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Introduction: On Crisis

Amelia Birch & Daniel Elias

Submission Co-Editors

This is an ambitious special edition indeed. At a time when the tertiary sector is under ever-increasing pressure to innovate, adapt, and produce, the *Limina Collective* decided, somewhat masochistically, to accept a broad array of works on crises. The edition received historical perspectives, theoretical analyses, literary works, and future-oriented pieces. Following the 2023 conference of the same name, we are now proud to present the work of twelve authors, three peer reviewed journal articles, two creative pieces, seven book reviews, and, new to *Limina*, three Ephemera essays. These last compositions are non-peer reviewed scholarly works, edited and examined by multiple editorial committee members. We hope that this new section of *Limina* will, in future, invite critical essays, long-form literary reviews, and scholarly reflections.

Our largest contribution comes from Denn Lean. His work highlights the rise of right-wing extremist terrorism and interrogates the religious influences behind Anders Breivik's and Brenton Tarrant's lone-wolf attacks. Lean examines their connections to Ásatrú—a pagan faith that has been appropriated by some white supremacist extremists. He argues that the relationship between these mass shooting events and religious ideology remains underdeveloped within Critical Terrorism Studies.

Andrew Hutcheon's first paper for *Limina* examines the works of Neil Postman in conjunction with an ongoing crisis in Australian education, from teacher shortages to declining literacy rates. Postman's early years as a high school teacher informed his turn towards media and communications theory, and Hutcheon analyses this scholarship in a comprehensive technology-oriented critique of the contemporary education landscape, arguing that both the principles and application of technology in Australian education have corrupted its meanings and outcomes.

Another first-time contributor is Seth Malacari, whose paper challenges the assumption that to be transgender is to be inherently in a state of crisis. Through a close reading of Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* and Linsey Miller's *Mask of Shadows*, Malacari argues that the sense of crisis experienced by the trans community is unfixed, as the state of gender is unfixed in these core texts and therefore envisions a world beyond this current state of crisis.

Our first Ephemera contributors cover a wide range of crises. Mary Blight asks us to recall the crises that befell Noongar country, focusing on two understudied massacres in 1837, and asks how such 'Swan River Logic' still pervades contemporary Australia. Laurent Shervington examines the studio

crisis that emerged in Hollywood during the post-war period, a time when the dominant studio industry could consistently capture the desires of the cinema spectator. Julia Garas turns her focus to society's yearning for retro amidst contemporary crises, using the representation of the 1980s in *Stranger Things* to explore how the unpredictability of the present compels people to seek comfort in an idealised sense of nostalgia.

Tess Ezzy's work utilises pantoum structures to explore the existential issues faced by millennials concerning aging and current social matters, interweaving ethnographic insights with poetic form. By employing creative language and symbolic allusions to the "millennium problems" and the "snowflake generation" characterisation, Ezzy enhances dialogues surrounding generational aging and identity development, offering valuable perspectives on the millennial experience.

Meanwhile, fellow editor and long-time contributor Rachel Denham-White has written a short story about the environmental challenge of communicating nuclear waste dangers to future generations when our current symbols and language may become obsolete. Denham-White's creative fiction explores the nihilistic task of securing nuclear disposal sites for thousands of years despite our inability to predict future human evolution or scientific understanding.

This issue also includes an eclectic contribution of book reviews. Rachel Denham-White offers two reviews on very different topics – from the macabre use of animals in Victorian fashion to Western Australia's first internationally successful female botanical collector, Georgiana Molloy. Lars Sheppard-Larsen provides an overview of a collection concerning the theme of the modern reception of the senses in antiquity, while Katrina Knight reviews a new perspective on the early medieval British-Latin writer Gildas. The only poetry review is by Sophie Roberts, who assesses a new translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Finally, with an apt ending to the *On Crisis* issue book reviews section, Georgia Whittaker reviews a monograph on the unfinished history of the Holocaust and its place in the current political climate.

Our special thanks go to Erica Steiner, who has grown the Book Reviews section such that it has developed its own processes and procedures. Her impact on *Limina* and its future is substantial, and the Collective is grateful for her years of diligence and stewardship over the past three years.

Our thanks go to the many contributors, peer reviewers, advisory board members, and, most importantly, our fellow editors in the *Limina Collective*. Your tireless work to bring this edition together while writing your own dissertations, completing your own degrees, and furthering your own careers was a Sisyphean effort. We recognise it and are immensely grateful. We hope you enjoy *Limina's* latest special edition, *On Crisis*.

Two Left Hands: Deconstructing Transness as a Crisis of Identity through SFF Fiction¹

Seth Malacari²

University of Western Australia

*Modern transgender existence has long held a link with a state of crisis. This paper challenges the assumption that to be trans is to inherently be in crisis, or that crisis is an internal force working upon the trans body. Through a close reading of two science fiction/fantasy texts, Linsey Miller's *Mask of Shadows* (2017) and Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*, this paper argues that crisis is an external force imposed upon the trans body by mainstream society and can be relieved through a social model of accessibility. By examining the unfixed state of gender within the texts and within modern queer and gender theories, this paper argues that the sense of crisis experienced by the trans community is also unfixed, and therefore a world beyond this state of crisis is possible.*

Transgender and gender diverse individuals, that is, those whose gender is something other than the gender assigned to them at birth, have been increasingly in the spotlight in recent years. There has been a surge in people seeking gender affirming healthcare, an increase in media representation (both positive and negative), and an alarming number of anti-trans legislations being passed through governments worldwide.³ A cursory glance at any newsfeed over the past decade reveals common links between transness and crisis. Trans people are often described as experiencing an identity crisis, and even the medical diagnosis needed for many people to access gender affirming care, Gender Dysphoria Disorder, hints at the idea that gender diverse people are unwell, pathologising transness as a medical crisis.⁴ Within the trans community, the word 'crisis' has crept its way into every corner: trans-led health organisations focus on the emotional and physical crises experienced by those unable to access care and of those experiencing transphobic abuse, crisis

¹ This research was carried out while the author was in receipt of an Australian Government Research Training Program Stipend Scholarship at The University of Western Australia.

² ORCID ID: 0009-0007-3418-7132

³ Katie Eyer, "Transgender Constitutional Law." *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 171, no. 5 (2023): 1405–1513.

⁴ Anne Elizabeth Jones, "Being My True Self: An Existential Phenomenological Inquiry into how Transition Influences Identity in Trans Men." Order No. 30730680, (England: Middlesex University, 2023). <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/being-my-true-self-existential-phenomenological/docview/2861285425/se-2>.

hot-lines are set up to deal with our community's pain, and many trans individuals use the language of identity crisis to understand themselves and their journey. As a trans masculine non-binary person, I have seen this pattern recur across our community spaces. However, as a trans masculine non-binary person, I do not think this is the way our lives need to be.

Through a close reading of two SFF (Science Fiction/Fantasy) novels, Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and Linsey Miller's *Mask of Shadows* (2017), this paper argues that the trans experience is not an internal, individual crisis, but a social crisis caused by the dominant narratives of the mainstream, and therefore can be alleviated with societal changes. The two novels analysed both present alternative narratives where non-binary gender identities (that is, gender embodiment that rejects the male/female binary system of gender which includes multiple specific gender identities such as genderfluid, or agender) are the central focus. In *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the Gethenians are the dominant people, and their non-binary gender is a central focus of the text. In *Mask of Shadows*, the main character Sallot Leon (Sal) is genderfluid, and their gender plays a significant role in the narrative. This essay will argue that the fictional world-building in these two novels can be viewed through modern transgender theory and the social model of disability lens to conceptualise a real-world possibility where transness is no longer experienced as a crisis.

In Mike Oliver's social model of disability, disability is viewed at the social level, and it seeks to understand how societies impose barriers upon differently-abled individuals, which then causes a lack of accessibility (a 'disability'), comparing disability to other socially imposed barriers such as race, gender, or class discriminations.⁵ The social model of disability is concerned with removing these external barriers on a whole of society level, moving the focus away from trying to 'fix' the individual and toward removing barriers for that individual to create equitable access to society.⁶ This essay will apply similar thinking to gender diversity, in that gender diverse individuals are not in need of 'fixing' (as trans people are not a 'problem') but rather social barriers for trans people (such as those that limit access to medical care, legal protection, public bathrooms etc.) need to be removed to create equitable access for trans and cisgender (non-trans) people.

⁵ Sofia Adam and Athanasios Koutsoklenis, "Who needs the social model of disability?" *Frontiers in Sociology* 8, December (2023), 1305301–1305301. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2023.1305301>.

⁶ Tom Shakespeare, "The Social Model of Disability", in *The Disability Studies Reader (4th ed)*, ed. Lennard J Davis (New York: Routledge, 2014).

The Left Hand of Darkness

In *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Le Guin examines how the lack of accessibility in society for those that are ‘othered’ is a reflection on the problems with society, not with the individual.⁷ This aligns with the argument that social acceptance is more important than individual effort in minimising an individual’s crisis state. On the planet of Gethen/Winter, the dominant people have no fixed gender and are non-binary (in the sense that they are not male or female, though their gender is not referred to in-text as non-binary, but ‘androgynous’⁸), except when ‘kemmering’, where they develop either male or female primary sexual characteristics in order to reproduce. Winter is an alien planet, but the story is being told through Genly Ai, an Earth-born human sent to Winter on a diplomacy mission by the Ekumen, an interplanetary governing body. His (Genly is a cisgender man) mission is to convince the Gethenians to join the Ekumen. The novel is presented mostly as field notes from Ai, with folklore tales, journal entries from his traveling companion Estraven, and notes from earlier outside explorers interspersed throughout. It is implied though that even the chapters from other points of view have been compiled and presented to the reader by Genly Ai.

The Left Hand of Darkness was published in 1969, the same year the Stonewall Rebellion occurred, an event largely credited as the beginning of the modern queer rights movement.⁹ Despite the prominent role trans women such as Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera played at Stonewall, transgender rights were not an immediate after-effect of the riots. Stonewall sparked the modern lesbian and gay revolution, but in an effort to retain this new found ‘privileged’ status, many lesbian and gay organisations actively distanced themselves from the transgender community.¹⁰ Alongside the growing tensions in the queer community in the 1960s, second-wave feminism was taking hold, examining women’s oppression socio-culturally, the psychological construction of women, and, most damaging to the trans liberation movements, further development of the definition of ‘woman’ being linked to shared physical, bodily experiences. These definitions directly caused a decline in acceptance for trans women in many women’s spaces, and a lack of acknowledgment and affirmation for the identities of trans men, often misgendering them as ‘butch women’.¹¹ It is important to note this because Le Guin, a cisgender woman, was writing in response to the world she existed in and she states that feminist theory, especially regarding gender and sex, was

⁷ Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (USA: Ace Books, 1969).

⁸ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 90

⁹ Fienberg, *Transgender*, 97.

¹⁰ Susan Stryker, *Transgender History: The Roots of Today’s Revolution* (New York: Seal Press, 2018).

¹¹ Fienberg, *Transgender*, 112-113.

an explicit focus of *The Left Hand of Darkness*. She says in the essay, 'Is Gender Necessary?', 'Along about 1967... I began to want to define and understand the meaning of sexuality and the meaning of gender, in my life and in our society'.¹² There is evidence in text of this examination of gender and sexuality. When Genly Ai meets a Gethenian who is permanently in kemmer, he explains to the reader:

Excessive prolongation of the kemmer period, with permanent hormonal imbalance toward the male or the female, causes what they call perversion; it is not rare; three or four percent of adults may be physiological perverts or abnormal – normals, by our standard. They are not excluded from society, but they are tolerated with some disdain, as homosexuals are in many bisexual societies.¹³

In *Underdogs: Social Deviance and Queer Theory* (2021), Heather Love argues that modern queer theory (defined by its emergence in the late twentieth century) has, in all aspects, precedents and connection to early mid-century sociology theories. She says, 'the roots of queer theory should be located in activist ferment and traditions of radicalism coming out of the AIDS crisis, the women's health movement, in debates in feminism, and in movements for gay and trans liberation that emerged in the late 1960s'.¹⁴ In this framing, Le Guin can be understood to have been writing amongst and in connection to the earliest roots of modern 'queer theory', placing this text in the lineage of modern transgender theory. It can then be argued that *The Left Hand of Darkness*, specifically Winter and the Gethenians, are an example of how gender 'deviant' bodies can exist outside of the crisis state.

The story opens with Genly Ai two years into his mission to Winter. His primary objective is to convince the Gethenians to join the international collective, but Genly struggles particularly with the fact that gender does not exist on Winter in the way he has learnt it on Earth. Le Guin challenges the stability of gender in this text by creating a society that has a non-binary gender majority (non-binary again used in the modern sense for clarity in this paper) and ambisexual physical bodies. In applying Oliver's social model theory to the text, we can view the ways in which compulsory gender conformity works as a barrier to equitable access for trans people in our modern world. Le Guin does this through comparison of Genly Ai and the Gethenians, and again with readers and the Gethenian society. Genly Ai is frustrated that he is not accepted

¹² Ursula K. Le Guin, "Is Gender Necessary? Redux", *Dancing at the Edge of the World* (USA: Grove Press, 1989), 7-16.

¹³ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 64.

¹⁴ Heather Love, *Underdogs: Social Deviance and Queer Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

by the Gethenians for the fact that he presents his gender differently. To the Gethenians, Ai is considered a 'pervert' and a 'freak' for having reproductive sex organs that denote him being permanently 'male'. The king of the nation of Karhide says to Ai, "'I don't know what the devil you are, Mr. Ai, a sexual freak or an artificial monster or a visitor from the Domains of the Void'".¹⁵ These sentiments are repeated often throughout the novel. This kind of language has been, and still is, used in a derogatory way toward trans people in the real world. When Ai tries to explain that there are others like him, the reply from the king is, "'So all of them, out on these other planets, are in permanent kemmer? A society of perverts?'"¹⁶ If readers can sympathise here that there is nothing wrong with Genly's gender presentation, that he is not a sexual deviant or a monster, he is simply in a world that is not built for him, then it can be understood that trans people in our world face a similar struggle. Genly Ai is therefore a vessel by which readers, particularly those in 1969 when this originally came out, can gently ease into the world of Winter and its complex statements on gender, fixing the reader's attention on a familiar (cisgendered human) figure navigating an alien world. Le Guin notes the effectiveness of this technique on male readers in particular, allowing them 'a safe trip into androgyny and back'.¹⁷ When viewed through the social model lens, Genly becomes the 'other', the person who the world is not built for, even though the reader can easily imagine a place where he would be perfectly accommodated for.

The Left Hand of Darkness has been criticised by some modern readers for the fact that despite its removal of gender, all the Gethenians are given he/him pronouns when outside of kemmer (that is, when not exhibiting any sex-based physical characteristics). There are two potential reasons for this. One is that Le Guin was not comfortable using they/them pronouns in 1969, fearing the reader (or more likely, the publisher) would not accept this, something she references herself in the essay 'Is Gender Necessary?', expressing regret in hindsight at this choice.¹⁸ The modern publishing industry still does not readily accept they/them pronouns, so I think Le Guin was justified in taking the path of least resistance in this case. The other theory is that as the story is predominately presented as field notes written by Genly Ai, these pronouns have been enforced upon the Gethenians by the outsider. Throughout the book, Genly Ai can be read as misogynistic, indeed the challenging of these views becomes a large part of his personal growth journey. Early in the novel Ai writes that he sees 'a Gethenian first as a man, then as a woman, forcing him into those categories so irrelevant to his nature and so essential to my own'.¹⁹ The notion

¹⁵ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 32.

¹⁶ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 36.

¹⁷ Le Guin, *Gender*, 16.

¹⁸ Le Guin, *Gender*, 15.

¹⁹ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 12.

that outsiders have imposed gender roles onto the non-gendered Gethenians is further supported during an excerpt from the notes of the first outside explorer to Winter, Ong Tot Oppong, who says:

I must say “he”, for the same reasons as we used the masculine pronoun in referring to a transcendent god: it is less defined, less specific, than the neuter or the feminine. But the very use of the pronoun in my thoughts leads me continually to forget that the Karhider I am with is not a man, but a manwoman.²⁰

This indicates that Genly is perhaps only following the guidance of the earlier explorers, who are also employees of the Ekumen. Whichever way we view the decision to use he/him pronouns, whether it was to avoid criticism in the real world, or to highlight the patriarchal thinking of the Ekumen and Genly Ai, or a combination of both forces, the choice reinforces the idea that the crisis of identity is imposed upon the Gethenians: they do not have the same concerns as Ai has for them, as they are the norm. This reflects Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s ideas on queerness (in a linguistic, identity, and political sense), being a term used to produce subjects linked with an ideology of shame for existing outside heteronormative society.²¹ Though the Gethenians are ‘queer’ to Genly Ai, he is the one ‘queer’ to them, and both sides view the other as the ‘shameful’ one. For Sedgwick, ‘queer’ has no fixed definition, other than to denote embodiment of the ‘shameful’ other, the outsider.²² The Gethenians are, as Judith Butler also describes, ‘performing gender’: a non-binary form of gender that they all share.²³ It is only because Genly Ai is ‘performing’ something else that he becomes ‘the shameful other’, and a crisis of gender exists.

Gethenians have no fixed gender roles, because they have no fixed gender, and they do not have any accessibility issues regarding their gender presentation because their entire society is built to accommodate this. They live in large groups called ‘Hearths’ or ‘Domains’ to allow for enough pairings during kemmerings, and their lives revolve around the kemmering cycles, allowing for time off, indiscriminate access to ‘kemmering houses’ and even contraceptive drugs to counter kemmering should the individual choose. They have shared responsibilities for parenting. Each individual can do whatever job they like, due to there being no divisions of labour between male and female sexes. There seems to be no shame toward those who wish to skip the kemmer phase and no shame in being in kemmer, but there is a perversion to those who

²⁰ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 94.

²¹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. “Queer Performativity.” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1, no. 1 (1993): 1–16.

²² Sedgwick, ‘Queer Performativity’.

²³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York: Routledge, 1990).

are permanently in kemmer, such as Genly Ai, but also other Gethenians who either naturally or with the assistance of hormones are also in this state.

Despite the Gethenians non-binary gender, Genly Ai imposes binary-gendered stereotypes upon various characters throughout the text, making remarks such as, 'he had a girl's quick delicacy in his looks and movements, but no girl could keep so grim a silence as he did.'²⁴ We see these examples again and again from Genly Ai, who seeks to divide all Gethenians into binary female and male roles, even outside of kemmer, and does so in misogynistic ways (reflecting, as earlier defined by Sedgwick, the 'shame' of his own gender construction as it sits in opposition to the Gethenians), always attributing weaker traits to the feminine and stronger traits to the masculine. When asked at one point if human women are a different species to himself, he says, "'No. Yes. No, of course not, not really. But... They don't often seem to turn up mathematicians, or composers of music, or inventors, or abstract thinkers.'"²⁵ At no point do the Gethenians make these same comments toward each other. The Gethenians attack each other for a range of transgressions such as being a traitor or having incestual relationships, but the misogyny Ai performs is not performed by the Gethenians because they do not have a divide between genders as they are all the same non-binary gender.

The way gender plays out on Winter reinforces the idea that transness is not an individual issue, but a societal one. Each time Genly Ai creates a false gender identity for a Gethenian, the facade crumbles further and we see what Butler meant when they wrote, 'the gendered body... has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality'.²⁶ Without these various acts, the 'reality' of gender that Genly Ai clings to simply falls apart. On Winter, Ai is faced with an unfamiliar canvas and attempts to paint on a familiar (Earth-learned) gender system. Perhaps after centuries of this some of it would stick, but in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, though it has been two years at least since Ai's arrival, the Gethenians remain unchanged. It is possible, through this futile attempt by Genly Ai, to imagine a similar action occurring in our world. What if gender hadn't stuck to us so? If being non-binary in our society was as readily accepted as being 'non-binary' on Gethen, would trans individuals face any crisis? Would trans people exist at all, or would we all simply be 'the norm', without the need to 'transition' anywhere, as we wouldn't have been assigned the wrong thing in the first place?

No greater is this unstable reality evidenced than through Ai's narrative arc with Estraven. Estraven is a Gethenian, a former prime minister of Karhide, who at the start of the novel is exiled by the king for being a traitor. When Ai

²⁴ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 299.

²⁵ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 234-235.

²⁶ Judith Butler, "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions," *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 175-93.

also falls out of favour with the king and is then imprisoned by the neighbouring nation of Orgoreyn, Estraven rescues him and together they spend months traveling across a northern ice shelf that runs between Orgoreyn and Karhide, seeking to complete Ai's original mission of uniting Winter with the Ekumen. Ai admits, when looking back on this event, that they fell in love there upon the ice.²⁷ By all reasonable admissions, Estraven is Genly's closest person on Winter, but they did not start out that way. Early in the novel, Ai says, 'Estraven's performance had been womanly, all charm and tact and lack of substance, specious and adroit. Was it... this soft supple femininity that I disliked and distrusted in him?'²⁸ Ai attaches his own gender bias to Estraven's ungendered body, displaying a general distrust and dislike for Estraven because of the difficulty Ai has in ordering them into either a 'male' or 'female' category. The closer Genly and Estraven become, the more this bias exerts a sense of crisis upon the body of Estraven. When Estraven suggests a nickname for Genly that denotes being 'hearth-brothers' (friends), Ai thinks to himself: 'Neither man nor woman, neither and both... changelings in the human cradle, they were no flesh of mine, no friend; no love between us.'²⁹

As Estraven and Ai spend more time together, Ai's concept of 'otherness' and gender begins to unravel, triggered in particular by Estraven entering kemmer and taking on the physical sex of a female. Initially this disgusts Genly. He says:

I saw then again, and for good, what I had always been afraid to see, and had pretended not to see in him: that he was a woman as well as a man... I had not wanted to give my trust, my friendship to a man who was a woman, a woman who was a man.³⁰

The language used here, particularly in terms of fear, again reflects modern trans discourse. Much of the current anti-trans legislation is rooted in fear, such as bills in the United States (and attempts within Australia) to ban transgender people from playing sport.³¹ The focus too on primary sexual characteristics denoting gender reflects struggles trans people face in our world. The fact that Estraven is presenting female, and Genly Ai is a cisgendered male, and therefore the pairing would be considered heterosexual (it is inferred from the text that Genly is also heterosexual), illustrates how powerful this fear can be and the power it can exert onto the trans body. Genly's fear and disgust manifest onto Estraven as though Estraven's body is monstrous or wrong, despite the fact their body is completely normal on Gethen. Le Guin challenges

²⁷ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 248.

²⁸ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 12.

²⁹ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 213.

³⁰ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 248.

³¹ Eyer, "Transgender", 1405.

the reader now by allowing Genly Ai to break through this initial disgust and to see beyond the binary thinking he has learned on Earth. He realises in this moment of fear that, 'it was from the differences between us, not from the affinities and likenesses, but from the difference, that love came'.³² Ai even names this event a 'near crisis', an admission of the way crisis is placed upon the body, upon the 'other', even though in this situation Estraven is acting in the natural order of Winter, while Ai is the one who does not conform to the standard gender. This exchange, this movement from crisis to love, not only demonstrates how unfixed social conditions of gender are, but also represents a new state of relationship between Estraven and Ai, one where Ai freely calls him his friend. When Estraven is killed by guards at the end of their journey, Genly Ai shows this in action: 'I took his head in my arms and spoke to him, but he never answered me; only in a way he answered my love for him.'³³

These events have a lasting impact on Genly, and we can see how he has grown across the novel when other humans from the Ekumen, humans who have a binary sex system the same as Genly's (this book does not touch on intersex variations at all), arrive on Winter and Ai is uncomfortable with their appearance. When the eleven Ekumen representatives exit their spaceship, Ai says, 'they all looked strange to me... Their voices sounded strange... They were like a troupe of great, strange animals'.³⁴ Here we see the crisis state transferred from the Gethenians to humans of Genly Ai's own kind, an example of how Butler's theory on gender as a repetitive act has worked to change Genly's own views. He has been submersed in and therefore repeating the Gethenian form of gender for long enough now that the 'other' has become himself. He does his duties in briefing the new arrivals, then hurries away to his rooms. When a Gethenian physician comes in to check on him, Genly describes how, 'his quiet voice and his face, a young serious face, not a man's face and not a woman's, a human face, these were a relief to me, familiar, right.'³⁵ That which he long feared, the 'trans' existence of the Gethenians, has now become a great comfort to him. This again supports that the 'othering' trans individuals face in society is not an internal state projected out onto the observer, but an external force imposed upon the trans body by the observer themselves. Genly has come to accept the normality of the Gethenians. The novel ends soon after this moment, so we can only theorise whether Genly Ai has broken free of the notion that each Gethenian body is a problem, and rather sees that the problem lies in society and the way mainstream ideologies exert otherness upon non-conforming bodies, or if he simply transfers his fears onto himself and other binary humans. One would hope that the self-growth he

³² Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 249.

