baiting was continuing in the industry after February 2015. McHugh also concluded that 'animal welfare outcomes are now the driving force behind Greyhound Racing NSW's

activities. No longer can it be argued that, under its present management, the commercial interests... trump animal welfare interests.'

McHugh regarded 'wastage' of greyhounds, the euthanasia of slow dogs, as 'insuperable.' He found that about 80 per cent of dogs whelped each year have to be retained as breeders or pets, find a home elsewhere, or be destroyed. This is a big problem, but the industry should have been given time to address it.

A weird 'value judgment'

The Commission considered that animal welfare 'must be given the greatest weight' in making a value judgment about the industry. Why is animal welfare given 'greatest weight'? Surely, this prejudices the answer. McHugh rabbits on about a social license to operate. This is the sort of crap that would come out of the mouth of Senator Penny Wong, not a sober judge.

McHugh argues that social institutions – industries, corporations, businesses or organised sports – must answer to the wider community for their behaviour to operate 'only as long as they perform in accordance with public expectations'. This is a dangerous contrivance. Parliaments define 'social license' in a thousand different ways. It is called consensus. Ignoring this consensus, activists silence the assent of the majority and crush an entire industry.

McHugh admits that defining social licence to operate 'has so far proved too difficult for the term to be used as a criterion of legal responsibility'. So, the judge, freed from the constraints of judicial office, gets all sociological.

Tabcorp indicated that greyhound racing was popular with punters in NSW and was the fastest growing of the three racing codes. In the previous year, it had attracted 100,000 customers and over \$1 billion in wagers. Rex Nairn's enjoyment is priceless.

The National Party and the Labor Party should get together and roll the Liberal Party in the New South Wales Parliament to save the sport of the little Aussie battler.