³³ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 284.

³⁴ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 296.

³⁵ Le Guin, *Left Hand*, 296.

experienced on the ice with Estraven has been enough to break him of the gender-binary hold.

Mask of Shadows

Where Le Guin explored the challenge of being binary gendered in a non-binary world, Linsey Miller's *Mask of Shadows* speculates on ways a gender-nonconforming person can find success and acceptance within a cis-normative one. *Mask of Shadows* was one of the first Young Adult (YA) novels to explicitly use the term 'genderfluid' to describe its main character.³⁶ Genderfluid is an identity that falls under the trans umbrella. Like all gender diverse identity labels, genderfluid may mean different things to each individual who self-describes as such. In general, genderfluid is used to describe those whose gender identity fluctuates from time to time. For main character Sallot Leon (Sal) specifically, this looks like being a girl, boy, or nonbinary on alternating days. Sal uses he/she/they pronouns, but only one at a time per day. For the sake of clarity within this paper, I will refer to Sal as the singular 'they' unless intext references state otherwise.

Mask of Shadows was first released in the United States in 2017, a time of political upheaval for LGBTQIA+ people. In 2012 the US established marriage equality, allowing same-sex couples to marry in some states. Following this, opponents of LGBTQIA+ rights turned their attention away from homosexuality and began targeting the transgender community (a repeat of the events following Stonewall in 1969 which contextualised *The Left Hand of Darkness*). Anti-trans groups successfully campaigned to repeal anti-discrimination laws, arguing (amongst other things) that transgender individuals using the public bathroom that matched their current gender (as opposed to the gender imposed on them at birth) was leading to increased attacks on cisgender women by 'sexual predators'.³⁷ In 2016, Donald Trump, who is vocally anti-trans, was elected President of the United States. Book bans in the United States overwhelmingly targeted LGBTQIA+ books for teenagers. In this context, Miller so openly including a genderfluid character in her YA novel can be viewed as a powerful act of resistance against an increasingly hostile political landscape.

Mask of Shadows is a fantasy set in the fictional land of Igna. The narrative follows Sal as they compete in a violent audition to become a member of the Queen's 'Left Hand' (her assassin security team). Many Queer YA novels (defined here as novels which feature a main character who is LGBTQIA+) do not explicitly label their characters in the blurb, but *Mask of Shadows* does: 'Sallot

³⁶ Linsey Miller, *Mask of Shadows* (Naperville: Sourcebooks Fire, 2017).

³⁷ Marie-Amelie George, "Framing Trans Rights" *Northwestern University Law Review* 114, no. 3 (2019), 555–632.

Leon is a thief, and a good one at that. But genderfluid Sal...'.³⁸ By giving Sal an identity label immediately, Miller is rejecting the use of internalised shame by YA authors to create a coming out narrative, or to use queerness as a shocking plot twist.³⁹ Sal's queerness is presented upfront, does not require Sal to come out in the first instance to the reader (though they do have to re-out themselves upon meeting new characters sometimes), and is not kept secret at all during the novel. Through Sal, Miller has created a character who has no gender identity crisis, though it is clear their gender identity is neither common nor wholly accepted by the society they live in, resulting in moments of discomfort for Sal.

As the novel is narrated in first person by Sal, there are only a few uses of their pronouns by others. Often characters will simply use their name or 'Twenty-Three', which is their number in the tournament. The first use of a pronoun for Sal occurs in the fourth chapter, when a guard says, "'They're here for the Left Hand auditions.'" ⁴⁰ Sal is wearing a face mask at the time and is a stranger to the guard, which implies that using they/them pronouns when faced with a person of unknown gender is accepted protocol in Igna. All other characters prior to this point have been assigned he/him or she/her pronouns by Sal, including this same guard. Sal does not use they/them pronouns to refer to others, and does not ask anyone's pronouns, though others ask Sal about theirs. It can be inferred then that in this world gender-neutral pronouns are not the default for all citizens but reserved for those presenting outside the cis-normative expectations of the male/female gender binary, which appear to largely conform to modern Western gender standards. The only area where masculine and feminine lines overlap differently to the real world is in combat (including status, weapons, and dress), where there appears to be no division. This would explain why Sal was not immediately gendered by the guard, as both males and females hold equal status in the Left Hand arena. This concept mirrors what Adrienne Rich defines in terms of sexuality as a 'compulsory heterosexuality', in that everyone is presumed to be heterosexual, unless actively presenting in some way that challenges this.⁴¹ By extension, everyone is presumed cisgender unless outwardly presenting in some way that challenges this. This is affirmed after Sal begins the Left Hand audition. Upon meeting their assigned servant, Maud, Sal lists their demands:

³⁸ Miller, *Mask*, blurb.

³⁹ Barbara Pini, Wendy Keys, and Damien W Riggs. "Transphobic Tropes and Young Adult Fiction: An Analysis of Brian Katcher's *Almost Perfect*." *The Lion and the Unicorn (Brooklyn)* 42, no. 1 (2018), 57-72. <https://doi.org/10.1353/uni.2018.0004>.

⁴⁰ Miller, *Mask*, 25.

⁴¹ Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1980), 631-660.

“No questions or gossiping about me. Not about my scars, my clothes, or my measurements. I dress how I like to be addressed - he, she, or they. It’s simple enough.” ...Even when I spelled it out for nosy people clear as I could, they couldn’t grasp why.⁴²

The blunt, unprovoked way Sal states this to Maud indicates that their gender identity is not fully understood in this world, though obviously accepted enough that they feel safe to present openly gender-nonconforming. Sal notes that, ‘Our Queen preaches acceptance and peace. They’d accept me.’⁴³ This implies that the nation of Igna is at least partially accepting of LGBTQIA+ persons, confirmed later in the novel through two depictions of same-sex relationships, including one involving Ruby, a member of the Left Hand and a main supporting character. The Left Hand are members of the Royal Court and are the highest authority in the land other than the Queen herself, so an openly queer member of this group is significant.

However, the aside about ‘nosy people’ and Sal’s ‘measurements’ suggests that there are those in this society who, upon hearing Sal is genderfluid, seek to know their birth assigned sex. This is a phenomenon reflected for real-life trans people, where there is often a fixation by outsiders to know what a person’s body presented as at birth, with a particular fixation on genitals. Sal reaffirms this desire for secrecy about their body later when Maud brings them new clothes (and it should be noted that Sal has no problems getting or wearing uniforms of any kind, seemingly the Left Hand easily accommodates their requests). Maud says she had to guess Sal’s size. Sal replies, “‘Not a word about me to anyone. They know what I look like, I lose my shot at surprise.’”⁴⁴ In this context, we can assume Sal is referring to the idea that if the other Left Hand auditioners (there is only one open position, with many competing for this spot) know Sal’s birth assigned sex, they will make assumptions on their physical capabilities. This fear suggests that gender biases exist in this world, and these seem to mostly reflect real-world divisions of what constitutes stereotypical masculine and feminine traits. Sal’s desire to conceal their physical body is facilitated by the fact that all competitors wear full face masks. In a broader sense of trans identity, Sal’s desire to be judged solely on their gender presentation is them seeking to separate sex from gender, which is a key point in modern trans self-determination practices.⁴⁵ By removing the idea that sex is linked to gender, Sal challenges outsiders to consider that if they have an issue with Sal’s gender presentation, it is coming

⁴² Miller, *Mask*, 33.

⁴³ Miller, *Mask*, 34.

⁴⁴ Miller, *Mask*, 69.

⁴⁵ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*. Ed. Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990).

from a sense of bias in their own world view and ideas of sex and gender, rather than an issue on Sal's part. There is no evidence in the text to suggest Sal has any issues accepting their gender identity or physical body at all.

Though Sal is comfortable with themselves, they experience repeated frustrations in having to explain their gender identity. When first meeting the other members of the Left Hand, Ruby, Amethyst, and Emerald, who are holding the auditions, Ruby refers to Sal as 'they'. Sal responds, "'you can call me 'she' when I dress like this. I dress how I am.'"⁴⁶ Sal goes on to explain to the reader, 'I wore a dress, and people treated me like a girl. I wore trousers and one of those floppy-collared men's shirts, and they treated me like a boy.'⁴⁷ This confirms that normative gender dress reflects modern Western standards. Judith Butler describes gender as an unstable identity, constructed externally of the body by stylised repetition of acts.⁴⁸ This is what they describe as the 'performance'. Sal reinforces this concept by using external devices (mainly clothing, but sometimes makeup and body language) to build a gender, tear it down, and rebuild a new one the next day. Sal demonstrates how by breaking free from the continuous repetition of a singular gender performance, the whole idea of a fixed gender becomes impossible. Sal's choice to dress in stereotypical male or female clothing to affirm their gender may seem to only reinforce the gender binary, but many trans people simply want to fit in, and Sal's reproduction of stereotypical gendered clothing may reflect a similar desire. However, this playing with clothing can also be looked at as a form of drag, of Sal purposefully messing with gender and appearance, acknowledging the power of the performance. If gender can change as easily as a change of clothing, how fixed is gender really? Whether Sal understands their relationship between clothing and gender as conforming or being subversive, it is theirs to play with and they freely explore these different ways to existing within this text and within the world of Igna. At no point does anybody attempt to stop Sal from dressing as any of their three 'genders'.

Following this interaction with the Left Hand, Sal goes on to explain their gender more clearly to the reader: 'I always felt like Sal, except it was like watching a river flow past... I ebbed and flowed, and that was my always'.⁴⁹ The metaphor of the river presents a nice symmetry to the fluidity of Sal's gender, that which changes day to day. Upon sharing this with the Left Hand there is never any further issue from them, and when Sal is misgendered by the main antagonist Five, members of the Left Hand correct him, implying that though it is uncommon for citizens of Igna to present this way, it is not unheard of. If we view this interaction through the lens of the social disability model,

⁴⁶ Miller, *Mask*, 46.

⁴⁷ Miller, *Mask*, 46.

⁴⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

⁴⁹ Miller, *Mask*, 46.

we see how simple it is for gender diverse people to receive accommodations and be accepted, holding a mirror up to our own societies failings in doing this exact thing.

Sal sums it up best for themself when they are asking Maud about how she was assigned to them specifically. Each auditioner has a servant who assists them during the trials. Maud explains it was a random allocation, and she'd never have picked Sal because Sal is 'the scrawniest' (there is a promotion for the servant whose auditioner wins).⁵⁰ Sal is unphased. They think, 'I'd have picked me. I like me.'⁵¹ This self-confidence and love for themself is a constant throughout the novel, even when they are facing hardships, failing tasks, injured, or tired: they always back themself. They challenge the idea of the sad trans person with an identity crisis, unable to 'pick' or struggling to find self-acceptance. Sal is a beacon of self-acceptance. They are unapologetically themselves, and through them, Miller challenges the idea that being trans is to suffer and supports the theory that it is the external society that enforces this suffering upon the trans body. Sal is an example of how there is nothing wrong with the trans body; the problem lies in society failing to accommodate the individual needs of trans people, in the same way the social model of disability advocates for changes to accommodate impaired individuals, rather than seeking to only 'fix' the impairment.

In the end, Sal wins the audition and is named 'Opal', the fourth member of the Queen's Left Hand. Sal expresses joy at their title now being 'Honourable', a gender-neutral term in their country, and an example of how a basic accommodation can easily remove any lingering discomfort Sal may have faced having to correct people using the wrong gendered title. Though we do not see how the rest of society (that is, everyone outside of this elite, privileged group) react to a genderfluid person being the new Opal, it can be inferred from the text that Sal's status is enough to quell any concerns. The Left Hand are well loved by the people of Igna, and are, after all, the Queen's hit squad, so it seems unlikely they would be bullied at all. It would be interesting to see a follow-up novel set in this world to see if Sal's role has had a trickle-down effect on the lives of other gender diverse individuals in Igna, as the only trans person we have access to in this novel is Sal themselves. Was it just Sal who managed to overcome the barriers of their world, or have doors opened for all gender diverse people now?

In *Mask of Shadows*, Miller has created a world that reflects aspects of our own in some ways but uses creative license to extend the possibility of genderfluidity being readily accepted by those in positions of governance or power, something that rarely occurs in real life, especially in the West. For the reader, the ease in which Sal exists in Igna may seem far-fetched, or

⁵⁰ Miller, *Mask*, 67.

⁵¹ Miller, *Mask*, 68.

unbelievable and this is itself a commentary on the way trans individuals in our society are expected to be at odds with the world, constantly facing crisis after crisis. Miller challenges the reader to imagine a possible future beyond the constraints of modern trans accessibility.

Between Two 'Left Hands'

In the same way that the social model of disability argues that the issues faced by the individual are not an internal factor, but an external force placed upon the individual by a majority ableist mainstream, so too can transphobia be viewed as a symptom of this same pattern. Crisis, or tension, between gender and acceptance, only exists if the majority mainstream society is so oriented to force one into crisis mode: to feel ashamed by their sense of 'otherness' and to find the systems that should support them do not support them.

In *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Le Guin presents a world that has reversed the script, where the people of Gethen are of a non-binary gender, while our protagonist must struggle with being ostracised and stigmatised for being a cisgender male from a binary gendered world. Genly Ai faces abuse due to his gender, but at the same time expresses that same prejudice toward the Gethenians by applying his own gender expectations onto them. On Winter, the systems do not support Genly to be permanently male. In the real-world, the systems do not universally support trans individuals to be trans, hence the barriers to social acceptance, gender affirming health care, and legal protections. It is the state of not being supported that leads to such realities as trans people having extremely high rates of self-harm and suicide. Genly comes to realise this when he finally accepts and loves Estraven for who they are, and when he comes to realise that his immersion in the alien world of Gethen has made members of his own kind seem 'alien' to him.

In *Mask of Shadows*, Miller presents a world where genderfluidity is uncommon, not openly celebrated, sometimes frustrating for Sal, but accepted enough that they are able to rise through the ranks to be appointed the title of Honourable Opal in the Queen's Left Hand, the second highest rank possible in the nation of Igna. Throughout the novel, characters in positions of power make accommodations for Sal with no push back. Authority figures provide gender diverse uniforms, acknowledge pronouns, and correct others who misgender Sal. Throughout, Sal demonstrates consistent self-love and self-acceptance, illustrating the point that to be trans is not to inherently be in a state of internal crisis or discomfort. Trans people can and should love themselves. It is the poor treatment of the trans body by outsiders that leads to the trans person suffering. While the ease of which Sal's gender is accepted may seem unrealistic compared to reality, this is precisely Miller's point. Why should gender nonconformity be such a crisis point? Why can't someone like Sal be accepted and honoured?

Le Guin takes her criticism of gender much further than Miller, examining how the stigma and gender biases Genly Ai imposes on the Gethenians is rooted in both fear and mass marketed gender performance by the mainstream society of his home world. However, both novels present us with examples of how trans bodies have a sense of crisis thrust upon them by external forces, even when the trans individual expresses inner acceptance. Applying the social model to transness could result in a world that lies somewhere between these two 'left hands'. Through the power of SFF fiction we can begin to imagine a world somewhere between *Ignia* and *Winter*, where gender diverse people exist, are accommodated for, and face no barriers because of their gender expression, in the same way cisgendered individuals are treated in our world. A world such as this, where all people, no matter their gender expression, can access society equally, would not require the trans person to change, it would require the world to catch up to the needs of the trans individual.

Crises in Australian education, the push for educational technology and the medium-oriented perspective of Neil Postman

Andrew Hutcheon¹
Edith Cowan University

From teacher shortages to declining literacy, the Australian education system faces multiple crises. This paper turns to the work of Neil Postman, who started as a high school teacher but later turned towards communication and media studies, to provide an alternative account of parts of this crisis, especially those around the role of technology in education. In his early works, his concern is attached to the concept of education as a 'subversive concept' and then a 'conserving concept' – first aiming to create young people engaged in civic society, then aiming to preserve written culture against television. After a middle period in which he broadened his critique of technology, Postman made a late return to education, reviving democratic critiques against the technophilic version of education that elevated the economy and individualism over civic society. This paper connects these works together as a comprehensive technology-oriented critique of education, arguing that both the principles and application of technology in Australian education have corrupted the meaning and outcomes of education.

Over the past 10 years, Australian education at all levels has lurched from crisis to crisis. In 2023 alone, Australian students slid to record lows in the international PISA testing, the national teacher shortage reached its worst ever level and the interim report of the Australian Universities Accord at one point simply stated, 'long-term planning has been completely inadequate.'² Failures across the board in Australian education have ushered forth similarly broad explanations, ranging from funding shortfalls to criticisms of the dominant pedagogical models. This article does not aim to capture all of those causes but instead report upon one widely under-examined aspect of this crisis: the impact of technology, and assumptions about technology, in education. The heart of this argument is that education technology (edtech) has been foisted upon Australian students without proper consideration of potential impacts, leading to substandard teaching environments, additional expense to students and schools, and an over-reliance on quantitative indicators. In pursuing this link of argument, I will be drawing heavily upon the works of Neil Postman, a teacher turned media scholar, who sustained a detailed critique of the role of technology in education between the 1970s and early 2000s.

¹ ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8790-6195

² Kate Chipperfield, 'Australian Universities Accord – Interim Report', 19 July 2023.

At the centre of this analysis is the increased focus on edtech as an apparently essential part of education in Australia and the noticeable changes that have occurred since this assumption came to prominence in the mid-2000s. In this paper, edtech specifically refers to digital tools, platforms and systems that are applied within formal education environments. This encompasses both school-mandated laptops and tablets, and bring your own device programs that may also include personal smartphone usage. This is a whole of system approach that includes both the material artefacts (e.g. hardware, software, infrastructure) and the ideologies that drive such adoptions, following the spirit of critical analyses by Neil Selwyn and Chris Bigum.³ Such a wide-ranging definition enables an analysis that moves beyond the perception of edtech as a mere pedagogical tool and orients this work around the issue of how edtech is offered as a solution to perceived challenges in education.⁴ That edtech is fundamentally a technological solution to a social problem—in this case, the performance of the Australian education system—is the primary reason I argue that a medium-oriented analysis is essential.

As such, Postman's critique is more vital than ever because it upends some of the basic tenets of national edtech assumptions. Where edtech proponents espouse an improved educational experience, Postman highlights the unique value of reading books and face-to-face conversation. And where edtech supporters claim value in standardised testing and quantification, such as the NAPLAN regime, Postman eviscerates the idea in pointing to arbitrary nature of so many grading systems and the hazards of teaching to the test. Significantly, where edtech support typically cloaks itself in the largely inconclusive field of pedagogical research, as per recent comprehensive research by UNESCO noting the low learning impact of edtech against issues with costs and the digital divide, instead basing its claims around the *content* of these new systems, Postman instead orients his analysis upon the *medium* of instruction.⁵ In practice, this means that edtech research will often discuss the merits of a new piece of software or the apparent benefits of an online means of instruction but overlook the general impacts of computers upon individual and society. For example, the potential implications of signing millions of

³ Neil Selwyn, *Education and Technology: Key Issues and Debates*, Third edition (London New York Oxford New Delhi Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022); Chris Bigum, 'Schools and Computers: Tales of a Digital Romance', in *Transformative Approaches to New Technologies and Student Diversity in Futures Oriented Classrooms: Future Proofing Education*, ed. Leonie Rowan and Chris Bigum (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2012), 15–28, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2642-0_2.

⁴ Edward Hamilton and Norm Friesen, 'Online Education: A Science and Technology Studies Perspective / Éducation En Ligne: Perspective Des Études En Science et Technologie', *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology / La Revue Canadienne de l'apprentissage et de La Technologie* 39, no. 2 (14 February 2013), <https://doi.org/10.21432/T2001C>.

⁵ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2023: Technology in Education: A Tool on Whose Terms?*, 1st ed. (UNESCO, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.54676/UZQV8501>.

Australian students up to Google Classroom environments that have been documented as selling student data have been overlooked in favour of apparent benefits of teachers being able to assign online activities to separate groups of students.⁶ Before we delve further into the divide between the edtech status quo and Postman's riposte, we must first examine the relevant scope and scale of the crises in Australian education.

Outline of a crisis in Australian education

There are three main elements to the Australian education crisis: the apparent decline in student learning, a worsening shortage in staff, and a shortfall in funding. All three are impacted by the shift to quantitative measures of student success and accelerated mass adoption of edtech, albeit to varying degrees, and will be analysed in this article. In this section, I am focusing on the nature and scale of the problems in student learning and the impacts of edtech adoption upon teachers.

Beginning with the apparent decline in student learning, Sue Thomson and her team at Australian Centre for Education Research noted that after the 2018 PISA testing, Australian students trailed China and Singapore by roughly one and a half years in literacy, three years in numeracy and between one and three years in scientific literacy.⁷ In 2022, the Australian results had further declined across all test subjects, resulting in deficits equivalent to two years of schooling as compared to national results at the beginning of testing.⁸ National news media pounced upon this news, at times with special attention paid to Australia's fall from an estimated first or near-first in literacy in the 1990s.⁹ Taken together, there is a seeming consensus that the system is underperforming.

⁶ Internet Safety Labs, 'Internet Safety Labs Research Reveals 96% of School Apps Send Student Data to Third Parties, Including Advertisers', Internet Safety Labs, 13 December 2022, <https://internetsafetylabs.org/blog/news-press/isl-research-reveals-96-of-school-apps-send-student-data-to-third-parties/>.

⁷ Sue Thomson et al., *PISA 2018: Reporting Australia's Results: Volume I: Student Performance* (Camberwell Vic: Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 2019).

⁸ OECD, *PISA 2022 Results (Volume I): The State of Learning and Equity in Education*, PISA (OECD, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1787/53f23881-en>.

⁹ Caitlin Cassidy, 'Australian Students' Pisa Scores Still Declining despite Climb into OECD Top 10', *The Guardian*, 5 December 2023, sec. Australia news, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/dec/05/australian-students-2022-pisa-scores-results-declining-oecd>; Glenn Fahey, 'What Australia Must Do to Lift Flatlining Student Scores', *Australian Financial Review*, 5 December 2023, <https://www.afr.com/policy/health-and-education/what-australia-must-do-to-lift-flatlining-student-scores-20231129-p5enlr>; Robyn Grace, 'Australian School Students More than Four Years behind in Maths', *The Age*, 5 December 2023, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/australian-school-students-more-than-four-years-behind-in-maths-20231204-p5eosl.html>.

There are some caveats we need to add this scene, most notably the over-reliance of quantified testing regimes such as PISA and NAPLAN. These testing regimes persist despite a growing body of evidence that such testing is at least mildly detrimental to learning.¹⁰ As the Dulfer report points out, a range of behaviours that have long been attached to standardised testing, such as ‘teaching to the test,’ has been observed across a large proportion of Australian classrooms.¹¹ Meanwhile, students from low socio-economic status backgrounds and some students who speak English as a second language are disadvantaged by the testing format¹². All of these factors make NAPLAN and PISA results a flawed proxy to student achievement, and yet they are the most common metrics by which our education system is judged and adjusted. As much as we must treat these results with caution generally, there is an important irony in the fact that the system is also in decline by the same measurements the policy making apparatus prioritises.

Another key element of the crisis is the workload impact on teachers, who are abandoning the profession in record numbers, such as in New South Wales where one in five teachers are now quitting within the first five years.¹³ The response to this is telling; while teachers have cited administrative workload as one of the key drivers of job dissatisfaction, the NSW state government responded at one stage by offering to outsource lesson planning rather than reduce the administrative component.¹⁴ While it is hardly the entire issue, lesson planning is a particularly interesting dimension of the issues this paper is concerned with, as there has been a marked change in the preparation of materials following the introduction of computers across most age groups. Consider the following reporting upon the matter:

The typical teacher spends about six hours a week creating and sourcing lesson materials, and a quarter of teachers spend 10

¹⁰ Nicky Dulfer, Suzanne Rice, and John Polesel, ‘An Educator’s Perspective: The Impacts of High Stakes Testing on School Students and Their Families’, Whitlam Institute, 17 November 2012, <https://www.whitlam.org/publications/2017/10/17/an-educators-perspective-the-impacts-of-high-stakes-testing-on-school-students-and-their-families>; Pauline Roberts and Marianne Knaus, ‘Play-Based Learning Play Pedagogies for Technology Education’, in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Technology Education* (Bloomsbury, 2023), 274.

¹¹ Dulfer, Rice, and Polesel, ‘An Educator’s Perspective’.

¹² Lisa O’Brien et al., ‘Improving Outcomes for All: The Report of the Independent Expert Panel’s Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System’, 2023.

¹³ Jason Gerke, ‘Record Numbers of Teachers Leaving NSW Schools’, *NSW Teachers Federation* (blog), 8 April 2023, <https://www.nswtf.org.au/news/2023/04/09/record-numbers-of-teachers-leaving-nsw-schools/>.

¹⁴ Jessica Amy Sears et al., ‘“This Is like Banging Our Heads against the Wall”: Why a Move to Outsource Lesson Planning Has NSW Teachers Hopping Mad’, *The Conversation*, 4 August 2022, <http://theconversation.com/this-is-like-banging-our-heads-against-the-wall-why-a-move-to-outsource-lesson-planning-has-nsw-teachers-hopping-mad-188081>.

hours or more. *Two-thirds of teachers scour the internet and social media websites – such as YouTube and Facebook – at least once a fortnight, looking for resources that can vary wildly in quality.*¹⁵

Textbooks and readers, for all of their flaws, are radically simple in comparison; there is no six hours of resource hunting per week when the primary text of instruction has remained stable over several years. We can go further here, when a textbook is chosen as the primary instruction resource, the question of quality is also settled, there is no variance as there is with online videos, as almost all textbooks are written by teachers in the field or academic experts, and in turn edited and vetted by the publisher or their peers. Critically, when textbooks can be taken as a constant, the teachers can spend more of their preparation time on *how* the class might be taught in terms of activities, which students should be in which group for an activity or adapting the activity to students with diverse learning needs. In all these ways, the essential stability of written texts as a medium serves as a more reliable foundation for effective teaching than the bells and whistles approach of online media, which are by their nature ephemeral and varying in quality.

The other side of edtech's impact on teachers is the administrative demands placed on teachers associated with the quantification of education that is so often linked with edtech initiative and technocratic thinking. Recent work by Rafaan Daliri-Ngametua, Sue Creagh and Ian Hardy with teachers in Queensland identified how regimes of quantification, primarily reporting associated with NAPLAN, was turned into increased stress upon individual teachers to have high performing students by principals and parents entrained to believe in the test scores as an absolute measure of achievement.¹⁶ Meanwhile, an international study of teacher conditions highlighted that 66.2% of teachers had found their administrative load had increased because of accountability measures, which are often attached to digitisation.¹⁷ Taken together, we can see the contours of a system in which quantification, often directed through digital technology, and the demands of shifting education to largely unproven edtech systems for administration and learning are contributing to system-wide increases in teacher stress and burnout. That these changes have occurred seems to be an acceptable observation, why they have occurred is a different matter that is worth further examination.

¹⁵ Jordana Hunter, 'Australian School Education Is Falling Short', *Grattan Institute* (blog), 2022, <https://grattan.edu.au/news/australian-school-education-is-falling-short/>.

¹⁶ Rafaan Daliri-Ngametua, Ian Hardy, and Sue Creagh, 'Data, Performativity and the Erosion of Trust in Teachers', *Cambridge Journal of Education* 52 (1 December 2021): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2021.2002811>.

¹⁷ Greg Thompson, 'The Global Report on the Status of Teachers 2021' (Brussels, Belgium: Education International, 2021).

The edtech procession

It is at this point that the question of how this crisis arose become an essential step on the path back to an education system that is fairer and kinder to all stakeholders, and can also be an invaluable contributor to the social, political and economic life of the nation. It is almost certainly a multi-causal phenomena, as highlighted in the significant federal reviews of education, such as the recent *Improving Outcomes for All* expert panel report.¹⁸ The earlier *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools* (commonly known as the Gonski report) stated frankly in 2018 that there was, ‘a lack of research-based evidence on what works best in education,’ prefacing a broad range of findings and potential actions to improve Australian education.¹⁹ Despite this lack of evidence and ignoring the complexities of the issue, there has been a concerted push for more edtech in classrooms across the nation, and so it is essential to pause and assess where this impetus comes from. While acknowledging that edtech advocacy has a degree of heterogeneity and complexity, there are certain strands of thought that are recur in this domain. Government policymakers driven by national competitiveness agendas,²⁰ teacher-practitioners with a pragmatic approach meeting students who are perceived to be digitally oriented,²¹ and of course, the edtech providers serving their commercial interests are all part of the edtech advocacy procession.²²

In the Australian context, however, a useful starting point for this discussion is the launch of the ‘Education Revolution’ by the Rudd Government in 2007. The premise of the Education Revolution was that the future was digital and so every child needed to be learning on computers as soon as possible.²³ The supposed inevitability of digitisation is based on spurious reasoning, as Australia’s economy has been dominated by resources

¹⁸ Australian Department of Education, ‘Improving Outcomes for All: Australian Government Summary Report of the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System.’, 11 December 2023, <https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/resources/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system-summary-report>.

¹⁹ David Gonski et al., ‘Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools’ (Australian Department of Education, March 2018), p. ix, <https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/resources/through-growth-achievement-report-review-achieve-educational-excellence-australian-schools>.

²⁰ Alan Reid, ‘Is This a Revolution?: A Critical Analysis of the Rudd Government’s National Education Agenda’, *Curriculum Perspectives* 29, no. 3 (2009): 1–13.

²¹ Joanne Orlando, ‘Teachers’ Changing Practices with Information and Communication Technologies: An up-Close, Longitudinal Analysis’, *Research in Learning Technology* 22 (8 August 2014), <https://doi.org/10.3402/rlt.v22.21354>.

²² Neil Selwyn, *Is Technology Good for Education?* (Cambridge, UK Malden, MA: Polity, 2016).

²³ Australian National Audit Office, ‘Digital Education Revolution Program - National Secondary Schools Computer Fund’, 2011, <https://www.anao.gov.au/work/performance-audit/digital-education-revolution-program-national-secondary-schools-computer-fund>.

while services and finance have declined since 2007.²⁴ This aside, since the Rudd government's decision to increase edtech use in 2007, digitisation has been an unusually bipartisan issue, especially where the idea of economic competitiveness in a global market is involved. Consider the following quotation from then-Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull in promoting the Coalition's approach to edtech adoption, from an ABC News report:

We need to make sure ... our kids are coming out of school competitive. This is a very competitive world. We've got to make sure they've got the skills to excel and to compete and be their best.²⁵

This is a breathtaking instrumentalisation of the purpose of education, and one that seemingly went unquestioned in the main national papers at the time as, for example, coverage from the *Sydney Morning Herald* thought Turnbull's education reforms 'reward personal progress' and would 'fix the country's lagging school system.'²⁶ What Turnbull is saying, however, does not entirely relate to the adoption of technology in classrooms, though it no doubt plays a part, as behind this statement lurks the spectre of quantification once again. In essence, once competitiveness becomes a central tenet of education, we must then determine who is winning the competition and once at that stage, it is only a small step to having a system that uses quantitative measures to determine said winners. This is what I refer to as 'quantitative capture,' a state in which quantitative logic dominates questions of value across a given society.

As a concept, quantitative capture lends itself neatly to the dominant idea of what Australia considers as the most important purpose of education; that is as a tool to serve economic needs, which are quantitative in nature, rather than creating well-informed citizens and masters of their field, which are qualitative in nature. Similarly, edtech companies have no philosophical or economic interest in the promotion of qualitative outcomes, which its systems are inherently poor at measuring. Where it is easy for computers to scan and mark multiple choice quizzes or mark a maths test due to its right-wrong binary logic, it is virtually impossible for computers to assess the 'fact' and quality

²⁴ Reserve Bank of Australia, 'Snapshot Comparison | Composition of Australian Economy', Reserve Bank of Australia, 2024, Australia, <https://www.rba.gov.au/education/resources/digital-interactives/snapshot-comparison/index.html>.

²⁵ Natasha Robinson, 'Australia Has an "Industrial-Era Model of School Education", and the PM Agrees It Needs to Change', *ABC News*, 29 April 2018, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-30/gonski-recommends-australian-schools-move-to-individualised-lea/9708984>.

²⁶ Michael Koziol, 'Malcolm Turnbull Backs Gonski 2.0 "blueprint" for Radical Overhaul of Australian Curriculum', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 April 2018, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/malcolm-turnbull-backs-gonski-2-0-blueprint-for-radical-overhaul-of-australian-curriculum-20180429-p4zcaq.html>.

content of an English or Philosophy essay because there are few ‘facts’ in such fields and the quality of an argument is largely a subjective judgement. In such a manner, the limitations of edtech come to inform the curriculum as a whole, defining the limits of the possible.

There is a further political dimension to the ascendance of edtech, which is the news-friendliness of *things* over *experiences*. The delivery of laptops or ‘technology enhanced’ buildings provide a clear proof of delivery in terms of campaign promises to both a waiting media and a sceptical public. The improvement for teachers themselves, perhaps in terms of adequate time and space to prepare classes, does not deliver the same media opportunity. Similarly, the announcement of edtech aligned policies grants legitimacy to government claims about competing in the apparently digital economy of the present and future, creating the very future it is claiming to meet in a performative way. Or as technology theorist Evgeny Morozov points out with relation to the larger project of Web3, ‘we’ve got this beautiful map on our hands – all that’s missing is the territory it is supposed to refer to.’²⁷ Instead of working towards meaningful change that would retain teachers—reducing administrative workloads, for example—we are sold a vision of what education could be, if it would just adjust to whatever edtech is being sold at the moment. For example, there is no budget seemingly allocated to the reduction of administrative tasks that overburden teachers or, for that matter, pay increases across the sector but there is \$91.7m over four years to ‘to transform program administration for schools and higher education providers by developing a stable, secure, and streamlined information and communications technology platform.’²⁸

Morozov has previously provided a term for such situation, ‘technological solutionism,’ or sometimes ‘technosolutionism,’ referring to the recurrence of situations where powerful institutions prefer to solve social problems with technology rather than systemic change.²⁹ We can see technosolutionism in action when, for example, in 2021 the NSW police commissioner suggested a sexual consent app as a solution to a growing problem with sexual assault and rape,³⁰ or when the federal government used software rather than people to assess Centrelink debt in the scandal known as

²⁷ Evgeny Morozov, ‘Web3: A Map in Search of Territory’, *The Crypto Syllabus*, 13 January 2022, <https://the-crypto-syllabus.com/web3-a-map-in-search-of-territory/>.

²⁸ Ry Crozier, ‘The Full List of IT Projects in the 2023-24 Federal Budget’, *iTnews*, 10 May 2023, <https://www.itnews.com.au/news/the-full-list-of-it-projects-in-the-2023-24-federal-budget-594172>.

²⁹ Evgeny Morozov, ‘To Save Everything, Click Here : Technology, Solutionism and the Urge to Fix Problems That Don’t Exist’, 1 January 2014.

³⁰ Kevin Nguyen and Paige Cockburn, ‘Sexual Consent App Proposal Might Be NSW Top Cop’s “Worst Idea All Year”’, *ABC News*, 18 March 2021, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-18/nsw-sexual-consent-app-proposed-by-mick-fuller/100015782>.

'Robodebt.'³¹ Technosolutionism provides a useful lens to think through the changes in education wrought by edtech. Rather than seeing this as a primarily pedagogical movement, we can see it as a larger capital-intensive technological movement that brought solutions to problems that did not really exist and has been part of an apparent decline in education outcomes.

The technosolutionist edtech status quo distorts what is deemed necessary for successful teaching, even in relatively poor environments, such as rural and remote schools, as mentioned in this excerpt from an *Australian Financial Review* report on Australian schools in 2022:

If you go to these rural communities to work, things like decent housing, the ability to go out on the weekend, decent Wi-Fi – all these things disappear. They don't get proper professional development, and they don't get psychologists and people who can work on the wellbeing of the kids.³²

It is curious to see in writing the equivalence of Wi-Fi with housing, and the implication that wi-fi is a precondition for teachers and students doing their work. Yet this is seemingly what our solutions in education have boiled down to; that the teacher is merely a guide through online resources, a shepherd of laptops and a master of standardised testing. Australia has been sold a vision of what education can and should be, which is conveniently aligned with a technosolutionism of laptops over libraries and educational games over teachers. Yet we also need to question the conditions into which technosolutionism can arise, which amount to a certain malaise around the idea of what education is for and how it should be conducted, for which Postman is an excellent starting point in thinking through our problems.

Postman's critique

What is the necessary business of the schools? To create eager consumers? To transmit the dead ideas, values, metaphors, and information of three minutes ago? To create smoothly functioning bureaucrats? These aims are truly subversive since they undermine our chances of surviving as a viable, democratic society. And they do their work in the name of convention and

³¹ Luke Henriques-Gomes, 'Robodebt: Five Years of Lies, Mistakes and Failures That Caused a \$1.8bn Scandal', *The Guardian*, 10 March 2023, sec. Australia news, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/mar/11/robodebt-five-years-of-lies-mistakes-and-failures-that-caused-a-18bn-scandal>.

³² Julie Hare, 'Why Australia's Students Keep Falling behind', *Australian Financial Review*, 30 September 2022, <https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/education/why-australia-s-students-keep-falling-behind-20220928-p5blna>.

standard practice. We would like to see the schools go into the anti-entropy business. Now, that is subversive, too. But the purpose is to subvert attitude, beliefs and assumptions that foster chaos and uselessness.³³

To read Postman today is to experience an inversion of political sensibilities. As the above quotation hints at, Postman is at heart a conservative, in the sense that he is preoccupied with the conservation of print culture and democratic society. In 1969, when he initially penned the lines above with co-author Charles Weingartner, as education systems were undergoing significant experimentation with a progressive bent, he would have been seen as outright atavistic. Yet to read him in 2024, against the backdrop of a technosolutionism that entrenches many of the social problems of our time, such as the reiteration of class divides in digital divides, Postman finds more common cause with today's misfits than with the establishment. This revision of political orientation ultimately comes down to the opening line of the quotation – What is the necessary business of schools? And to better understand Postman's response to that, we need to look further into his body of work on the topic.

Before continuing with an examination of Postman's work in relation to technology and education, it is worth positioning him within the field of media studies, which is the line this article seeks to follow. Postman is broadly in the same lineage as Harold Innis³⁴ and Marshall McLuhan in his insistence on the centrality of the form of media instead of its contents.³⁵ His perspective is notably different from popular contemporaries such as Jean Baudrillard in that he is more materially than semiotically oriented.³⁶ Meanwhile, he also differs from writers such as Herman and Chomsky in that his interest is not in the bias inherent in ownership structures but instead pursues the bias inherent in the mediums themselves.³⁷ In the context of this article, it is also important to note that he was a teacher before a media scholar, which explains his ongoing engagement with concepts of childhood and education that are not as prominent in most others' in media studies work.³⁸ Taken together, Postman's

³³ Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (New York: Dell, 1988), 17.

³⁴ Harold A. Innis, *The Bias of Communication*, 2nd ed (Toronto ; Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

³⁵ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 5. impr (London: Routledge [and] Kegan Paul, 1975).

³⁶ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser, *The Body, in Theory - Histories of Cultural Materialism* (Ann Arbor, Mich: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2019).

³⁷ Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2002).

³⁸ Postman and Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*; Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1994); Neil Postman, *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School*, 1st ed (New York: Knopf, 1995).

value in my argument is one focused on the impact of the material form of edtech as being both critical to understand as well as fundamentally inalterable (i.e. a laptop cannot be something other than a laptop). This is not as technologically determinist as it first seems—a trait shared by Postman’s fellow travellers Innis and McLuhan—because Postman’s point is that we *could* choose another way to deliver and engage with education that is not so strongly oriented around edtech and yet we do not for cultural and political reasons.

One such cultural choice is the way, as discussed earlier in the article, that Australia has given itself over to quantification at all levels of education and that this is deeply problematic. I have generally identified the most overt forms of this issue in the form of PISA and NAPLAN but, to Postman, the issue runs far deeper than that. To Postman, the beginning of the decline arises in the very existence of grades themselves, as he highlights in the following way:

To say that someone should be doing better because he has an IQ of 134, or that someone is a 7.2 on a sensitivity scale, or that this man’s essay on the rise of capitalism is an A- and that man’s is a C+ would have sounded like gibberish to Galileo or Shakespeare or Thomas Jefferson. If it makes sense to us, that is because our minds have been conditioned by the technology of numbers so that we see the world differently than they did... Which is another way of saying that embedded in every tool is an ideological bias, a predisposition to construct the world as one thing rather than another, to value one thing over another, to amplify one sense or skill or attitude more loudly than another.³⁹

In Postman’s critique, as implied above, grade systems often limit how student understanding is assessed. For example, students are typically graded in maths on their ability to sit at a desk and complete equations on paper, rather than demonstrating an understanding of geometry by being outside and building a strong treehouse or play structure. It is, in this example, far easier to mark and sort students based on the *number* of equations correctly solved than it is to assess the *quality* of a structure built out of variable components in differing environments. And yet, is either student ‘better’ than the other?

For Postman, this problem was later better expressed as he shifted his primary research concern from education to media technology, exemplified in his seminal works *Amusing Ourselves to Death*⁴⁰ and *Technopoly*.⁴¹ It is in the latter work that Postman defines his concept of Technopoly, a ‘state of culture’

³⁹ Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 13.

⁴⁰ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, 20th anniversary ed (New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Penguin Books, 2006).

⁴¹ Postman, *Technopoly*.

consisting of the 'deification of technology' requiring the development of a new kind of society, one in which certain attitudes and approaches to problems that conditions people in a way that is reminiscent of what Morozov would later call technosolutionism:

Those who feel most comfortable in Technopoly are those who are convinced that technical progress is humanity's supreme achievement and the instrument by which our most profound dilemmas may be solved. They also believe that information is an unmixed blessing, which through its continued and uncontrolled production and dissemination offers increased freedom, creativity and peace of mind. The fact that information does none of these things...seems to change few opinions, for such unwavering beliefs are an inevitable product of the structure of Technopoly.⁴²

Against this quotation, we might fruitfully consider current debates around the integration of generative AI into education. At first there was a notable clutching of pearls around the idea that students would cheat at written assessments using answers provided by ChatGPT and its ilk, ignoring the fact that if assessment were less formulaic and quantitative, the software would not be able to answer it correctly in any event. Yet in a relatively short time we have seemingly shifted, at least in the environments I have knowledge of in secondary and university education, towards the *fait accompli* that generative AI is the future and that what it provides us is a blessing for creativity and productivity. In this shift we can see the very malady Postman identified 30 years ago, in that the provision of information—in this case the responses from generative AI—for our supposed benefit is an unmixed blessing, no context need apply. What Postman is most commonly arguing against is the pervasive spread of not just the physical artefacts of technology in education—in his time, television, in ours, laptops and the internet—but the contagious nature of the thinking that comes with it. We might think that common grading systems are separate from questions of technology, but in reality they stem from an attitude connected to the technocratic mindset that follows industrialisation and stimulated by digitisation. Or as Postman writes elsewhere:

...we learn nothing when educators ask, Will students learn mathematics better by computers than by textbooks...Such questions have an immediate, practical value to those who ask them, but they are diversionary. They direct attention away from

⁴² Postman, 71.

the serious social, intellectual and institutional crises that new media foster.⁴³

We are regularly assured that edtech infused experiences are both what students want and a better means of creating active learning experiences.⁴⁴ What remains unanswered in these discussions is any earnest engagement with the ‘serious social, intellectual and institutional crises that new media foster.’ In this case, when teachers and administrators ask whether students learn better by laptops than by pen and paper, we ignore, for example, whether laptops are *also* conduits of distraction in the form of games and social media. We ignore that the internet *as it is currently built* is designed for the purposes of commerce, what internet historian Ben Tarnoff has described a connected series of online shopping malls, hence the overwhelming amount of advertising and the extraction of user data for sale, including student data.⁴⁵

Returning to the purely utilitarian stance, however, and thinking about the learning environment ‘in itself’, Postman still has serious objections, with regards to a then-current proposal to connect students and scientists virtually, that are worth heeding:

But I find it especially revealing that in the preceding scenario [about a proposal for researchers to help primary school students with science projects], we have an example of a technological solution to a psychological problem that would seem to be exceedingly serious. We are presented with a student who is “bored with the real world.” What does it mean to say someone is bored with the real world, especially one so young? Can a journey into virtual reality cure such a problem? And if it can, will our troubled youngster want to return to the real world? Confronted with a student who is bored with the real world, I don't think we can get away so easily by making available a virtual-reality physics lab.⁴⁶

Postman here poses a very real problem that is now facing educators across mainstream contexts. When compared to all the limiting factors and difficulties

⁴³ Postman, 18-19.

⁴⁴ Paulo Blikstein and Izidoro Blikstein, ‘Do Educational Technologies Have Politics? A Semiotic Analysis of the Discourse of Educational Technologies and Artificial Intelligence in Education’, *Works in Progress*, 29 June 2021, <https://wip.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/do-educational-technologies-have-politics/release/1>.

⁴⁵ Ben Tarnoff, *Internet for the People: The Fight for Our Digital Future* (London ; New York: Verso, 2022).

⁴⁶ Neil Postman, *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School*, 1st ed (New York: Knopf, 1995), 41.

of working in the real world, online and virtual learning experiences are typically designed to be extrinsically motivating in the spirit of Skinner's behaviourist model; all the stickers and merit systems that have been teacher staples for decades are now supercharged with animation and leaderboards, books are no longer confined to static ink on the page, they become multimedia experiences on iPads.⁴⁷ All with the cumulative effect that the real world becomes uninteresting in comparison. We are, in effect, training children to be at home in the eternally distracting online environment of debatable economic value and questionable resilience building capability.

Notes on a way forward: 'loving resistance fighters' and 'convivial' classrooms

At the end of *Technopoly*, Postman provides us with the rhetorical figure of the 'loving resistance fighter' that might pursue a resistance to these changes, which so often come back to the problem of how and why we educate;

A resistance fighter understands that technology must never be accepted as part of the natural order of things, that every technology...is a product of a particular economic and political context and carries with it a program, an agenda, and a philosophy that may or may not be life-enhancing...*I can say no more than this, for each person must decide how to enact these ideas.*⁴⁸

To Postman, teachers teach because they enjoy the process of teaching, the daily interactions with students and the cultivation of minds that will go on to achieve things large and small, not because we see ourselves as the reproductive apparatus of business as usual, even if this is practically what we do at present. Technology occupies an odd space with regards to this orientation because for some teachers the technology is an interesting conduit to creative expression or because students can do some interesting science projects with data, but for other teachers it is 'in the way', it mediates the teacher-student relationship or modifies the horizon of the pedagogically possible.⁴⁹ Furthermore, as discussed, it creates other distortions and problems in education, potentially more than it solves: the misallocation of resources that could be better spent on reducing inequality between schools and students, introducing a prime source of distraction, or the creation of a number of

⁴⁷ Blikstein and Blikstein, 'Do Educational Technologies Have Politics?'

⁴⁸ Postman, *Technopoly*. 184-185.

⁴⁹ T. Philip Nichols and Ezekiel Dixon-Román, 'Platform Governance and Education Policy: Power and Politics in Emerging Edtech Ecologies', *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 46, no. 2 (1 June 2024): 309–28, <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737231202469>.

physical impairments during developmental years, such as the reported increase in myopia⁵⁰ and the decrease in physical strength.⁵¹

Against this, Postman offers up this loving resistance fighter. Teachers love teaching, so each must find their own way to manage the issues, good and ill, that come with technology. Yet I find this approach unsatisfactory because of the systemic imbalances that edtech creates, many of which I have introduced throughout this article. After all, there is little a single teacher can do against a program as large as the Rudd Government's Digital Education Revolution and its descendants. There is no marketing budget or sales teams supporting a teacher putting in the hours to adapt their lesson plans to a specific class. And there seems to be no politicians that will challenge the agenda of digitisation or, at the very least, support improved working conditions for teachers beyond the occasional (and begrudgingly given) incremental pay increases. Though the idea of 'loving' the experience and execution of education is an important element of resisting the corrosive changes in education of the past 20 years, what it lacks is institutional power and resources.

What is needed then is a more systematic alternative that addresses the crises that Postman correctly diagnoses. Critically, what this solution needs to provide, unlike the education administrators of 2024, is an account of the problem from a technological as well as pedagogical perspective. As a means of provoking further thought on this issue, I would propose the theories of Ivan Illich as a rich starting point for these inquiries. Firstly, as I have noted elsewhere with respect to mundane AI voice assistant systems such as Siri and Alexa, Illich's notion of 'radical monopoly' serves as an alternative starting point for understanding the power dynamics of big tech.⁵² Radical monopoly is interested not in the economic monopoly where one company dominates the market in terms of supply, but instead signals towards the notion that certain configurations of technology monopolise *how things are done*. In the book that he introduces the concept in, *Tools for Conviviality*, Illich uses cars as an example; the particular way we have developed and used cars—private ownership, public highway building, generally lax regulations on fuel economy until recently—has created an environment in which the car

⁵⁰ Carla Lanca and Seang-Mei Saw, 'The Association between Digital Screen Time and Myopia: A Systematic Review', *Ophthalmic and Physiological Optics* 40, no. 2 (March 2020): 216–29, <https://doi.org/10.1111/opo.12657>.

⁵¹ L. D. Rosen et al., 'Media and Technology Use Predicts Ill-Being among Children, Preteens and Teenagers Independent of the Negative Health Impacts of Exercise and Eating Habits', *Computers in Human Behavior* 35 (1 June 2014): 364–75, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.01.036>.

⁵² Andrew Hutcheon, 'Domestic AI Systems, Maker Culture and the Design Ethics of Ivan Illich', in *Technology, Users and Uses: Ethics and Human Interaction through Technology and AI*, ed. Joan Casas-Roma, Jordi Conesa, and Santi Caballe (Bradford: Ethics International Press Limited, 2023), 135–161.

absolutely dominates many cities.⁵³ This domination occurs on the level of space, as the suburb, highway and parking lot all consume arable land for the benefit of drivers, and of behaviour, where even small trips are often done by car in the first instance because there are no disincentives against the apparent convenience of car travel. We can note, for example, the decline in the number of children taking ‘active transport’—walking and cycling—to schools, from 75% to 25% between 1981 and 2021, with half of those children living less than 1 km away from their school.⁵⁴ In the radical monopoly of the car, driving is the default and prioritised mode of transport, and other options are considered unusual or mildly deviant.

The application of radical monopoly in terms of edtech is related to Postman’s early criticism of technology in the classroom, in that increasingly the use of technology to teach is not something done in an appropriate context but something that is becoming a ‘necessary’ part of all teaching, under a logic of technosolutionism. Without space for teachers to wholesale reject the use of technology in their classrooms, as part of a considered approach to their specific classes and contexts, then the edtech approach has become a radical monopoly on how we teach. As with the radical monopoly of cars, the secondary and unintended consequences of edtech are required to be ignored. The impact on student behaviour, physical health, the student-teacher connection, and more sustained modes of thought must be sacrificed for marginal and debatable gains in learning and to support an assumed shift to a digital services economy that has been on the verge of happening for thirty years at this stage.

Against radical monopoly, Illich proposed the concept of conviviality, which prioritises sustainable, vernacular, and socially responsible technology design.⁵⁵ Broadly speaking, we can view this issue through the issue of repair. In the education context, we might most concisely think about this in terms of hardware and software choices in each context. In terms of hardware, when we think about edtech, we are typically talking about laptops and tablets, loaded with the approved software, and often effectively locked to the student on account of how many devices are practically irreparable. The Illichian approach here would be to only invest in items that students could pull apart as needed, or remixed and recycle into new devices, teaching the students that computing has a necessary material component in its hardware, giving rise to discussions around sustainability and developing their confidence to repair and modify this apparently key device in their life. In software, we see proprietary

⁵³ Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1975).

⁵⁴ WA Department of Transport, ‘The Declining Rate of Walking and Cycling to School in Perth’ (WA Department of Transport, 2021), https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/mediaFiles/active-transport/AT_P_Declining_Rate_walking_cycling_to_school_in_Perth.pdf.

⁵⁵ Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*.

solutions, such as Google Classroom and Teams, ascendant over open-source solutions, such as Moodle and Signal. If schools more regularly owned their own instances of key learning software, or used software from companies that are not driven by ad revenue, then we could eliminate the scourge of data harvesting of minors, but instead we are often stuck with the default offerings of the edtech radical monopoly. That these systems might be harder to use or require more local IT staff to help manage is precisely the point, because in return the students would presumably develop real competence in computers and more jobs would be retained in the community. Critically, a convivial approach does not deny technology in its entirety, rather it seeks to use it only where appropriate, under conditions in which the grassroots level of teachers and students maintain control and that a spirit of open-ended inquiry prevails. Yet because such an approach is unquantifiable—as in, how can one use one rubric to mark projects as diverse as upcycling broken computer parts into fashion items and the creation of open-source surf condition detection AI?—though perhaps more institutionally legible, the convivial classroom is perhaps as much a fever dream as Postman’s loving resistance fighter.

Conclusion

Taking Postman on as a serious critic of the edtech mindset sheds new light on the crisis in Australia’s education system. While much of the coverage of the crisis focuses upon conventional narratives about the content and pedagogical approaches of teaching, the creep of edtech and its associated technocratic administrative mindset has played a significant role in the quandaries around fixing the system. At best, edtech is simply an annoyance, another thing for teachers and students to learn, and an often-unnecessary mediation of the student-teacher relationship. At worst, it is defining the way the entire sector is operated, a radical monopoly of the way private corporations think education should be operated. Yet it is perhaps Postman’s more nuanced attack on the quantitative nature of contemporary teaching, the historically unprecedented nature of absolutist grading systems and administrative accountability workloads that a hypothetical Galileo or Shakespeare would have considered gibberish, that perhaps points to the largest problem. Without *deeply* understanding that education could and should be dedicated to producing a wide variety of people that could fill a wide variety of roles both communal and economic, necessitating a more open approach to assessing learning, we are committed to an all-in bet on an entirely digital future without a robust social sphere. I will close here with some hypothetical questions and a call to the reader to read Postman for themselves. What could Australia’s teachers do with their time if they did not have to complete as much digitally driven administrative work? What could our students learn without having to prepare for the one-off events of NAPLAN, PISA and ATAR? What might we afford,

especially in low socio-economic areas, if we did not have to pay for devices? How many students might thrive if they were allowed to step back from the screen? These are big, thorny questions but it seems they effectively go unasked because they sit outside our technologically oriented perception of what education is for and how it is done, and that is precisely the problem Postman identified long before the internet that we would best heed today, not tomorrow.

Warriors of the Blood: The crisis of lone-wolf domestic terrorism by pseudo-religious white supremacist extremists

Denn Lean

University of New South Wales

The most heinous acts of far right-wing, lone wolf, autonomous cell leaderless resistance, and ethno-religious terrorism in history were committed by two Ásatrúar when casualties inflicted by an individual act of violence are accounted for.¹ In 2011, Norwegian Anders Breivik, a White Supremacist Extremist, achieved the highest death toll for a lone wolf attack in Oslo and Utøya, Norway. In 2019, Australian Brenton Tarrant, another White Supremacist Extremist, achieved the second highest death toll for a lone wolf attack across multiple locations in Christchurch, New Zealand, after being inspired by Breivik's actions. The core relevance for Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) is that both these individuals are religious followers of Ásatrú.² This means that White Supremacist Extremist Ásatrúar have now formally joined Christians, Judaists, Hindus, Islamists, and Sikhs in perpetrating multiple acts of ideological ethno-religious terrorism. The question for scholars of CTS is whether this constitutes a new wave of ethno-religious terrorism. My conclusion is that whether White Supremacist Extremist Ásatrúar has begotten a new wave of terrorism is yet to be determined – but the evidence is compelling enough that the fact Ásatrúar are willing to engage in terrorism is a serious cause of concern for law enforcement, national security and intelligence apparatuses, and most certainly for CTS academics.

Since the 1980s, White Supremacist Extremist (WSE) violence has become a socio-political, ethno-religious, and now, national security dilemma throughout the majority of the Western World, especially within the United States (US).³ Moreover, during the 1980s and 1990s, an ideological and politico-religious conversion occurred for many WSE movements away from Christianity to a modern neo-pagan religion known as Ásatrú.⁴ The name

¹ I would like to thank Professor John Squires for his excellent tutelage of *Terror and Religion* during my undergraduate studies, where my academic inspiration for ethno-religious and ideological terrorism research was initiated, especially pertaining to White Supremacist Extremism intermixed with religious Ásatrú.

² Ásatrú is the Icelandic spelling, whilst Ásatru is the Norwegian – I utilise the Icelandic spelling.

³ Throughout this article, WSE will be used to refer to both the movement – Extremism – and the individuals within a movement – Extremist(s).

⁴ Ásatrúar themselves prefer heathen to pagan because of the derogative connotation of Christianity throughout history. Stefanie von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival: Transformations of Germanic Neopaganism* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 9-11; Mathias E. Nygaard, "The use of history in

Ásatrú is an Icelandic term meaning ‘faith in the *Æsir*’ – that is, the Viking-Age gods of Scandinavia that many would be familiar with, such as Thor and Odin – and it denotes a variety of modern religious beliefs and practices whose adherents claim are historically accurate reconstructions of the beliefs and practices of such ancestral communities from a millennium earlier.

This transformation for WSE occurred because of Robert Matthews’ protégée, David Lane. They were both members of the *Brüders Schweigen*, the Aryan Brotherhood’s elite guerilla unit during the early to mid-1980s.⁵ It is the legacy of Lane, whose reinterpretation of *völkisch* ideology.⁶ Intermixed with modern Odinism, which is also a non-racialised variant of Ásatrú, that began this devolution from traditional Christianity for WSE movements, groups, gangs, and individuals (if religious) towards what I label as *völkisch* Ásatrú.⁷

In the context of Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS), I would classify Breivik and Tarrant as leaderless resistance terrorists. They achieved “an act undertaken through individual initiative” that was “more a mark of despair than a revolutionary strategy.”⁸ Moreover, they were initially labelled Christian fundamentalists (if religion was even considered as a motivating factor for their actions), when in fact, both should be classed as *völkisch* Ásatrúar. Breivik openly professed to be a WSE Odinist and claimed to have never been a Christian.⁹ Tarrant stated that his WSE was inspired by Breivik’s actions and Lane’s ideological preachings.¹⁰ Both those claims are examined at the end of this article. However, for these reasons, I classify them as WSE Ásatrúar, or more specifically, Odinists.¹¹

Norwegian Asatru: ‘a religion with homework.’” *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, no. 2 (2022), 318.

⁵ Matthews died in a shootout with Federal authorities at his Whidbey Island hideout north of Seattle after an FBI informant gave him up. Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (Durham: Duke University Press, dukeupress.edu, 2003), 55, 193, 198; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 4th ed. rev. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 184, 216.

⁶ Which essentially begot occultist Nazism, as will be explored later.

⁷ *Völkisch* means folkish. Within Ásatrú groups, this is code for white Europeans (or their descendants) only.

⁸ Jeffrey Kaplan, “Leaderless Resistance,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, no. 3 (1997): 80, 90.

⁹ Kristin Engh Førde, “Norse gods in a crusade for Europe,” *Kilden*, 7 February 2012, kjonnsforskning.no; Silje Rognsvåg, “Breivik thinks Jesus is “pathetic”,” *Dagen*, 19 November 2015, Dagen.no.

¹⁰ Kristy Champion, “Australian right wing extremist ideology: exploring narratives of nostalgia and nemesis,” *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, no. 3 (2019b): 209, 214; Peter Lentini, “The Australian Far-Right: An International Comparison of Fringe and Conventional Politics,” in *The Far-Right in Contemporary Australia*, eds Mario Peucker & Debra Smith (Singapore: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2019), 42-44.

¹¹ A subset within Ásatrú, ‘Odinists’ refers to those who only worship or are interested in Odin, often in a hypermasculine context. This is ironic, given that the actual early medieval evidence for Odin points to a deity with transgressive and transgender tendencies.

It is important to note that the majority of Ásatrúar exists in non-racialised groups and communities, and this analysis relates to the violent words and actions of a small minority of this religious group. In the same way that the words and actions of Christian, Muslim, or Hindu terrorists are not representative of their majority, we should similarly keep in mind that the actions of these *völkisch* Ásatrú are not a reflection of all Ásatrúar.

Within this essay, I will first analyse the origins of Ásatrú from within esoterica, mysticism, and occultism, followed by the evolution of Christian Identity politics, which is generally understood as the primary source of modern WSE. I will then shift my focus to CTS through an examination of David C. Rapoport's Four Waves of Modern Terrorism model, a recent critique by Chris Millington, and the Cosmic War theory of Mark Juergensmeyer. With this theoretical grounding examined, I then discuss WSE domestic terrorism in the US since the 1980s for its relevance to the development of *völkisch* Ásatrú violence and the actions of Breivik and Tarrant.

Ásatrú, *völkisch*, and occultist Nazism

The modern revival of Scandinavian and Germanic paganism or heathenry, henceforth referred to as Ásatrú, is relevant because it was Lane's inspiration to re-invent *Wotanism* of the nineteenth century, itself a reconstruction of imagined Germanic and Nordic beliefs with little actual connection to ancient and medieval practices, that one finds the origins of Odinism Breivik and Tarrant are associated with. What follows is a historical analysis of the *völkisch* movement, which is a highly relevant context regarding modern Ásatrúar having its roots intermixed with *völkisch* ideology.

As the socio-political and ethno-religious ideologies of the 1960s hippie era evolved into the 1970s New Age era, dramatic changes occurred within many Western metropolises – the Goddess metaphor evolved within feminism, and the re-emergence of “Wicca, Witchcraft, Heathenism, and Shamanism” remerged under the “broad term of *Celtic Spirituality movements*”¹² to name a few. Nonetheless, the evolution of modern Ásatrú had two distinct phases: a Foundation Era during the 1970s and 1980s in “Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Britain, and the [US]” that coincided with a renewal of “*völkisch* religious [communities] in [then Western] Germany”¹³ during which left- and right-wing ideological schism occurred; and a Consolidation Era during the 1990s and 2000s when such controversies peaked resulting in a process of reformation the anti-racialised groups eventually dominated as they formalised Ásatrú into a

¹² Judy Harrow, “The Contemporary Neo-Pagan Revival,” in *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, ed. James R. Lewis (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 9-10; Jenny Butler, “Druidry in Contemporary Ireland,” in *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2005), 87.

¹³ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 54.

modern religion. Simply put, various Western polities sought a form of spirituality that had absolutely nothing to do with Christianity or its rigid social structures and gendered hierarchy.¹⁴ However, this is also when older *völkisch* religious ideologies – like Ariosophy, original Odinism, Western occultism and occultist Nazism, and even Satanism – intermixed right- and left-wing ideological, socio-political, and ethno-religious attitudes on spirituality and ethnicity within such polities.¹⁵

Psychologist Colin Campbell infamously referred to this as the “cultic milieu” – “the cultural underground of society” intermixing “a bundle of ideas and practices related to other ideas and practices”¹⁶ into one. This evolution represents the ideological, emotional, religious, and political motivations of modern WSE, not just Breivik, Tarrant, or Lane. But why did such divergent and oppositional ideologies intermix?

Stefanie von Schnurbein’s research into the re-emergence of *völkisch* ideology and the (re)evolution of Ásatrú movements since the mid-1980s argued that “Germanic [and Nordic] Neopaganism is [where] alternative, dissident spirituality ... ultra-nationalist, racist, and radical right-wing ideology ... [meet and influence] each other.”¹⁷ As von Schnurbein stated, Ásatrúar is the outcome “of an [active] contributors to” mythologising Germanic and Nordic history through (re)inventing a National Mythology to suit a socio-political ideology, and this has “two points of [crystallisation]”¹⁸ within history: Germanic Romanticism (c. 1800) and *völkisch* ideological nationalism (c. 1910). Contextualisation of this evolution is important to understanding Lane, Breivik, and Tarrant.

The Romantic era infused a concept of Germanic history established by the Renaissance and Enlightenment: that Nordic or Germanic myth is synonymous with various patriotic endeavours from within the literary and religious arts.¹⁹ Thus, when philosopher and theologian Johann Gottfried

¹⁴ For an in-depth analysis, see James R. Lewis ed., *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Micheal F. Strmiska ed., *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2005); Jesper Aagaard Petersen ed., *Contemporary Religious Satanism: A Critical Anthology* (London: Routledge, 2009); Kathryn Rountree ed., *Contemporary Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Europe: Colonialist and Nationalist Impulses* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2015); Martina Miechová, *Radical Paganism: Contemporary Heathens in Search of Political Identity*, (Masters Thesis Charles University, Prague, 2019, unpublished).

¹⁵ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 8, 54-55.

¹⁶ The psychologist Colin Campbell coined the term ‘cultic milieu’ in 1972, quoted in Petersen, “Introduction: Embracing Satan,” 4.

¹⁷ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 1, 2, 8.

¹⁸ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 17.

¹⁹ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 21, 350, 358; Adrian Ivakhiv, “The Revival of Ukrainian Native Faith,” in *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspective*, ed. Micheal F. Strmiska (Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2005), 215.

Herder (1744–1803) decided to revitalise Germanic poetry through folklore, Herder attributed Norse mythology as *the* authentic source of pre-Christian European historiography.²⁰ Herder's *Volk*, or proper nation, became radicalised as the *völkisch* movement became an alternative religion by 1910; however, its Romantic origins were always ideologically anti-Jewish and anti-Romani because, according to Herder, they never had a defined homeland.²¹

Herder's theories developed after scholar Paul Henri Mallet (1730–1807) first translated Eddic poetry in 1755 from Danish into French and in 1756 published a Celtic and Scandinavian historiography, as both books were translated into German. Hence, Herderian *volksgeist* – spirit of the people or national spirit – entered the psyche of various European polities who sought a national identity centred within a homogenous ethnicity of their own.²² Germanic Romanticism mythologised antiquity as a “holistic unity of [the] natural environment, language and history”²³ personified by rural life and the promotion of racist rhetoric.

The *völkisch* movement's goal of pan-German nationalism spread across Germanic polities after 1871, while *völkisch* ideology led to the creation of the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, also known as the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP).²⁴ In 1920, the Treaty of Versailles

²⁰ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 21; Micheal F. Strmiska, “Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspectives,” in *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspective*, ed. Micheal F. Strmiska (Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2005), 42.

²¹ The concept of European Romani and Sinti (often referred to by their racist moniker Gypsy or Gypsies) not having a “homeland” within Europe is completely spurious; this utterly false narrative remains a racist concept of “Europeanness” to this day. von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 3, 17, 22, 25, 27; see Wiliam L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Rosetta Books, 1961), 106, for an informative description of Hitler's definition of *Volk*.

²² von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 21-26, 136; Ivakhiv, “The Revival of Ukrainian Native Faith,” 215; Jenny Butler, “Paganism in Ireland: Syncretic Processes, Identity and a Sense of Place,” in *Contemporary Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Europe: Colonialist and Nationalist Impulses*, ed. Kathryn Rountree (Oxford: Berghahn), 197-196, 213; Michael Strmiska & Vilius Rudra Dundzila, “Romuva: Lithuanian Paganism in Lithuania and America,” in *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspective*, ed. Micheal F. Strmiska (Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2005), 244.

²³ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 17.

²⁴ The German Empire (1871-1918) won the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 and reunified Germanic polities after the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire (962 to 1806) separated them into independent states. Additionally, the etymology of 'Nazi' as a shortened derivative is ascribed to a short essay by Joseph Goebbels in 1926, *Der Nazi-Sozi*, see [The Nazi-Sozi](#). It was never used again by members of the NSDAP, as National Socialist was their preferred moniker. German exiles used Nazi in English as a derogative term, and it eventually became modern parlance after WWII.

arguably ensured that the Weimar Republic would fail.²⁵ So, how did this *völkisch* movement evolve? Nineteenth-century *völkisch* so-called expert Guido von List (1848–1919) infused “occultism, Theosophy, Ariosophy [and] esoteric traditions, paganism, magic, and monist pantheism”²⁶ into *völkisch* ideology whilst simultaneously inventing *Wotanism*, a religion of nature for the pagan commoner, and *Armanism*, an initiatory mystical religion exclusive to the *Armanenschaft*, the elite priests of *Wotanism*. List conceived these ideas from the writings of fellow occultist Helena Petrova Blavatsky (1831–1891), who invented Theosophy, which achieved “an influence far beyond its membership.”²⁷ Conjointly, the former Cistercian monk and friend of List, Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels (1874–1954), invented Theozology, or Aryanised Christianity, which supposedly proved the Old Testament depicts “the gradual degradation of the Aryan race”²⁸ due to centuries of interbreeding with non-Aryans and animals.

The *völkisch* movement sought to Germanise Christianity as portrayed in *völkisch* magus Richard Wagner’s opera *Parsifal*, a mythologised quest for the Holy Grail overtly insinuating a *völkisch* longing for a fictional Aryan Christ – Wagner openly stated his art personified *völkisch* ideology regarding the “religion of the blood.”²⁹ Although the vast majority of the NSDAP were not occultists, Alfred Ernst Rosenberg (1893–1946), who became the NSDAP’s primary propagandist, theorised that Indo-Europeans were the original Aryans, whom Rosenberg made into Caucasians.³⁰ Rosenberg’s theories originated from the English-born racist, so-called philosopher Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927), who stated, “[w]hoever makes the assertion that Christ was a Jew is either ignorant or insincere ... [Jesus] had not a drop of

²⁵ For an analysis of Germany’s transformation into Nazism, see David F. Crew ed., *Nazism and German Society, 1933-1945* (London: Routledge, 1994); Anson Rabinbach & Sander L. Gilman eds., *The Third Reich Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Martina Steber & Bernard Gotto, *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Jane Caplan, *Nazi Germany: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019 [eBook]).

²⁶ Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 19-20; von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 55, 81-82, 116; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 24-25. Ariosophy refers to “the esoteric wisdom of the race of Aryans”, see Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 20.

²⁷ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 51; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 21; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 20. Theosophy mashed Hinduism, Buddhism, Gnosticism, Masonry, and the development of “scientific racism” together.

²⁸ Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 21, 22.

²⁹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 20, 210.

³⁰ As head of the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, Rosenberg – along with Hans Frank, Wilhelm Frick, Julius Streicher, and Fritz Sauckel – was one of only five original NSDAP members to both face trial and be executed at Nuremberg in 1946 for their role in the Holocaust. All others escaped, committed suicide, or died during WWII in combat; Strmiska, “Modern Paganism in World Cultures,” 24.

genuinely Jewish blood in his veins.”³¹ Chamberlain promoted scientific racism for educated elites, as well as marrying Wagner’s biological daughter and becoming a naturalised German, and helped to infuse Herderian rhetoric into *völkisch* and, thus, NSDAP ideology.³²

Rudolf von Sebottendorff (1875–1945), *Ordenmeister* of the Ariosophic *Germanenorden* in Munich, created the Thule Society in 1918 “to avoid unwanted leftist attention”³³ after the short-lived Communist Republic of Munich was overthrown in 1919.

Liebenfels and List’s ideologies created both the Ariosophic Thule and Edda Societies, the former whose associates on January 5 1919, Anton Drexler (1884–1942) and Karl Harrer (1890–1926), created the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (DAP) along with Rudolf W.R. Hess (1894–1987) and Rosenberg as original members.³⁴ By 1916, the *swastika* had already been the *Germanenorden*’s official emblem, important relevance on the use of occultist Nazism iconography by Brevik and Tarrant, and it transferred over to the DAP via the Thule Society.

On September 16 1919, after an lecture by so called economist Gottfried Feder (1883–1941), *Bildungsoffizier* of the Munich *Reichswehr*, Adolf Hitler, wrote an essay supporting a “‘rational’ [rather than] ‘emotional’” approach to the “irrevocable removal of the Jews” and to the “Jewish Question”³⁵ – the first time Hitler used such wording. The ultra conservative *Reichswehr* viewed all workers’ parties as Communists or Socialists, and Hitler was ordered to infiltrate one that “might be different.”³⁶ Already a supposed central figure of the DAP, Feder was to give a lecture in replacement of the *völkisch* poet Deitrich Eckart, the “spiritual founder of National-Socialism,”³⁷ in the *Leiberzimmer* of the Sternneckbräu beer hall. Afterwards, DAP chairman Anton Drexler invited

³¹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 20.

³² Strmiska, “Modern Paganism in World Cultures,” 25; For the prominence of Houston to pre-1927 Nazism, see von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 29; Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 121, 123-128; Rabinbach & Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 125, 151, 222, 268, 433, 526, 643, 732

³³ *Ordenmeister* translates as Grand Master. Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 26; Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 46, 48.

³⁴ Rudolph Hess would go on to be the longest serving and surviving original member of the NSDAP. Rabinbach & Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 3-4, 8-9; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 22, 23, 25-26, 27; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 20, 22.

³⁵ *Bildungsoffizier* means the educational officer or political activity investigator. Feder’s *Manifesto for Breaking the Bondage of Interest* had just been published. Rabinbach & Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 3; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008 [eBook]), 109.

³⁶ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 47; Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, 111.

³⁷ Rabinbach & Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 3; Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 46-47, 51.

Hitler to join and within a week received membership no. 555.³⁸ Hitler became the DAP's propagandist in early 1920, added National-Socialist "to attract the working class for the Aryan cause"³⁹ on April 1 1920, and attained the now NSDAP's leadership in July 1921. The rest is history.

After the Nazis seized power in 1933, on the personal instructions of Heinrich L. Himmler (1900–1945), the Austrian esoteric occultist, Karl Maria Wiligut (1866–1946), a prominent Ariosophist, became "chair of the department of prehistory" to lead "research [into] Aryan history and culture"⁴⁰ for the *Ahnenerbe* institute. The original *völkisch* movement demanded the "'reunification' of all German settlements at the territorial expense of other European States,"⁴¹ which even casual observers of history know mirrors the European theatre of World War II (WWII).⁴² However, the fact is, *völkisch* Ásatrú is *not* the religion of Wagner, von Sebottendorff, Chamberlain, Eckart, or Rosenberg, presenting a historical and religious contradiction. The cultic milieu of *völkisch* Ásatrú has reinterpreted the pan-German ideology of pre-1945.⁴³

There was a "general tendency to conflate [*völkisch*] culture, religion and [concepts of] ethnicity"⁴⁴ with Germanic or Nordic mythology in early Ásatrú groups. Mattias Gardell labelled Ásatrú – meaning true to the gods – a "homemade, self-experienced, and nondogmatic polytheist [pathway]" of reclaiming sacred elements of "man's physical embodiment"⁴⁵ to nature and

³⁸ In January 1940, Drexler stated in a letter that Hitler later falsified his original member number as no. 7. The original membership cards started at 500 to inflate their numbers. Drexler noted Hitler might be considered *committee* member no. 7, but Drexler never sent the letter. Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, 110-111.

³⁹ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 49, 52; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 26; Rabinbach & Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 3; Caplan, *Nazi Germany*, 50.

⁴⁰ The *Schutzstaffel* created the *Ahnenerbe*, meaning "something inherited from our forefathers", on July 1 1935. Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 22.

⁴¹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 19-20; von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 28.

⁴² I would argue the European theatre of WWII begins with Hitlerite Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland, September 1 to October 10 1938, not September 1 1939 with the invasion of Poland. The French, British, and Italians signed the Munich Agreement with Germany on September 29 1938, without consulting Czechoslovakia, later forcing their government to agree. The era of Appeasement remains heavily criticised by modern historians regarding British and French diplomacy during the 1930s – however, the argument they were stalling to sufficiently re-arm has gained academic credence through contemporary research on this period.

⁴³ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 19; Shannon Webber, "White Supremacy's Old Gods: The Far Right and Neopaganism," *The Public Eye* (Winter 2018), 11-16.

⁴⁴ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 17.

⁴⁵ "Man" refers to the old term for the human species and is a direct quote. Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 152, 157. Kaplan stated Gardell's fieldwork amongst WSE movements remains unparalleled in CTS scholarship, see Jeffrey Kaplan, *Apocalypse, Revolution and Terrorism: From the Sicari to the American Revolt Against the Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2019 [eBook]), 106 n. 58.

spirituality. But WSE Ásatrúar, like Breivik and Tarrant, seek the dark esoteric past of *völkisch* Aryan superiority as Lane did. The post-1945 re-emergence of *völkisch* religion in West Germany was predicated on the nefarious pretext of religious freedom, arguing they were persecuted during Hitlerite Germany.⁴⁶ Nazism did persecute devout Christians, providing this *völkisch* resurgence with a spurious argument when in fact, *they* were the persecutors. Modern *völkisch* Ásatrúar have mythologised their own reinterpretation of history. It has since evolved again into a twisted combination or cultic milieu for WSE, of which two Ásatrúar have achieved a permanent place in the lexicon of ethno-religious terrorism. In the US, WSE Ásatrú has even tried to claim they are an organic religion of white Americans based on the short-lived Norse settlements c. 1,000 CE in the northeastern regions of North America.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, Lane, Breivik, and Tarrant do embody the original *völkisch* ideology: a common, homogenous, linguistic, cultural heritage with defined, natural territorial borders that disavows racial inter-mixing or inter-breeding as detrimental to the formulation of stable (white) identities.

On an academic note, Gardell stated that “despite the rising tide of paganism in white-racist culture”⁴⁸ since the 1990s, as a scholarly field, it remains understudied, which I do not consider having appreciably changed over the years that followed. Breivik and Tarrant espoused *völkisch* ideology, while *völkisch* Odinism is now considered by many WSE to be the “true religion of the Aryan race.”⁴⁹ This fact should not be ignored within CTS.

Importantly, the concept of an Aryan Christ spread West across the Atlantic quite willingly into the racist mission of Christian Identity in the US after first infecting the British Empire’s sectarianism.⁵⁰

British-Israelism creates Christian Identity

Christian Identity is an “umbrella concept for numerous [WSE] related theologies and ministries”⁵¹ originating from Protestant sectarianism, specifically British-Israelism. Mark Barkun stipulated that Richard Brothers (1757–1824), a retired British naval officer, in the late 1790s had so-called

⁴⁶ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 2, 4, 17, 48.

⁴⁷ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 209, and see parts of the chapter on “The Pagan Revival,” 146-154; Martyn Whittock, “American Vikings past and present: untangling myth from reality,” *The Historian* (Summer 2024, history.org.uk).

⁴⁸ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 1.

⁴⁹ Webber, “White Supremacy’s Old Gods,” 12.

⁵⁰ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 20, 21.

⁵¹ Mattias Gardell, “Black and White Unite in Fight? On the Inter-Action Between Black and White Radical Racialists,” in *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in the Age of Globalisation*, eds Jeffrey Kaplan & Heléne Lööv (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2002 [eBook]), 238.

‘millenarian visions’ of being a descendant of King David.⁵² However, Brothers concept of a British-Israel begot him eleven years locked inside an insane asylum.⁵³ It would be the illiterate son of an Irish weaver, John Wilson (?–1871), who wrote five volumes of *Lectures on Our Israelite Origins* between 1840 and 1876, which led to the spread of British-Israelism among educated elites. Wilson reinterpreted the New Testament of the Bible as justifying “Aryan superiority, anti-Semitism, and White domination” over the “‘mud-people’ of ‘Asia [and] sub-Saharan Africa.’”⁵⁴

Wilson promoted a mythos that had existed for some time within British sectarianism, that Jesus was actually Aryan not Semitic, akin to *völkisch* ideology. The Biblical exodus, after Rome’s 70 CE destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, actually, according to Wilson, refers to “blue-eyed Aryans” who arrived “in the British Isles [becoming] Anglo-Saxons” and as “the true Jews”⁵⁵ their racial purity must be preserved. The *völkisch* movement might have created the NSDAP and ensured the outcome of the Holocaust.⁵⁶ However, British-Israelism resulted in Christian Identity politics in the US. William Cameron, Henry Ford’s publicist during the early twentieth century and a devotee of evangelist Gerald L. K. Smith, wrote *The International Jew: The World’s Foremost Problem*, which he credited to Ford, and based on Smith’s preachings about Wilson’s theories.⁵⁷

This produced a WSE chain of events. In 1946, Bertram Comporet, a deputy district attorney in San Diego, and Wesley Swift, a KKK member, founded the WSE Church of Jesus Christ-Christian (CJCC). Bill Gale, a member of the CJCC, started the WSE Christian Defence League in 1960, which evolved into the Posse Comitatus, the Aryan Nations, and the paramilitary Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord (CSA). Christian Identity minister, Robert Millar, and ex-American Nazi Party member Glen Miller, who were neighbours of the CSA, then built the WSE ranch Elohim City not far from Oklahoma City.⁵⁸

⁵² As in the mythical king of ancient Canaanites within the Levant, which is depicted in versions of the Bible.

⁵³ In reality, his mental degradation may have been a result of syphilis. Mark Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement*, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 5-6.

⁵⁴ Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 6-7; Leonard B. Weinberg & Eliot Assoudeh, “Religion and the Radical Right in American Public Life,” *Religion Compass*, no. 7 (2016): 181.

⁵⁵ Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 131, 143, 163; Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 38.

⁵⁶ For a comprehensive analysis, see von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 2016; Caplan, *Nazi Germany*, 2019; Crew ed., *Nazism and German Society*, 1994; Steber & Gotto, *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany*, 2014; Rabinbach & Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 2012.

⁵⁷ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militias to al Qaeda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 189.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Christian Identity's interconnectivity with the *völkisch* movement and British-Israelism is crucial to the evolution of WSE ethno-religious ideology and, by extension, Lane's, Breivik's, and Tarrant's *raison d'être*. Gardell articulated the etymology of Identity politics origins within the US as bluntly as it possibly could be:

[R]acism pervaded all spheres of organised thought, including [United States] nationalism and religion. Racism was at the heart of the [United States] foundation. [Racism] was not disputed [because it] was truly a way of life, the "natural" order on which civilisation rested. Scientific racism [evolved within] academic circles [and] as part of the conventional Christian denominations, [racism] was a chief principle in the [United States] judicial system, [racism] was the upholder of decent morality and [racism] organised the social space of [United States] society.⁵⁹

Thus, the evolution of WSE stems from Christian Identity politics through British-Israelism and emulates *völkisch* ideology, providing a core ideological context to Lane's, Breivik's, and Tarrant's WSE terrorism.

What is terrorism?

Within CTS, terrorism instigates definitional problems, especially in conjunction with political violence.⁶⁰ During the 1920s and early 1930s, the *International Conferences for the Unification of Penal Law* were the first "organised international legal attempt [at] defining terrorism."⁶¹ In 1937, the League of Nations held the *Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism* to codify an international legal framework.⁶² Both attempts failed, and the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and the Security Council have also failed to reach a consensus on a legal definition of terrorism since its inception in 1945.⁶³

⁵⁹ Gardell, "Black and White Unite in Fight?", 237-238.

⁶⁰ Alex P. Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, ed. Alex Schmid (Abington, UK: Routledge, 2011); Timothy Shanahan, "The Definition of Terrorism," in *The Routledge Handbook on Critical Terrorism Studies*, ed. Richard Jackson (London: Routledge, 2016); Philip Jenkins, *Images of Terror: what we can and can't know about terrorism* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2003).

⁶¹ Ben Golder & George Williams, "What is 'Terrorism'? Problems of Legal Definitions," *UNSW Law Journal*, no 2 (2004), 270.

⁶² This occurred after 40 years of Anarchist political assassinations. Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 39; Golder & Williams, "What is 'Terrorism'?" 274 note 26. For an in-depth analysis of the Anarchist era, see Michael Kemp, *Bombs, Bullets and Bread* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2018).

⁶³ Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 5.

The issue for CTS is that the definition of terrorism continuously changes. In 1974, a retired judge of the International Court of Justice declared, "We have cause to regret that a legal concept of terrorism was ever inflicted upon us. The term is imprecise; it is ambiguous; and, above all, it serves no operative legal purpose."⁶⁴ In 1988, CTS scholars could list 109 definitions; since 2011, there have been over 250. When prominent CTS scholars were asked to describe terrorism, they produced a 580-word description, which consisted of 12 clauses, indicating the complexity of critically analysing terrorism.⁶⁵ Obviously, the events of September 11, 2001, instigated a massive interest in CTS compared to previous decades. However, there has been a failure by CTS scholars to "distance [themselves] from the vilification"⁶⁶ of the subject matter.

Moreover, Alex P. Schmid contends that unlike in traditional sciences, where a definition is "basically an equation", terrorism reflects the "political interests and the moral judgements (or lack thereof) of those who do the defining."⁶⁷ However, Timothy Shanahan contends two divided camps exist within CTS: objectivists, who argue there are epistemological characteristics that demonstrate "terrorism is a real [and] distinct form of political violence", and subjectivists, who argue terrorism is "entirely within the eye of the beholder"⁶⁸ based on personal opinion of a specific event. This is why I argue that claiming terrorism *automatically* equates to political violence is not undertaking a neutral and critical analysis – and this matters.

First, terrorism is too narrow a concept to automatically be associated with a broad concept like political violence.⁶⁹ Second, terrorism is a loaded term – it is over-utilised as a "pejorative political term of stigmatisation"⁷⁰ by socio-political or ideological opponents. Third, when it is utilised in the pejorative, it arguably becomes "the most politicised term in [modern] political vocabulary" akin to being called a "racist, fascist, or imperialist."⁷¹ Fourth, the concept of

⁶⁴ Golder & Williams, "What is 'Terrorism?'" 270-271.

⁶⁵ Shanahan, "The Definition of Terrorism," 105; Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 42-44; Golder & Williams, "What is 'Terrorism?'" 270. For definitions dating back to Maximilien Robespierre's *la Terruer* (Reign of Terror) during the French Revolution, see Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 99-148.

⁶⁶ This alludes to Islamist rhetoric in CTS. Ioannis Tellidis, "Terrorism and Peace Studies," in *The Routledge Handbook on Critical Terrorism Studies*, ed. Richard Jackson (London: Routledge, 2016), 300, 302.

⁶⁷ Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 39-40.

⁶⁸ Shanahan, "The Definition of Terrorism," 104.

⁶⁹ For the complexities of 'political violence' as a term, see Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 40, 71, 78; Shanahan, "The Definition of Terrorism," 105, 108; Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 3, 27, 37, 78, 128, 131, 149.

⁷⁰ Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 40, 677, 694.

⁷¹ Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 40, 94. For analysis on bias in academia see, Gillian Duncan & Alec P. Schmid, "Bibliography of Terrorism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, ed. Alex Schmid (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2011), 466-468; Bradley McAllister &

terrorism or terrorist is far too often used to denigrate various acts, irrespective of physical violence occurring.⁷² Lastly, when claiming an act is ethnoreligious or ideological, the polity's government is usually the defining agency that commonly holds definitional control.⁷³ An old adage persists, regardless of whether anyone likes it or not: "one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter."⁷⁴ Thus, one question for CTS is where the power of definition should rest.

Once those who self-declare themselves to have a right to label what an act of terrorism is – victims of violence, mass and social media, governments, religious leaders, various UN bodies, non-government organisations, and so on – academics are the last bastion of critical analysis regarding the facts, but only *when* CTS scholars "approach the subject from a detached academic point of view."⁷⁵ When trying to determine what constitutes terrorism, whether by WSE or other far-right movements, Kristy Champion and Jacob Zenn have concluded that making such a definitive determination is not so easily reached.⁷⁶ Shanahan, however, has provided what I consider to be a quite sensible and straightforward definition:

Terrorism is the strategically indiscriminate harming or threat of harming members of a target group in order to influence the psychological states of an audience group in ways the perpetrators anticipate may be beneficial to the advancement of their agenda.⁷⁷

I would argue this definition fits Breivik's and Tarrant's actions to the letter.

Alex P. Schmid, "Theories of Terrorism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, ed. Alex Schmid (Abington, UK: Routledge, 2011).

⁷² Shanahan, "The Definition of Terrorism," 106, in reference to "ecoterrorism" and "cyberterrorism" as non-violent forms of terrorism. It is also what non-democratic authoritarians frequently call their opponents.

⁷³ Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 40-41; Shanahan, "The Definition of Terrorism," 103, 105, 109-111.

⁷⁴ Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 19-23; Shanahan, "The Definition of Terrorism," 104; Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 2003, chapter 2 "Another Man's Freedom Fighter" for a critically complex analysis.

⁷⁵ Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 41.

⁷⁶ Champion, "Australian right wing extremist ideology," 2019b; Kristy Champion, "A 'Lunatic Fringe'? The Persistence of Right Wing Extremism in Australia," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, no. 2 (2019a); Kristy Champion, Mark Nolan, & Nick O'Brien, "Framing the Australian extreme right: proposing a threefold typology with consideration of legislation and listing regulations," *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, no. 3 (2023); Jacob Zenn, "War on terror 2.0: threat inflation and conflation of far-right and white supremacist terrorism after the capitol 'Insurrection'," *Critical Studies in Terrorism*, no. 1 (2023).

⁷⁷ Shanahan, "The Definition of Terrorism," 110.

Rapoport's Religious Terror theory and Four Waves of Modern Terrorism model within Critical Terrorism Studies

The late Rapoport created the first academic course on terrorism in 1969. It "consisted solely of artistic works or memoirs" as he reminisced on the "paucity of academic research"⁷⁸ in 2011.

In 1984, having begun to develop the wave model, Rapoport stated, "[b]efore the nineteenth century, religion provided the only acceptable justifications for terror [which raises] questions about the appropriateness of contemporary definitions."⁷⁹ Rapoport's analysis was of the Hindu Thugs, Islamic Assassins, and Judaist Zealots-Sicarii of ancient history whose violence Rapoport labelled, sacred terror, adding such ideologues "seek different political ends in this world by whatever means of terror they consider most appropriate."⁸⁰ By 2022, this changed to "[b]efore the eighteenth century, religion was the primary motivator of every terror campaign,"⁸¹ and his analysis of sacred terror had replaced the Thugs of Hinduism for the Crusaders of Christianity.

In 1987, Rapoport first referred to three waves of terrorism; between 1999 and 2003, this became four waves of modern terrorism. By 2004, specific timeframes and titles were added: the Anarchist wave, spanning 1870s to 1920s; the Anti-Colonial wave, from 1920s to 1960s; the New Left wave, from 1960s to 1980s; and the Religious wave, from the 1980s to the present day.⁸²

A significant problem with the wave model is that Rapoport ignored Christian and right-wing terrorism and continuously referred to rebel

⁷⁸ David C. Rapoport, "Introduction," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, no. 4 (1987); Chris Millington, "Bad history: a historian's critique of Rapoport's "four waves of terrorism" model," *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, no. 3 (2024, mmu.ac.uk): 492.

⁷⁹ Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling," 659.

⁸⁰ Rapoport's original articulation of sacred terror is seen in Rapoport's "Fear and Trembling," 1984.

⁸¹ David C. Rapoport, *Waves of Global Terrorism: From 1879 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 13.

⁸² For this evolution, see Rapoport, "Introduction," 1987; David C. Rapoport, "Terrorism," in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*, eds Jennifer E Turpin & Lester R. Kurtz (San Diego: Academic Press, 1999); David C. Rapoport, "The Fourth Wave: September 11 2001 in the History of Terrorism," *Current History*, no. 650 (2001); David C. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11," in *The New Global Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, ed Charles W. Kegley (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2003a); David C. Rapoport, *Generations and Waves: The Keys to Understanding Rebel Terror Movements*, UCLA International Institute (2003b), international.ucla.edu; Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," 2004; Rapoport, *Waves of Global Terrorism*, 2022; also see Michael Kemp, *Bombs, Bullets and Bread*, 2018.

movements as terrorists.⁸³ Rapoport never analysed WSE radical right-wing Christians – let alone Ásatrú – terrorism during a distinguished career within CTS.⁸⁴ In contrast, some of Rapoport's contemporaries have undertaken extensive research into both topics for decades.⁸⁵ Importantly for CTS, Chris Millington's recently published critique of Rapoport's long-standing wave model concluded that it was never fit for purpose.⁸⁶

Millington's criticism begins with Rapoport's 1984 conclusion to his *Fear and Trembling* article, where they state, "[t]here is no authoritative history of modern terrorism that traces its development from its inception"⁸⁷ in the nineteenth century to modern times – indeed, Rapoport repeated this opinion in 2004, 2013, and again in 2022. Millington's problem is with political scientists not embodying the historian's *modus operandi*, stating "[t]he solution to understanding the history of terrorism is to engage in genuine historical study" and "fine-grained, case-specific research [focused on the] context and nuance" of the subject matter through undertaking "painstaking research into the archival record."⁸⁸ The reality, however, is that most political scientists primarily rely on secondary sources by necessity.

Chris Millington and a critical remodelling of Rapoport's 'Four Waves' model

Breivik and Tarrant might belong to the Religious wave, but a maxim of the Anarchist wave is very appropriate – "terror [is] propaganda of the deed"⁸⁹ – and they certainly provided WSE with propaganda by their deeds. The

⁸³ Millington, "Bad history," 490, 496-497; Karen Rasler & William R. Thompson, "Looking for Waves of Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, no. 1 (2009): 32; Leonard Weinberg & William Eubank, "An End to the Fourth Wave of Terrorism?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, no. 7 (2010): 596. For a somewhat supportive analysis of Rapoport's modelling, see Jeffrey Kaplan, "Terrorism's Five Wave: A Theory, a Conundrum and a Dilemma," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, no. 2 (2008).

⁸⁴ Breivik and Tarrant had undertaken their terrorism prior to Rapoport's passing in early 2024.

⁸⁵ For further analysis, see Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Kaplan, "Leaderless Residence," 1997; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 2003; von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 2016.

⁸⁶ Millington, "Bad history," 489.

⁸⁷ Millington, "Bad history," 492; David C. Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions," *The American Political Science Review*, no. 3 (1984): 672.

⁸⁸ Millington, "Bad history," 502.

⁸⁹ It is also worded 'by the deed' and is attributed to nineteenth-century socio-political activists Italian Socialist Carlo Pisacane and Russian Anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, see Kemp, *Bombs, Bullets and Bread*, vii. Dynamite had only recently been invented by Alfred Nobel in 1866, and many of the early Anarchists who used it also killed themselves, indicative of the suicide terrorism of Rapoport's 'Religious' wave of terrorism. Russian Anarchist Peter Kropotkin is also given credit, as seen in Rapoport's "Fear and Trembling," 660.

paramilitary organisations between the 1920s and 1980s, during Rapoport's Anti-Colonial and New Left waves, were not generally religious ideologues; they sought independence from colonialism and championed secular statehood.⁹⁰

Rapoport's wave model stipulates that a political event begins and ends each wave, and Millington's criticism continues because the political event of Rapoport's Anti-Colonial wave was the Treaty of Versailles. After The Great War ended on the Western Front, the victorious *Entente* during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919–1920 imposed individual punitive treaties upon the five defeated Central Powers.⁹¹ Although I will not examine that historiography here, the terms of the treaty imposed upon the Weimar Republic arguably caused World War II in Europe.⁹²

Regardless, controversy continues through labelling the Second Wave as Anti-Colonial. Post-1945 was an era of paramilitary independence movements based on aspirations of independent statehood, and insinuating 1918 to 1939 was an era of terrorism under such conditions remains problematic.⁹³ This is why Millington argues that Rapoport "fit the history to the model" considering that most anti-colonial violence began "at least twenty-five years after [Rapoport's] trigger point"⁹⁴ of Versailles. Millington continues, arguing that Rapoport named "the waves after the groups that opposed the status quo.

⁹⁰ Rapoport, *The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism*, 52-65; Rasler & Thompson, "Looking for Waves of Terrorism," 28, 30-39, 41; Weinberg & Eubank, "An End to the Fourth Wave of Terrorism?" 595.

⁹¹ Note how peace for the West forgets the Southern and Eastern Fronts of WWI. The Entente included France, Britain, Japan, Russia, and Italy. The US became an 'associated power' in 1917, the year the Russian Revolution and Civil War saw a cessation of hostilities on the Eastern Front. The other treaties were the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye upon Austria, September 10 1919; the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine upon Bulgaria, November 27 1919; the Treaty of Trianon upon Hungary, June 4 1920; and the Treaty of Sèvres upon the Ottoman Empire, August 10 1920, which was superseded by the Treaty of Lausanne, July 24 1923, upon Türkiye when the Ottoman government collapsed after a civil war and war with Greece, including acts of genocide.

⁹² This begins November 9 1918, after the "November Revolution" in the last month of WWI; it ends March 23 1933, with the onset of Hitlerite Germany. Kaiser Wilhelm II, the last Prussian Hohenzollern monarch, was forced to abdicate and died in exile during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands in 1941 during WWII, ironically. Rapoport, "Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," 53; Erez Manela, "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East-West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919," *The American Historical Review*, no. 5 (2006), 1328; Enzo Traverso, *Fire and Blood: The European Civil War, 1914-1945*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2006), 5, 9, 50, 57-58; Norman A. Graebner & Edward M. Bennett, *The Versailles Treaty and Its Legacy: The Failure of Wilsonian Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁹³ The battles fought within Europe, let alone outside, are too numerous to list. This is a research project I am working on pertaining to the term "inter-war period" that I have serious historical problems with.

⁹⁴ Italics in original, Millington, *Bad history*, 501.

[Thus], the model reinforced traditional, state-centric conceptions of terrorism, and continues to do so.”⁹⁵ Rapoport, unfortunately, claimed state terrorism eclipsed rebel terrorism only briefly during the 1930s – when most CTS scholars acknowledge states also perpetrate terrorism and likely agree state-sponsored terrorism has always “outweighed that of rebel [terrorism].”⁹⁶

European ethnic minorities, and especially non-European colonial majorities subjected to centuries of extractor or settler colonialism, sought self-determination.⁹⁷ Former colonies of the Central Powers predominantly became French or British League of Nations Mandates, whose indigenous populations would not see their independence until Rapoport’s New Left wave of the 1960s and 1970s. The Irish Free State’s attainment of dominion status in 1922, following a bloody paramilitary War of Independence against centuries of British colonialism, is essentially an exception within pre-World War II Europe.⁹⁸

Furthermore, Millington’s criticism of rigid timeframes is appropriate because it remains problematic for CTS, such as this analysis which is based on Rapoport’s model. Rapoport also lacked a nuanced analysis on certain events, like why the Muslim Brotherhood or the Irish Republican Army (IRA) continued to maintain an influence across successive waves, indicating some of the issues.⁹⁹

Regarding the Third or New Left and the Fourth or Religious waves of terrorism, issues already outlined persist. Thus, I have omitted my analysis due to repetition, other than to state that the label New Left speaks to Millington’s criticism of state-centric ideological arguments, and the Religious wave does not focus on WSE terrorism. Rapoport stated that the 1979 Islamic Revolution

⁹⁵ Millington, *Bad history*, 495.

⁹⁶ This alludes to the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) or “brownshirts” of the NSDAP, who were an official paramilitary wing of the NSDAP. Millington, *Bad history*, 494-495.

⁹⁷ Wilsonian idealism simultaneously inspired and crushed the aspirations of minority ethnic and majority indigenous polities alike, see Rapoport, “The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism,” 52-56. For a comprehensive analysis of colonialism, see Manela, “Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia,” 2006; Graebner & Bennett, *The Versailles Treaty and Its Legacy*, 2011; Patrick Wolfe, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, no. 4 (2006); David B. Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires, 1415-1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Environmental Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, 4th rev. ed. (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).

⁹⁸ Patrick Keatinge, “Ireland and the League of Nations,” *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, no 59 (1970). Other wars occurred in Europe, but my scope does not allow for an analysis of them all.

⁹⁹ Rapoport, “Four Waves of Modern Terrorism,” 55; Manela, “Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia,” 1348 note 73; Weinberg & Eubank, “An End to the Fourth Wave of Terrorism,” 594; Sagit Yehoshua, “ Hamas,” in *Routledge Handbook of Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, ed. Andrew Silke (London: Routledge, 2019), 292-297, 300.

in Persia, modern Iran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan are the political events that beget the continuing Religious wave.

Rapoport never analysed Christian terrorism ordinarily, and although the 2022, and final, reiteration of the wave model included a section on the Crusaders, this has very limited usefulness in modern CTS. Back in 1984, Rapoport stated that “materials are not as conveniently available” and opined it “reminds one of the Crusades, an unlimited or total war launched by the Papacy.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, meaning state-sponsored terrorism, illustrating an inconsistency with Rapoport’s original reasoning. Rapoport, though, always stated the wave model was only focused on rebel and not state-sponsored, or right-wing, terrorism.¹⁰¹

However, in the 2022 final reiterations of both his ‘sacred terror’ theory and ‘four waves’ model, Rapoport included the Sons of Liberty and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) alongside the Crusaders – one overtly WSE group and all Christians who conducted a form of terrorism.¹⁰² Unfortunately, the two have no living memory because they are not modern examples of Christian or right-wing terrorism, and the KKK has barely functioned as an organisation in recent generations.¹⁰³ Nonetheless, it is the concept of waging a Cosmic War that now requires analysis to further understand Breivik and Tarrant as WSE ethno-religious, self-anointed warriors battling the – imagined – enemies of the Aryan race.

Mark Juergensmeyer and Cosmic War Theory

Juergensmeyer summarised Cosmic War theory as a “great encounter between cosmic forces [of] good versus evil, [of] divine truth and falsehood that worldly struggles only mimic.”¹⁰⁴ For example, Christian Identity leader Kerry Noble claimed, “[t]he Lord God is a man of War”, and Osama bin Laden’s 1998 *Fatawa* stated that the US was leading a “war on God, His messenger and Muslims.”¹⁰⁵ For a Cosmic War in a WSE Ásatrú context, one need only look at Lane’s *völkisch* Odinism, where *Ragnarøk* had already occurred – when “Aryan man turned his back on the indigenous Gods of his race.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Rapoport, “Fear and Trembling,” 660 note 4.

¹⁰¹ For an analysis of Rapoport’s conversation with Kaplan, see Millington “Bad History,” 500-501.

¹⁰² Rapoport, *Waves of Global Terrorism*, 26-34, 34-43, 43-49, respectively.

¹⁰³ The KKK does still exist but in various fractured groups compared to its late nineteenth-century origins.

¹⁰⁴ Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?* 155.

¹⁰⁵ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 127.

¹⁰⁶ Note that *Ragnarøk* is the destruction of the old Gods within early medieval Norse texts; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 209.

Moreover, Phillip Jenkins argued that terrorism operates on a logic quite different to other political agendas: to an ethno-religious nationalist or extremist, terrorism is not viewed the same as conventional warfare because concepts like defeat and victory have very different meanings to non-state actors. His point is that acts of terrorism are not commonly settled in the traditional sense of diplomacy or international relations.¹⁰⁷

Ben Golder and George Williams argued that defining terrorism within a political context is a modern, post-2001 symptom of international relations attempting to produce a legal – that is, a political – definition, which, as Schmid and Shanahan outlined, has consistently failed. Golder and William’s argument is that ethno-religious terrorism cannot easily be redefined within political concepts, even though it is widely deployed in various legal doctrines.¹⁰⁸

Schmid and Shanahan’s analysis of who and what constitutes terrorism is clearly illustrated within the case of Palestinian paramilitary independence movements. Assaf Moghadam’s analysis of the organisational goals and motives of Islamist suicide terrorism, as conducted by Hamas or Hezbollah, concluded such actions are an “expression of a political strategy.”¹⁰⁹ Hamas and Hezbollah utilise both “religious and political indoctrination” to instil a mixture of “moral, political, and religious justification”¹¹⁰ into their actions.

Furthermore, David Lester, Bijou Yang, and Mark Lindsay remind us that politically motivated killing, where the perpetrator also dies, is not a new phenomenon even in Western polities. However, they argue that Islamic suicide terrorism is rarely politically motivated – it is routinely a personal act between the perpetrator and the victim.¹¹¹ Examples of non-Islamist suicidal tendencies include the Japanese kamikaze pilots of WWII, the Old Testament story of Samson dying while killing the Philistines, and the Anarchist wave, which often involved the use of newly invented dynamite that frequently killed the attacker, whether intentionally or not.

In Rapoport's wave model, such groups operate within the traditional Anti-Colonial and New Left (1950s–1970s) ethos by having a political and paramilitary wing, akin to Sinn Féin and the IRA to this day. Further discussion on suicidal, let alone Islamic or sectarian, violence is not my focus, but these examples illustrate how geopolitical conditions infuse contentious elements of religious context into contemporary discourse within CTS. Although this is not an exhaustive source of examples, they illustrate two facts. Politics is, arguably, a secondary aspect of the ideological aspirations of many ethno-religious

¹⁰⁷ Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 74.

¹⁰⁸ Golder & Williams, “What is ‘Terrorism’?” 270-271.

¹⁰⁹ Assaf Moghadam, “Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organisational Aspects,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, no. 2 (2003): 77.

¹¹⁰ Moghadam, “Palestinian Suicide Terrorism,” 85.

¹¹¹ David Lester, Bijou Yang & Mark Lindsay, “Suicide Bombers: Are Psychological Profiles Possible?” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, no. 4 (2004): 284.

movements. However, politics is not easily removed from the ideological motivations of ethno-religious terrorism.

Although Breivik and Tarrant conducted themselves in a very similar manner, they were leaderless resistance terrorists who never had an organised paramilitary structure as support. Rapoport reminds us “[t]he modern terrorist serves political ends to be achieved by human efforts alone, and [they], not God, chooses the most appropriate ends and means.”¹¹²

The Cultic Milieu of White Supremacist Extremism in the USA

An important correlating nexus occurred in the late 1970s when WSE militias began to physically emulate the ethno-religious ideological mythology of neo-Nazi theorist and former writer for the American Nazi Party, William Pierce. In 1978, Pierce published *The Turner Diaries* (under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald), which has since become ‘the bible’ for WSE right-wing anti-government militia types in the US.¹¹³ Pierce’s fictional Aryan guerillas called the Order to fight an apocalyptic battle and race war against a dictatorial American government and so-called race traitors who are forcibly imposing a secular agenda upon Christian society because they are secretly led by “Jews and liberals.”¹¹⁴

The *Turner Diaries* culmination provides this extremism: the protagonist, Earl Tuner, undertakes a suicide attack in a nuclear armed aircraft against the Pentagon; what is called the Day of Rope in the book, when all non-whites are literally hung in the streets; and Pierce’s American Aryans achieve a nuclear strike upon Palestine-Israel with an Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile.¹¹⁵ In 1984, Pierce founded his own WSE movement, the Cosmotheist Community, based on the *Turner Diaries* ideological premise, such as the Order’s “mission” to restore “Christianity’s ‘spiritual strength’ and ‘health’ [as] ‘bearers of the Faith [in a] Godless world.”¹¹⁶ Pierce denounced Identity movements *per se*, but the correlating rhetoric of each doctrinal framework is not easily missed. Pierce’s WSE mythology literally provides the nucleus for the most devastating act of domestic terrorism in US history and inspired the actions of Matthews, Lane, and others whom Breivik and Tarrant would later emulate.

On April 19, 1995, Timothy James McVeigh and Terry Lynn Nichols achieved the highest death toll for an act of domestic terrorism not conducted

¹¹² Rapoport, “Fear and Trembling,” 674.

¹¹³ Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 75; Martina Miechová, *Radical Paganism: Contemporary Heathens in Search of Political Identity*, (Masters Thesis Charles University, Prague, 2019, unpublished), 36.

¹¹⁴ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 25, 216; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 37.

¹¹⁵ Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 76.

¹¹⁶ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 25, 277.

by an organised paramilitary movement.¹¹⁷ McVeigh detonated 1,995 kilos “of ammonium nitrate fertiliser and fuel oil”¹¹⁸ inside a truck parked outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, destroying one third of the structure – it killed 168 adults and 15 children and injured 680 others. McVeigh had sold Pierce’s *Turner Diaries* at gun shows for years and always had a copy upon him, and whilst Pierce died in 2002, Pierce publicly denied knowing McVeigh; however, the police investigation confirmed McVeigh had rung Pierce’s unlisted number in West Virginia and had a lengthy conversation prior to the bombing.¹¹⁹ The truck bomb was almost exactly like a similar attack Pierce depicted in the *Turner Diaries*.

On July 27, 1996, Eric Robert Rudolph detonated an explosive device at Centennial Park during the Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia, killing up to three people and injuring over one hundred. On January 16, 1997, Rudolph bombed the Northside Family Planning Services, Atlanta, with no injuries. On February 21, 1997, Rudolph bombed the Otherside Lounge in Midtown, Atlanta, during a lesbian night-only event, with no fatal injuries. On January 29, 1998, Rudolph bombed the New Woman, All Woman Health Care Clinic in Birmingham, Alabama, killing security officer Robert Sanderson and maiming nurse Emily Lyons. Rudolph stayed on the run until being captured in 2003. On April 13, 2005, Rudolph pleaded guilty to all charges. Rudolph associated with Identity preachers Dan Gayman, since childhood via his mother, and Nord Davis, whom Lane also knew, labelling himself a Soldier at War for the Army of God and subscribed to conspiracy theories about anti-LGBTQI+ and the permissiveness of secular culture being secretly controlled by Jews through atheistic internationalism.¹²⁰

Between 2 and 4 July 1999, Benjamin Nathaniel Smith killed an African American basketball coach and a Korean exchange student. He then wounded nine Orthodox Jews, two African American students, and one Taiwanese student – all with a sniper rifle during a rampage across Illinois and Indiana

¹¹⁷ The 2001 attacks in New York City and Washington D.C. are not considered “domestic” terrorism, irrelevant to various conspiracy theories that now exist. Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 151; Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion and Violence: Theory and case studies*, Milton Park: Routledge, 2016), 60, 69, 71.

¹¹⁸ Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 256; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 188; Aaron Winter, “The United States of America: Counterterrorism pre-9/11,” *The Routledge Handbook of Counterterrorism*, ed. Andrew Silke (London: Routledge, 2019), 615.

¹¹⁹ Kaplan, *Radical Religion*, 184-185 note 39; Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 134-137.

¹²⁰ Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 132-133; Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 24, 183; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 191; Seegmiller, “Radicalised Margins,” 515-516, 522; Doug Gross, “Eric Rudolph lays out the arguments that fuelled his two-year bomb attacks,” *Associated Press*, April 14, 2005, <https://web.archive.org/>; Olivia B. Waxman, “When Terror Struck the Summer Olympics 20 Years Ago,” *Time*, July 27, 2016, <https://time.com/>; Beau Seegmiller, “Radicalised Margins: Eric Rudolph and Religious Violence,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, no. 4 (2007): 515.

before shooting himself in a standoff with police.¹²¹ The ideological divergence is that he was a member of the neo-Nazi World Church of the Creator (WCOTC), shunned Identity politics, and denounced modern Christianity, like Pierce and Breivik, while espousing the anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric of the *Turner Diaries*.¹²² Smith was awarded the Aryan of the Month by the *Nationalist Observer Racial Readers Forum* (NORRF) on August 3, 1999.¹²³

On August 10, 1999, Buford O'Neil Furrow attacked a Jewish centre in Granada Hills, Los Angeles, injuring five people, including three children, then killed a Filipino American postal worker out of frustration.¹²⁴ Furrow had lived at the Aryan Nations compound in Idaho, run by Richard Butler and married Matthews' widow. He was known as "the elder statesman of American hate" who also claimed "Adam's pure blood seed-line"¹²⁵ was being killed off through a global conspiracy. NORRF also awarded Furrow the Aryan of the Month in September 1999.¹²⁶

David Lane and *Wotansvolk*

As has been analysed, WSE traditionally subscribes to Christian Identity politics, which has always been about white supremacy. Since the late 1990s, though, Christian Identity politics has competed with *völkisch* Odinism for WSE ideology. However, such competition relates more to white prison populations in the US compared to anti-government militias, who maintain traditional Identity beliefs.¹²⁷ That said, the WSE transformation away from Christianity towards *völkisch* Odinism can be traced to Lane.¹²⁸ The most comprehensive research into Lane's life is Mattias Gardell's *Gods of the Blood*, published in 2003. What follows is a breakdown of Gardell's and others' research, which was conducted after he embedded himself in various WSE groups and movements.

Lane's transformation towards Ásatrú began when he joined the Aryan Brotherhood, from which he was recruited into Matthews *Brüders Schweigen*, and in September 1983, along with nine other members, participated in a "pagan' initiation ritual" at Matthews "Metaline Falls, Washington,

¹²¹ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 170; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 191; Edward Walsh, "Racial Slayer Killed Himself in Struggle," *Washington Post*, July 6 1999.

¹²² Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 29, 170, 215, 245.

¹²³ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 94, 361, 402; Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 167, 246.

¹²⁴ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 24.

¹²⁵ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 28-29; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 191.

¹²⁶ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 94, 402; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 186; George Michael, "Right-Wing Terrorism: The strategic dimensions," in *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, ed. Andrew Silke (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 108, n. 6.

¹²⁷ Jeffrey Kaplan, "The Reconstruction of the Ásatrú and Odinist Traditions," in *Magic Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, ed. James R. Lewis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996): 208, 225.

¹²⁸ Kaplan, *Radical Religion*, 67-68

homestead.”¹²⁹ The *Brüders Schweigen* was nicknamed the Order in homage to *Turner Diaries*. Although others would help develop this evolution within WSE movements globally, it is Lane who began the replacement of Christianity within the US for WSE. So, who was David Lane and what promoted this conversion into *völkisch* Odinism?

Lane’s childhood began as the son of an abusive alcoholic itinerant farmer who was then adopted at the age of five by a fundamentalist Lutheran minister after living in an orphanage for a time.¹³⁰ Due to his upbringing, “Jesus [personified] pure boredom”¹³¹ for Lane, and he developed a conspiracy theory of history from the civil rights movement’s mission to end segregation after the assassination of John F. Kennedy.¹³² Lane developed contempt for the US military’s involvement in the Vietnam War, stating, “I mean, it’s a red-white-and-blue nasty murder machine.”¹³³ Lane’s disdain for the nationalist right-wing of US politics stems from the conspiracy of a Zionist New World Order, stating the “singular intent of America” is to “exterminate the White race. How can you *be* what destroys you?”¹³⁴

Lane’s anti-Zionist rhetoric and Masonic-Zionist conspiracies began when he became involved with the Identity movement of the John Birch Society, which was associated with the CJCC and the Aryan Nations, where he would meet Butler and Matthews. He also joined the Ku Klux Klan, the White Aryan Resistance, and, fatefully, the *Brüders Schweigen*. Lane, as a member of this “elite [unit] within the Aryan Nations”, became one of the “most notorious [domestic] terrorists [during] the 1980s”¹³⁵ in the US due to their brutal violence.

Lane’s status as a progenitor of *völkisch* Odinism for WSE inside US prisons stems from being a member of *Brüders Schweigen*. They undertook bank robberies in Seattle and Spokane, Washington; armoured car robberies in Seattle and Ukiah, California; and bombed a Synagogue in Boise, Idaho.¹³⁶ The *Brüders Schweigen* also murdered Aryan Nations member Walter West and Jewish radio host Alan Berg.¹³⁷ They even ran a successful money counterfeiting racket.¹³⁸ Lane would eventually be given up by an FBI

¹²⁹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 193; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 15.

¹³⁰ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 191-192.

¹³¹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 192.

¹³² US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas.

¹³³ Lane quoted in, *Ibid*.

¹³⁴ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 193.

¹³⁵ Italics in original, Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 191-193; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 15; Lentini, “The Australian Far-Right”, 26.

¹³⁶ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 195.

¹³⁷ West was likely murdered as a suspected FBI informant. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 216; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 15.

¹³⁸ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 198.

informant within the *Brüders Schweigen*, Ken Loff, for a five-year prison sentence reduction.¹³⁹ Subsequently, Lane was found guilty of “racketeering, conspiracy, and violating the civil rights of Alan Berg (by killing him)”¹⁴⁰ – Lane received 190 years imprisonment.

Lane’s ideological conversion focused on Nordic paganism, specifically Odin of the *Æsir*, which is why Odinism, *Ásatrú*, and *Wotansvolk* are often misconstrued for each other and utilised inconsistently within journalism and scholarship alike, often neglecting the WSE elements. Within prison, Lane founded *Wotansvolk* in September 1995 with help from his wife Katja and fellow WSE *Ásatrúar*, Ron McVan, who jointly developed *Wotansvolk* into a “fully developed religious concept.”¹⁴¹ However, Lane’s vision was more philosophical. In 2001, *Wotansvolk* was officially registered as the Temple of Wotan, and Lane chose the Germanic name for Odin instead of the Scandinavian name because it incorporates the acronym Will of the Aryan Nation (WOTAN) and represented the symbolism of Lane being born on a Wednesday in a town called Woden.¹⁴²

In a connection to the origins of *völkisch* occultist Nazism, von List is considered by McVan to be the “undisputed high priest of Wotanism and Ariosophy.”¹⁴³ Thus, from inside the US prison system, folkish Odinism began replacing Christianity for many WSE. Between 1996 and 2001, the number of Odinists as their stated religion tripled within gangs such as the Aryan Nations, Brotherhood, and National Alliance. Katja administers the *Wotansvolk* webpage and runs a prison outreach program for WSE Odinists, thereby allowing Lane’s *völkisch* Odinism to spread across various WSE networks on a global scale.

Wotansvolk’s infamous 14 word mantra – We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children – is considered “one of the very few concepts”¹⁴⁴ the various WSE movements accept as a doctrine globally. Moreover, Lane was labelled an “Aryan prisoner of war”, along with other surviving members of the *Brüders Schweigen*, and the “Mandela of the White Revolution”¹⁴⁵ by WSE, and while Lane died in 2007, his legacy continues within WSE.

Gardell, once again, provides the most in-depth perspective on the ideological positions of various WSE after the September 11, 2001, attacks in New York City – and the general reaction was “praise and admiration.”¹⁴⁶ A Creativity Movement adherent praised Osama bin Laden’s messages, stating

¹³⁹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 198-199.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 191; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 16.

¹⁴² Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 205; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 14-15.

¹⁴³ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 210.

¹⁴⁴ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 191, 199.

¹⁴⁵ Ron McVan quoted in Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 199.

¹⁴⁶ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 324.

“The most Americans would kill for is their pizza, beer ... and SUV’s. We have truly evolved into a degenerate state.”¹⁴⁷ The Aryan Nations linked their website to Hamas’ and other Jihadists; printing an interview with Osama bin-Laden by John Miller on their electronic mailing list, the WCOTC stated “[if] American mothers in general [value] the lives of their children, [find] a nationalistic government that will look after their interests and not the interests of the Jews.”¹⁴⁸ The American Front published supportive translations of Osama bin Laden and Mu’ammar al-Qaddafi’s speeches after the attacks into English; Mat Hale, head of the WCOTC, blamed the US government for the attacks, stating that the US “foreign policy [is] slavishly pro-Israeli.”¹⁴⁹ White Aryan Resistance leader, Tom Metzger, stated “these soldiers were aware that their lives would be sacrificed for their cause. If an Aryan wants an example of ‘Victory or Valhalla’, look no further.”¹⁵⁰ There was, however, some disagreement due to the fact that WSE groups have no coordinated messaging. David Duke and Don Black, both of whom were Grand Wizards of the KKK, openly condemned the Islamist-Jihadist attacks, while one WSE posted “I HATE when non-white sand-niggers commit a massacre on our soil.”¹⁵¹

The underlying theme, though, is overwhelmingly anti-Jewish and -Israeli, intermixed with anti-Arab and -Islamic rhetoric, while praising the attacks due to the fact the World Trade Towers were “controlled and owned”¹⁵² by Jewish businesses, alongside praising the fact that both Arabs and Jews also died.

The correlating mindset of White Supremacist Extremists

Returning to Oklahoma City that very same day, a WSE associate of Lane and McVeigh, Richard Wayne Snell, was executed for murdering a pawnshop owner whom Snell believed to be Jewish and an African American police officer after being pulled over for a traffic violation.¹⁵³

McVeigh, Nichols, and Snell were all loosely associated with the Identity politics commune of Elohim City, the Michigan Militia, and the, now defunct, CSA, whom gave Snell refuge in return for their assistance with Matthews’

¹⁴⁷ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 325.

¹⁴⁸ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 325.

¹⁴⁹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 325-326.

¹⁵⁰ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 325.

¹⁵¹ This is a verbatim quote. I fully acknowledge this section paraphrases or directly quotes Gardell’s work. Gardell’s citations list websites that no longer exist and are legally blocked by my ISP, ceased being available after 2001 or are only available to Gardell during his research. My research determined no scholars have cited such information independently of Gardell’s research. As noted above, Kaplan acknowledged in 2019 that Gardell’s fieldwork amongst WSE remains unparalleled. Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 324-325, and 397 notes 1-7.

¹⁵² Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 397 note 8.

¹⁵³ Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 135; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 64.

Brüders Schweigen in the past. However, somehow, the official investigations determined these WSE militias and communes “had nothing to do”¹⁵⁴ with these terrorists. Pierce’s narrative about the encroachment of government control was taken seriously by Matthews. Hence, the *Brüders Schweigen* was also known as the Order in homage to Pierce’s fictional guerilla unit.¹⁵⁵ Nonetheless, McVeigh and Nichols executed their attack in retaliation for the Ruby Ridge siege against Randy Weaver in 1992 and the Waco standoff with David Koresh from February 28 to April 19, 1993. Both government operations ended with significant casualties, including family members and children at Ruby Ridge and 82 Branch Davidians plus 4 ATF agents at Waco.¹⁵⁶ McVeigh and Nichols sought revenge for their fellow WSE, nothing else, just like Breivik and Tarrant.

The correlation with all WSE terrorism is they espouse anti-government conspiracy theories too numerous to list; they promote ethno-religious apartheid within their predominantly white settler colonial polities; they are overtly anti-LGBTQI+, anti-feminist, and anti-gender equality; and, they subscribe to the anti-globalisation rhetoric of being controlled by international cabals under the control of the Jews, atheists, and secular institutions which separate religion from state laws. None of these men were disgruntled employees or jilted lovers. This brief historiography underscores how WSE, anti-government, paramilitary domestic terrorism – Matthews, Lane, McVeigh, Nichols, Rudolph, Smith, and Furrow – in the US all stem from Christian extremism, traditionally the only organised religion associated with WSE terrorism.¹⁵⁷ Breivik and Tarrant changed that.

Leonard Weinberg, William Eubank, and Juergensmeyer argue this militia-style paramilitarism is part of the same ideological terrorism as the Cosmic War being waged by Shia and Sunni Islamists or Hindu and Sikh anti-secular nationalists.¹⁵⁸ When assessing the legality of how such groups continue to exist, Weinberg and Assoudeh state the Anti-Defamation League, Southern Poverty Law Centre, and the FBI successfully re-labelled Neo-Nazi, Racist Skinhead, Neo-Confederate, White Nationalist, Anti-LGBTQI+, Anti-Immigrant, Anti-Muslim, and Holocaust Denialists as hate-groups within both

¹⁵⁴ Kaplan & Lööw, *The Cultic Milieu*, 466; Barkun, *Religion and the Radical Right*, 256; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 64, 128; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 186-188, 191; Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 135.

¹⁵⁵ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 55, 193-198; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 187.

¹⁵⁶ United States Marshal Service (USMS); Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF); Federal Bureau of Investigations–Hostage Rescue Team (FBI HRT). Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 70-71; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 186; Kaplan, *Radical Religion*, 59-74; Winter, “The United States of America: Counterterrorism pre-9/11,” 629; Alexander Spencer, “New Versus Old Terrorism,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies*, ed. Richard Jackson (London: Routledge, 2016), 126.

¹⁵⁷ Weinberg & Assoudeh, “Religion and the Radical Right in American Public Life,” 2016.

¹⁵⁸ Weinberg & Eubank, “An End to the Fourth Wave of Terrorism,” 63-83, 103-125.

public and a governmental discourse.¹⁵⁹ With Trump's re-election, this is now in question.

Jeffrey Kaplan made important conclusions about WSE movements' overall strategic thinking, arguing that Identity politics adherents who embrace the 'leaderless resistance strategy' illustrate a long-standing division associated with far-right ideological activism against a more powerful state apparatus.¹⁶⁰ Kaplan argues that, although WSE Identity politics movements have been associated with millenarian revolutionary violence for decades, these movements generally have short outbursts of violence and, instead, prioritise their withdrawal from society and government oversight.¹⁶¹

With the sole exception of McVeigh and Nichols, who fit somewhere between autonomous cell and lone wolf terrorists, mass-shooting events over the last thirty-plus years, especially within the US, have overshadowed these attacks of the 1990s. Although Rudolph, Smith, and Furrow were WSE and conducted lone-wolf attacks, they were not autonomous cell terrorists. Moreover, terrorist attacks in France, Germany, Sweden, and other European countries since 2001, following the onset of the War on Terror, have been carried out by groups or individuals claiming allegiance to ethno-religious organisations *outside* of Europe. These groups or individuals operate as autonomous cells *within* Europe, including lone wolf attacks. Even though they have achieved death tolls similar to those of McVeigh and Nichols, it does not constitute leaderless resistance terrorism. This is why Breivik and Tarrant maintain their positions as first and second because they are lone wolf, leaderless resistance, autonomous cell terrorists.¹⁶²

The Soldiers of Odin, Anders Breivik, and Brenton Tarrant: WSE Odinites

One example of the global impact Lane's Cosmic War ethos has fostered is the Soldiers of Odin (SoO), created by Mika Ranta, a self-avowed white supremacist and National Socialist with ties to the WSE Finnish Resistance Movement.¹⁶³ The SoO originated in the northern Finnish town of Kemi in October 2015 and grew in popularity throughout Scandinavia. By December 2016, SoO had evolved into a global WSE movement, claiming twenty chapters

¹⁵⁹ Weinberg & Assoudeh, "Religion and the Radical Right in American Public Life," 181-182.

¹⁶⁰ Kaplan, *Radical Religion*, 60.

¹⁶¹ Kaplan, *Radical Religion*, 117.

¹⁶² Jeffrey Kaplan, Heléne Lööv & Leena Malkki eds., *Lone Wolf and Autonomous Cell Terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 2.

¹⁶³ Yannick Veilleux-Lepage & Emil Archambault, *The Soldiers of Odin: The Global Diffusion of Vigilante Movements*, (self-published, 2017), <https://www.semanticscholar.org/>; Yannick Veilleux-Lepage & Emil Archambault, "Mapping Trans-National Extremist Networks: An Exploratory Study of the Soldiers of Odin's Facebook Network, Using Integrated Social Network Analysis," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, no. 2 (2019).

across Europe, Australia, Canada, and the US.¹⁶⁴ SoO were immediately labelled WSE due to their anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric.¹⁶⁵

Importantly, the core difference between the SoO and other WSE movements is that they spread entirely through social media, and the SoO began their Canadian and Australian chapters around March 2016.¹⁶⁶ What separates the SoO from most other WSE is they operate as a paramilitary organisation, undertaking street patrols led by a Sergeant at Arms; they engage in overt vigilantism; and in Canada and Australia, unlike Finland, they also undertake charitable endeavours, such as food collections to feed homeless citizens.¹⁶⁷

This is reminiscent of Hamas and Hezbollah within Palestinian refugee camps since the Nakba. Although the Canadian chapter of the SoO has not been “explicitly ... linked to acts of terrorism,”¹⁶⁸ Canadian members participated in the infamous 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, when a counter-protester was infamously and intentionally run down and died from her injuries. The Australian chapter is likewise not overtly known to be linked to any terrorist activities, and both the Australian and Canadian chapters remain active.¹⁶⁹

It has been stated that Odinism is arguably “the most significant faith within WSE far-right movements globally.”¹⁷⁰ On July 22, 2011, in Norway, Anders Behring Breivik murdered seventy-seven people. Breivik detonated a van bomb, similar to McVeigh's truck bomb, within Oslo's government district at 15:30, instantly killing eight people and wounding two hundred more, nine of them severely.¹⁷¹ Breivik then drove 19 kilometres to the island of Utøya, where Breivik systematically executed sixty-nine of 564 members of the Norwegian Labour Party (A/Ap) attending their annual political youth camp,

¹⁶⁴ Veilleux-Lepage & Archambault, *The Soldiers of Odin*, 1-2.

¹⁶⁵ Veilleux-Lepage & Archambault, *The Soldiers of Odin*, 3.

¹⁶⁶ Veilleux-Lepage & Archambault, *The Soldiers of Odin*, 4; Mario Peucker and Debra Smith eds., *The Far-Right in Contemporary Australia* (Singapore: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2019).

¹⁶⁷ Veilleux-Lepage & Archambault, “Mapping Trans-National Extremist Networks,” 22, 25, 32; Pamela Nilan, “Far-Right Contestation in Australia: Soldiers of Odin and True Blue Crew,” in *The Far-Right in Contemporary Australia*, eds. Mario Peucker and Debra Smith (Singapore: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2019), 101-125.

¹⁶⁸ Veilleux-Lepage & Archambault, “Mapping Trans-National Extremist Networks,” p. 22, 33.

¹⁶⁹ Lentini, “The Australian Far-Right,” 19, 39.

¹⁷⁰ Lentini, “The Australian Far-Right,” 19, 42-43.

¹⁷¹ Robert Carle, “Anders Breivik and the Death of Free Speech in Norway,” *Society*, vol. 50 (2013): 395-401; Cecilia Leonard, George Adams, James Knoll & Terje Torrisen, “The Case of Anders Behring Breivik – Language of a Lone Terrorist,” *Behavioural Sciences and the Law*, vol. 32 (2014): 408-422; Lars Erik Berntzen & Sveinung Sandberg, “The Collective Nature of Lone Wolf Terrorism: Anders Behring Breivik and the Anti-Islamic Social Movement,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, no. 5 (2014): 759-779; Cato Hemmingby & Tore Bjorgo, *The Dynamics of a Terrorist Targeting Process: Anders B. Breivik and the July 22 Attacks in Norway* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2016).

nearly all of whom were teenagers.¹⁷² Breivik was arrested without incident. Within his manifesto, Breivik stated he was doing “that which the police would like to do but were not allowed to do or were too feeble to carry out.”¹⁷³ On that very day, then A/As Minister for Foreign Affairs, Gro Harlem Brundtland, intended to give a speech, which was later confirmed as a target of opportunity.¹⁷⁴

Breivik was initially labelled a Christian Fundamentalist by the Oslo police chief, and early reports linked him to the Identity politics terrorism of McVeigh instead of the WSE Odinism of Lane.¹⁷⁵ Yet, as mentioned, Breivik stated he is a follower of WSE Odinism. An ideological problem, though, is that this contradicted Breivik’s pseudo-adoption of Christianity’s historical warrior caste’s ethos in his manifesto and initial statements made in court.¹⁷⁶ In keeping with the theme of WSE origins within Identity politics, which intermixed and evolved into WSE Ásatrúar, Breivik participated in right-wing Christian political movements while a member of the Progress Party from 1999 to 2004.¹⁷⁷ Breivik was also an online contributor to the Christian Democratic Party’s *Document.no* and *Norge IDAG*. However, during the police investigation, it became evident that Breivik had failed to ingratiate himself with these movements, apparently due to having an unpleasant personality.¹⁷⁸ Accordingly, Breivik embodies leaderless resistance terrorism attributed to the modern ethos of National-Socialists, Identity politics, and now *völkisch Ásatrú*.¹⁷⁹

Breivik self-associated himself with the ancient Christian militant-religious groups, specifically claiming to be a Justiciar Knight of the Knights Templar. Breivik claimed there was a network of resistance fighters opposed to multiculturalism and cultural Marxism throughout Europe, and that as a member of the Norwegian branch, he was but one of twenty-two other autonomous cells of Templars spread across Europe. However, the Norwegian police investigation stated they found no proof of Templar cells, even though Breivik’s manifesto labelled these networks as Destroyers of Marxism, Defenders of Christendom, and Crusaders, martyrs of the Church. However,

¹⁷² Carle, “Anders Breivik,” 395; Leonard *et al*, “The Case of Anders Behring Breivik,” 410; Hemmingby and Bjorgo, *The Dynamics of a Terrorist*, 2.

¹⁷³ Leonard *et al*, “The Case of Anders Behring Breivik,” 419.

¹⁷⁴ Hemmingby & Bjorgo, *The Dynamics of a Terrorist*, 26-27.

¹⁷⁵ Carle, “Anders Breivik,” 396.

¹⁷⁶ Kaplan, *Radical Religion*, 67-68; Lentini, “The Australian Far-Right,” 21, 33-34; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 29.

¹⁷⁷ Carle, “Anders Breivik,” 398-399.

¹⁷⁸ Berntzen & Sandberg, “The Collective Nature of Lone Wolf Terrorism,” 762.

¹⁷⁹ Kaplan, *Apocalypse, Revolution and Terrorism*, 59-60; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 8.

Breivik's motivational framing has been assessed by professional psychiatrists as being both diagnostic and prognostic.¹⁸⁰

Illustrating the impact of *völkisch* Odinism and the dogmatic globalised impact of Lane's *Wotansvolk* within WSE ideological terrorism is Australian Brenton Harrison Tarrant. On March 15, 2019, Tarrant live streamed his lone wolf attack on two Mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, via Facebook for over an hour, killing fifty-one people and wounding forty others with an assault rifle and a shotgun.¹⁸¹ As mentioned, Tarrant espoused ethnoreligious solidarity with Breivik, even seeking Breivik's personal blessing from his non-existent Templars.¹⁸² And, importantly for this analysis, Tarrant literally recited the ethos of the Lane's *Wotansvolk's* 14 words within his manifesto and also listed Oswald Moseley, a British fascist leader, as one of his ideological influences.¹⁸³

While Tarrant is attributed to *völkisch* Odinism by his associations and mentors, his equipment and weapon also portrayed occultist Nazism iconography such as the Black Sun rune and Odin's cross.¹⁸⁴ Breivik also utilised iconography, but of the Norse *Æsir*, by naming his pistol *Mjølfnir* after Thor's hammer and his rifle *Gugnir* after Odin's "spear that always hit the target."¹⁸⁵ Tarrant was suspected of having links to the Australian WSE movement, the United Patriots Front, who disbanded in 2017 to form the more extremist Lads Society.¹⁸⁶ Tarrant's manifesto championed the WSE conspiracy theory of the Great Replacement being imposed upon white people, an ethnostate of cultural purity, and advocated for a fascist style of governance.¹⁸⁷ Tarrant also stated that whiteness means European-ness both

¹⁸⁰ Leonard *et al*, "The Case of Anders Behring Breivik," 2014; Berntzen & Sandberg, "The Collective Nature of Lone Wolf Terrorism," 2014; Hemmingby & Bjorgo, *The Dynamics of a Terrorist*, 2016.

¹⁸¹ Campion, "A 'Lunatic Fringe'?", 13; Lentini, "The Australian Far-Right," 42; "2019 – Operation Deans Targeted Terrorist Attacks, Christchurch, March 15," New Zealand Police, police.govt.nz.

¹⁸² Alexandra McFadden, "Wardens of Civilisation: The Political Ecology of Australian Far-Right Civilisationism," *Antipode*, no. 2 (2023): 548

¹⁸³ Lentini, "The Australian Far-Right," 42; Campion, "A 'Lunatic Fringe'?" 6, 13.

¹⁸⁴ Lentini, "The Australian Far-Right," 43; Lizzie Dearden, "New Zealand attack: How nonsensical white genocide conspiracy theory cited by alleged gunman is spreading poison around the world," *Independent*, March 16 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/>.

¹⁸⁵ Izak Krzysztof, "Anders Behring Breivik. A case study of a far-right terrorist - a lone wolf," *Terrorism: studies, analyses, prevention*, no. 2 (2022): 291.

¹⁸⁶ Campion, "Australian right wing extremist ideology," 212; Mark Briskey, "From the Old Guard to the Lads Movement: Hybrid Racism and White Supremacism in Australia," in *Back to the '30s? Recurring Crises of Capitalism, Liberalism, and Democracy*, eds. Jeremy Rayner, Susan Falls, George Souvlis, & Taylor C. Nelms (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022 [eBook]), 354.

¹⁸⁷ Campion, "A 'Lunatic Fringe'?" 13-14; Campion, "Australian right wing extremist ideology," 212, 214; Briskey, "From the Old Guard to the Lads Movement," 351, 358; Lentini, "The Australian Far-Right," 42-43.

culturally and genetically, somehow attributing the Anzac myth to the concept of the “strong white Australian.”¹⁸⁸ Tarrant also supported eco-fascism and restricting ethnicities to geographical locations and utilised the “invasion rhetoric to legitimise”¹⁸⁹ murdering children and unarmed civilians who were not white or of European ethnicity.

Breivik utilised the internet to market his manifesto prior to his attacks and was mistakenly labelled a Christian Fundamentalist initially.¹⁹⁰ Tarrant would follow Breivik’s *modus operandi* by posting his manifesto online prior to his attacks, although Tarrant was not labelled as having any religious affiliations.¹⁹¹ Breivik and Tarrant embraced the WSE ethno-religious ideology of *völkisch* Odinism and overtly espoused a sacred terror and Cosmic War ethos. This is especially evident when one considers that their victims had both a socio-political and a religious contextualisation: they were left-wing youth members of a political party that is supportive of multiculturalism within Norway, and the other victims were Muslim migrants in New Zealand who were peacefully undertaking their normal cultural and religious observances, respectively.

Conclusions

Tarrant and Breivik remain in prison to this day, but alive, unlike their multitude of victims. Although this analysis is pretty condemning of the actions by two Ásatrúar, it cannot be said that Ásatrú is inherently a religion that relies on terrorism to achieve its goals. I would argue it is quite random and unfortunate that two of the most infamous acts of domestic terrorism were undertaken by individuals who claim to adhere ideologically to a variant of Ásatrú, albeit WSE Odinism. The Ásatrú revival since the 1970s does not herald a Fifth wave of terrorism, nor should it be considered as a terrorist-focused ideology. These two individuals should be contrasted against the continued WSE Christian Identity terrorism within the US and Europe, and not Islamist violence, which has continued to be framed inconsistently since 2001 by mainstream media. The overtly biased reporting on the destruction of Palestine and the unnecessary death toll inflicted by Israel on Palestinian civilians after October 7, 2023, by the terrorist group Hamas is a point in case of mainstream

¹⁸⁸ Campion, “Australian right wing extremist ideology,” 214.

¹⁸⁹ Campion, “Australian right wing extremist ideology,” 2017

¹⁹⁰ There are multiple, conflicting narratives regarding Breivik’s supposed Christian fundamentalism. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 20-29; George Michael, “Counterinsurgency and Lone Wolf Terrorism,” in *Lone Wolf and Autonomous Cell Terrorism*, eds. Jeffrey Kaplan, Heléne Lööw and Leena Malkki (New York: Routledge, 2015), 60-77, endnote 60.

¹⁹¹ Lentini, “The Australian Far-Right,” 2019; Campion, “Australian right wing extremist ideology,” 2019b.

Western media bias on specific topics, something CTS should never encourage or tacitly endorse.

The contemporary era of terrorism and the role of Ásatrúar within the current Religious wave has not – as Gardell rightly stated in 2003 – been examined sufficiently by scholars of CTS, but more so than Ásatrúar in general, WSE is still not front and centre of CTS as it should be considering the recent re-election of Trump to the US Presidency and the significant question-marks hanging over the various WSE Christian affiliations and militia backgrounds of Trump's nominations for political appointment. There is a significant gap in CTS academia that needs to be addressed with comprehensive, contemporary, qualitative, quantitative, and unbiased research, as this brief and multifaceted analysis has attempted to do, and it only scratches the surface of the historiography of WSE terrorism. The truth is, the research for this analysis *relies* upon the very few scholars who analysed the topic of Ásatrúar in the first place, so there are no apologies that regard me.

However, a number of questions require definitive answers. Did Breivik's and Tarrant's ideological goals align with known terrorist organisations? Not really: WSE movements are not well organised in general, although they share numerous conspiracy theories that Breivik and Tarrant acted upon, like very few others have. Is there a Cosmic War element to their actions, as Juergensmeyer defined it?¹⁹² Breivik can be labelled numerous things because clearly, Breivik engaged with Christian Identity politics at some stage: a White Christian Nationalist, even a pseudo-crusader in the anti-Islamic Christian Fundamentalist biblical sense. However, because Breivik labels himself an Odinist, these labels contradict themselves. Tarrant idealised Breivik's actions and Lane's ethos, including their *modus operandi*, but does not have the traditional Christian Identity politics background as far as my research concluded. This makes it harder to classify Tarrant's positionality in CTS. However, I classify him simply as a WSE terrorist at the very least.

Due to their stated and associated ideological goals, both Breivik and Tarrant are arguably WSE adherents of *völkisch* Odinism, a unique but growing far-right-wing WSE ethno-religious movement. This examination has attempted to illustrate the importance of further research into the origins of WSE Ásatrúar, which has been illustrated largely stems from Christian Identity politics that espouse anti-government, anti-globalisation, and anti-multicultural rhetoric. Irrelevant of either Breivik or Tarrant's stated religious views – let alone those of Matthews, Lane, McVeigh, Nichols, Rudolph, Smith, or Furrow – I would agree with Juergensmeyer's assessment of ethno-religious terrorism. That is, the concept of a God is not the primary motivation of ideological terrorism, even for WSE Ásatrúar, because the majority of such ideologues invent their own ethos in order to fulfil some Warrior of the Blood

¹⁹² Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 117, 128.

fantasy, one that they alone are fighting in some non-existent Cosmic War solely existing within their imaginations.

Colonial violence in Australia – ‘Swan River Logic’ and the Voice referendum

Mary Blight¹
Curtin University

This article looks at the crisis in forgetting and remembering of colonial violence in Australia today. This ‘forgetting’ is one of the factors that led to the Voice referendum resulting in a ‘no’ vote in October 2023. The violence of the colonisation of Australia was actively forgotten by settler society until the 1970s and is an area that still needs research today. Settlers sought to take Indigenous land and ‘replace’ Indigenous people, in line with settler colonial theory. This paper will look at two massacres on Noongar land or boodjar in 1837 and examine the ‘Swan River Logic’ behind settler justifications for the violence. Although these two events are on the University of Newcastle Massacre Map, they need to be further researched and explained to facilitate truth telling. Without truth telling the Australian public will continue to be unable to understand the need for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

The result of the Australian referendum on an Indigenous Voice to parliament in October 2023, with only 39.9% of people in favour, has once again denied a voice to Indigenous peoples. Those who voted no have suggested that they did not want to divide Australia.² In contrast to the overall no result, communities where more than half the members were Indigenous had a yes vote of 63%.³ This indicates that a divide exists in Australia between settler and Indigenous groups; a divide explained by settler colonial theory. Lorenzo Veracini has defined settler society as comprising three classes of people, the settler, who is seen as ‘normative’, the Indigenous Other who settler society seeks to eliminate, and the Exogenous Other, who may or may not be admitted to settler society.⁴ Settler colonialism, as defined by Patrick Wolfe, and further developed by Lorenzo Veracini and others, describes the hierarchy of Australian society

¹ ORCID: 0000-0002-8570-495X

² Nicholas Biddle et al., *Detailed analysis of the 2023 Voice to Parliament Referendum and related social and political attitudes*, Australian National University (Centre for Social Research and Methods, 2023), 1, <https://apo.org.au/node/325112>.

³ Jordyn Beazley, ‘Indigenous communities overwhelmingly voted yes to Australia’s voice to parliament,’ *The Guardian*, Sun 15 October 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/oct/15/indigenous-communities-overwhelmingly-voted-yes-to-australias-voice-to-parliament>.

⁴ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 18.

since invasion.⁵ The divide seen in the Voice vote is therefore a legacy of colonisation.

The slogan of the No campaign was 'If you don't know, vote no', and the success of this idea reflects the lack of knowledge of the violence of colonisation of Australia. In effect, the Voice vote quantified the percentage of people in Australia who understand the deadly impact of the invasion of this country on Indigenous peoples, and those who do not. From the early 1900s to the late 1970s, there was little education on colonial violence in the Australian history curriculum. William Stanner, in his 1968 Boyer lectures, called this out, labelling it 'the great Australian silence'.⁶ This led to historians finally turning to this important subject, especially Henry Reynolds, whose books have been called "'real" history by a whitefella' by Bidjara/Pitjara, Birri Gubba and Juru Academic Jackie Huggins.⁷ More recently, the violence of colonisation has been mapped and quantified by the Massacre Map project, led by Dr. Lyndall Ryan at The University of Newcastle.⁸ Research by the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods shows that, despite the loss of the Voice proposal, 80.5 percent of Australians believe that there should be 'formal Truth-telling processes' about the violence of colonisation.⁹ Ryan and fellow researcher Philip Dwyer have stated that the Massacre Map provides an overview of the violence of colonisation, but each massacre needs to be further investigated and analysed.¹⁰

When researching colonial violence in Australia, the question of motive on the part of British settlers for this violence arises. In 1942, Western Australian historian Paul Hasluck ruminated on how settlers at the Swan River colony, men he deemed to be of 'decent habit and usually of controlled passions', participated in violent encounters with Noongar people.¹¹ Settler colonial theory provides an insight into this contradiction. Veracini explains that settlers see themselves as having sovereign rights to the land they have invaded, and

⁵ See Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology* (London: Cassell, 1999). Also Veracini, *Settler colonialism*.

⁶ W.E.H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming: the 1968 Boyer Lectures* (Sydney: The Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1974, 7th printing), 18-24.

⁷ Jackie Huggins, 'Experience and identity: Jackie Huggins and writing history,' *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies*, 2, 1-7 (1996): 3. See also Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia* (University of New South Wales Press, Revised edition, 2006, reprint of 1981 edition).

⁸ 'Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia, 1788-1930,' University of Newcastle, 2017-2022, <https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php>.

⁹ Biddle et al., *Detailed analysis of the 2023 Voice to Parliament Referendum and related social and political attitudes*, viii.

¹⁰ Philip Dwyer and Lyndall Ryan, 'Reflections on genocide and settler colonial violence,' *History Australia*, 13:3, 335-350 (2016): 349-50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2016.1202336>.

¹¹ Paul Hasluck, *Black Australians: a survey of native policy in Western Australia, 1829-1897* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2nd ed, 1970), 179.

this sovereignty travels with them. This sets up the idea that the invaded Indigenous Other is wrong and 'degraded'.¹² Wolfe pointed out the difference between colonialism and settler colonisation, stating that settler colonialism 'destroys to replace' Indigenous people while settlers appropriate land.¹³ This imperative to destroy Indigenous society, replacing it with settler society, is the source of colonial violence. Wolfe has called this the 'logic of elimination'.¹⁴ This tension between settlers, who saw themselves as good people, and the violence they committed during colonisation and after has resulted in a desire to create an idealised and fictional narrative of colonisation.

While the invasion of Indigenous land in Australia was an inherently violent act, part of the psychology of Australia is to now ignore and obfuscate this violence. Veracini discussed Franz Fanon's idea that settlers consider that history starts with the arrival of the settler population, and that settlers do not consider that Indigenous peoples have a history.¹⁵ While pointing this out, Fanon contends that the colonist 'makes history', but that history is not of the Country that has been colonised, it is about the process of colonisation.¹⁶ Timothy Bottoms has done extensive research on colonial violence in Queensland, finding that historians have 'concealed' the truth of the violence of settlement and sought to 'heroify' settler history.¹⁷ Veracini describes how settler history focuses on the 'victimology' of the hard work and sacrifice required to settle the country invaded, along with the idea that the Indigenous groups whose land was being invaded were nomadic, and therefore did not really deserve to own Country. Stories of hardship from the migrants who subsequently arrived in the colonised country are also discounted by settlers, who use their own history of hardship to legitimise their appropriation of Indigenous land.¹⁸

Stories of settler pioneering in Western Australia concerning the Bussell family, Lieutenant Bunbury and settlers in the York district are well known in local Western Australian historiography.¹⁹ These 'smoke rising from slab huts'

¹² Veracini, *Settler colonialism*, 18.

¹³ Patrick Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,' *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8:4, 387-409 (2006): 387-88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>.

¹⁴ Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,' 387.

¹⁵ Lorenzo Veracini, 'Historylessness: Australia as a settler colonial collective,' *Postcolonial studies*, 10(3), 271-285 (2007): 272.

¹⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, trans. Constance Farrington (Penguin, 1973), 15. The use of a capital C here for Country denotes Indigenous land.

¹⁷ Timothy Bottoms, *Conspiracy of silence: Queensland's frontier-killing times* (Allen and Unwin, 2013), xxiv.

¹⁸ Veracini, 'Historylessness: Australia as a settler colonial collective,' 274.

¹⁹ See E. O. G. Shann, *Cattle Chosen: the story of the first group settlement in Western Australia, 1829 to 1841*, Facsimile ed. ed., Historical reprint series., (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1978 reprint of 1926 edition). Also Alexandra Hasluck, *Portrait with*

narratives, as Inga Clendinnen calls them, hide the shameful reality of what settlers did in the south-west of Australia while stealing Noongar land.²⁰ A close reading of records held in the State Records Office and Battye Library in Western Australia provides a detailed history of the violence that took place in Busselton, south of Perth on Wardandi Noongar Country, and in York, on Balladong Noongar Country east of Perth, during colonisation. Research on this aspect of the colonisation of Noongar land is rare, but Jeremy Martens has recently published an informative article on Lieutenant Bunbury's punitive activities in the York/Toodyay district east of Perth from 1830 to 1840, overseen by Governor James Stirling.²¹ In this paper I will revisit a massacre led by Bunbury at York and Toodyay in 1837, comparing it to another massacre conducted in the same year by settlers in the Vasse district, where Busselton is today. This comparison will look at settler motivations for this violence and how settlers justified their behaviour. It will also discuss how settler Louis Giustiniani decried this violence, labelling it 'Swan River Logic', long before Wolfe described the 'logic of elimination' of colonisation.²²

Two massacres in 1837

South of the Swan River colony, on 28 June 1837, Constable Elijah Dawson, two soldiers of the 21st regiment, Corporal John Gill and Private Maloney, and three settlers, the Chapman brothers and Alfred Pickmore Bussell, headed out in pursuit of Wardandi Noongar people at the Vasse settlement after they speared and ate a calf belonging to settler George Chapman.²³ Alfred Bussell's sister Bessie noted in her diary that nine Wardandi men armed with spears were

background: a life of Georgiana Molloy (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1955). Also Rodger Jennings, *Busselton: 'outstation on the Vasse,' 1830-1850* (Busselton, W.A: Shire of Busselton, 1983). Also Rika Erickson, *Old Toodyay and Newcastle* (Toodyay Shire Council 1974). Also Henry William Bunbury, *Lieutenant Bunbury's Australian Sojourn: The letters and journals of Lt. H.W. Bunbury, 21st Royal North Fusiliers, 1834-1837*, ed. JMR Cameron and Phyllis Barnes (Hesperian Press, 2014).

²⁰ Inga Clendinnen, 'The History Question: Who Owns the Past?,' *Quarterly essay*, no. 23 (2006).

²¹ Jeremy Martens, 'In a State of War': Governor James Stirling, Extrajudicial Violence and the Conquest of Western Australia's Avon Valley, 1830-1840,' *History Australia*, 19(4), (2022), 668-686. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2022.2072351>.

²² Louis Giustiniani, 'The Logic of Swan River: To the Right Honorable Lord Glenelg V,' *Swan River Guardian* (WA : 1836 - 1838), *Thursday 23 November 1837*, page 253 (1837). <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/214041848>. See also Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,' 387.

²³ See Geoff Blackburn, *Conquest and Settlement: The 21st Regiment of Foot (North British Fusiliers) in Western Australia 1833-40* (Hesperian Press, 1999), 27. Note that Maloney is Private Michael Mullaney. See pages 26 and 199. He was posted to Augusta in 1833. For the settler names see Shann Papers Elizabeth Capel Bussell Diary April-December 1837 Battye Library MN 586; ACC 337A/795, 1837, 24, Battye Library Western Australia.

killed and two injured when the punitive group opened fire on them.²⁴ Lenox Bussell was the Justice of the Peace for the Vasse district, and excused the massacre in a report to Resident Magistrate John Molloy in the following words:

Steps prompt and decisive were called for and were absolutely necessary to prevent the occurrence of the same act again and again until the whole herd and the prospects, perhaps the lives, of a thriving settlement had fallen a sacrifice....²⁵

The focus in this statement is on settlers retaining land at any cost. He went on to say that he did not agree with 'temporizing measures' saying it was necessary to convince Wardandi people of their 'inferiority and then extend to them our protection' which would then 'be gratefully accepted'.²⁶ This is a muddled type of reasoning typical of settler colonialism, in which Lorenzo Veracini has identified 'expressions of social pathology, as well as ideology.'²⁷ Lenox Bussell then states that severe responses to small thefts by Wardandi people, such as that of the calf, were necessary to avoid 'a sacrifice of life on both sides double or treble' that which had just occurred.²⁸ His statement underlines the settler commitment to taking Wardandi land with violence.

On 13 July 1837, in response to the massacre the month before, two Wardandi men, leader Gaywal and younger man Nungundung came to the window of Constable Ejjiah Dawson's hut and threw spears at him and his wife, injuring them slightly.²⁹ Dawson had been one of the leaders of the previous massacre. On 30 July 1837 settlers could hear Wardandi people shouting near some settler huts, and Bessie Bussell reported hearing gunfire after settler men armed themselves and went down to investigate.³⁰ This time settlers killed three Wardandi women, one man and a boy, with several

²⁴ Elizabeth Bussell Diary April-December 1837: 24.

²⁵ Letter from Lenox Bussell to Captain Molloy 9 July 1837 CSR Vol 54 folio 136-138 (also in CSR Vol 55 folio 64-65), 1837, State Library of Western Australia.

²⁶ Lenox Bussell to Captain Molloy 9 July 1837.

²⁷ Lorenzo Veracini, 'Settler Collective, Founding Violence and Disavowal: The Settler Colonial Situation,' *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 29:4, (2008): 363-379, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256860802372246>.

²⁸ Lenox Bussell to Captain Molloy 9 July 1837.

²⁹ Elijah Dawson letter to Captain John Molloy Resident Augusta 24 August 1837 SROWA Acc 36 CSR Vol 55 folios 66-67, 1837, State Library Western Australia. See also J G Bussell, Shann papers transcription of letter to Peter Brown Col Sec 26 December 1840 regarding the arrest of Nugundung Acc 337A/788, 1840, Battye Library Western Australia. And J Molloy and J Bussell report on death of George Layman 27 February 1841, SROWA Acc 36, CSR Vol 101 folios 93-4 1841, State Library, Western Australia.

³⁰ Elizabeth Bussell Diary April-December 1837: 30.

Wardandi people badly injured and near to death.³¹ Lenox Bussell took many months to report this event to the Colonial Office in Perth, finally submitting a letter to Resident Magistrate John Molloy saying that he 'found it positively necessary to put down by the severest measures any future attempt upon the lives of Europeans' and that as he could not locate Gaywal and Nungundung it was 'necessary to visit the offence upon the whole of the party implicated'.³²

It is instructive to look at the settler justification for a massacre led by Lieutenant Henry William St Pierre Bunbury in the York district east of the Swan River colony in 1837, to ascertain whether Lenox Bussell's reasoning was unusual. It was in response to an incident at York where, after many years of settler violence in the district, and as payback for the arrest and removal to Perth of two Ballardong men, a group of forty Ballardong warriors speared and killed two settler servants called Peter Chidlow and Edward Jones.³³ Bunbury volunteered to lead the punitive expedition and Governor James Stirling sent him to York with instructions to perform 'proper examples of Severity to the full extent to which the Law warrants in such cases'.³⁴ Bunbury was accompanied by nineteen soldiers of the 21st regiment and aided by Lieutenant Mortimer, Resident Magistrate McLeod and York settlers in undertaking several weeks of violent activities in the York, Toodyay and Beverly districts. This violence resulted in the deaths of at least eighteen Ballardong people during July and August of 1837.³⁵

While William Nairn Clark, editor of the Swan River Guardian, urged the punitive settler group at York not to commit a massacre of Ballardong people, as 'the innocent might then be sacrificed to atone for the crimes of the guilty' he went on to say:

Unnecessary cruelty ought not to be inflicted, but the deaths of Chidlow and Jones must be avenged, and we say that ample justice ought to be dealt against their Murderers in the first place, as a terror to their assistants or abbetors [sic].³⁶

Going on to say that the Swan River colony was founded as a 'hasty and crude measure' Nairn ruminated that settlers could not now leave Noongar land, as

³¹ Elizabeth Bussell Diary April-December 1837: 30-31.

³² Lenox Bussell letter 27 December 1837 to RM Captain John Molloy SROWA CSR Vol 59 folio 148-149, 1837, State Library of Western Australia.

³³ Erickson, *Old Toodyay and Newcastle*.p. 28.

³⁴ Bunbury, *Lieutenant Bunbury's Australian Sojourn*, 224.

³⁵ Swan River Guardian (WA : 1836 - 1838) View title info Thu 20 Jul 1837 Page 25-206 <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/23543251>

³⁶ William Nairn Clark, 'Colonial Warfare Between the Whites and the Blacks,' *Swan River Guardian* (WA : 1836 - 1838) Thu 20 Jul 1837, (1837): 205-206. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/23543251>.

it would be 'gladly seized by a Foreign Power'.³⁷ This is an acknowledgement that the real cause of the conflict between settlers and Ballardong people was settler appropriation of Ballardong Noongar. Nairn also lamented that Ballardong people could not just be removed from their Country as it could 'only be accomplished by force' due to the existential attachment to that Noongar people have with their boodjar or Country.³⁸ This reading confirms that in the York district, also, settlers justified their violence towards Ballardong Noongar people through the imperative to take Noongar boodjar.

The violence on Ballardong Country in 1837 appears to have been greater than that reported, and this is revealed by a letter from the Reverend Louis Giustiniani to the Colonial Secretary where he alleged that York settlers were planning to go out on the pretext of hunting for game to 'destroy all the Aboriginal inhabitants they can meet', with settler Arthur Trimmer declaring that he planned to kill ten Ballardong people himself.³⁹ Later in the year Giustiniani wrote to the Swan River Guardian reporting that Trimmer's servant had shot a Ballardong woman, and Trimmer had cut her ears off, attaching them to his mantlepiece as a trophy. Giustiniani also stated that McLeod had shot indiscriminately into a Ballardong camp as people slept, on two separate occasions, calling the violence prevailing in the York district 'Swan River logic'.⁴⁰ This settler logic, or the 'logic of elimination' as Wolfe calls it, was followed through with such ruthless efficiency, that many Ballardong people went to Perth for refuge.⁴¹

In both massacre events, the number of Noongar people killed was under-reported. The Reverend Giustiniani called the situation in York a 'blood scene'.⁴² The fact that so many Ballardong people went to Perth for refuge also backs up Giustiniani's claim that settler violence in the York district was extreme. In October 1837, Governor Stirling had to send settler George Fletcher Moore, accompanied by young Ballardong man Garbung, to York tell Ballardong people that hostilities were at an end and that "'Governor wongay yahi keenyak" (the Governor says he is satisfied)' and settlers would now stop

³⁷ Clark, 'Colonial Warfare Between the Whites and the Blacks.'

³⁸ Clark, 'Colonial Warfare Between the Whites and the Blacks.'

³⁹ Louis Giustiniani, Letter to Colonial Secretary Peter Brown 25 August 1837 SROWA Acc 36 Vol 55 folio 73 1837, State Library Western Australia.

⁴⁰ Giustiniani, The Logic of Swan River.'

⁴¹ Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,' 387. According to Kimberly's 1897 history, the 'punishment inflicted by the soldiers' caused 'a general exodus' of Ballardong people to Perth. See Warren Bert Kimberly, *History of West Australia: A Narrative of her Past Together with Biographies of Her Leading Men*. (Melbourne: F.W. Niven and Co., 1897), 107. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/History_of_West_Australia.

⁴² Louis Giustiniani, 'Lord Glenelg and the Natives. Lesson III,' *Swan River Guardian (WA : 1836 - 1838) View title info Thu 8 Jun 1837*, (1837): 182. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/214041945>.

attacking Balladong people.⁴³ Bunbury's activities during this time were later described by Moore as 'particularly zealous'.⁴⁴ With the first massacre at the Vasse on 28 June, 1837 Bessie Bussell recorded in her diary that nine Wardandi men were killed and two injured, but her brother Lenox Bussell's subsequent report stated that three people were killed.⁴⁵ Vasse settlers killed five more Wardandi people a month later on 30 July 1837, but Lenox Bussell did not quantify these deaths, instead justifying settler actions months later in an incomplete report.⁴⁶

Conclusion

The result of the Voice vote shows a split between settler society and Indigenous groups in Australia. This is reflective of Veracini's definition of settler society as consisting of three classes: settlers, Indigenous peoples who settlers seek to eliminate and Exogenous others who are not yet admitted to settler society.⁴⁷ In Australia today, two of those classes can vote, with a large difference between the overall yes result of 39.9% contrasted with a yes vote in remote Indigenous communities of 63%. This division is reflective of the violence of colonisation, and how it is remembered today. I suggest that this division indicates a lack of knowledge of the violence of colonisation in settler society, while Indigenous peoples have a strong, lived memory of it. This violence arose out of the 'logic of elimination' of settler colonialism.⁴⁸ This settler logic was pointed out by settler Louis Giustiniani in 1837, a year in which settler violence on Noongar boodjar in Western Australia increased on two fronts, at Busselton and York. This desire for dominance, due to the 'Swan River Logic' seen in the reports of settlers such as Lenox Bussell, Lieutenant Bunbury, Resident Magistrate McLeod, Governor Stirling, and William Nairn show how settlers rationalised killing Noongar people for their land.⁴⁹ Although research in the archives readily supplies detailed information on the violence of 1837, these events and many other massacres in Western Australia noted on the Massacre Map are not thoroughly documented today, accounting

⁴³ James Cameron, *The Millendon Memoirs: George Fletcher Moore's Western Australian Diaries and Letters, 1830-1841* (Carlisle, W.A.: Hesperian Press, 2006), 433.

⁴⁴ G F Moore, 'Brief Chronicle,' *Journal of Agricultural and Horticultural Society, Mitchell Library, 1842-3, xxxiv*. (1842-3): 102, <https://go-gale.com.ezproxy.library.uwa.edu.au/ps/i.do?p=MOME&u=uwa&id=GALE%7CU0109318905&v=2.1&it=r&sid=primo>.

⁴⁵ See Elizabeth Bussell Diary April-December 1837: 24. Also Letter from Lenox Bussell to Captain Molloy 28 June 1837 SROWA Acc 36 CSR Vol 54 folios 135-136, 1837, State Library Western Australia.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Bussell Diary April-December 1837: 30-31.

⁴⁷ Veracini, *Settler colonialism*, 18.

⁴⁸ Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,' 387.

⁴⁹ Giustiniani, 'The Logic of Swan River.'

for the gap in understanding of Australia's violent history. When settlers invaded Australia, a forgotten war ensued. The result of the Voice referendum shows that truth telling concerning this frontier war is needed to inform Australian citizens of the true history of this country, and more research is urgently required.

Enjoying the Crisis: The Libidinal Dynamics of the Hollywood Studio Decline¹

Laurent Shervington
University of Western Australia

This article explores the Hollywood studio system crisis during the late 1940s-1950s, using a psychoanalytic lens to read this event as a "crisis of enjoyment" where the industry failed to capture post-war spectators' desires. Using Lacanian theory, the crisis is theorised as a traumatic event in a libidinal economy underlying the industry's material economy. Key legal interventions dismantled the vertical integration model: the de Havilland case limiting studio control over actors, the Paramount decision ending block-booking, antitrust actions against colour film monopolies, and the "Miracle Decision" weakening censorship— all restricting studios' control over production, distribution, and content. Hollywood responded with technological innovations such as colour film, Cinemascope, or Cinerama to enhance cinema's sensory experience, attempting to reclaim audiences through what Todd McGowan calls cinema's "excessiveness." Despite these efforts, the studio system could not recover as audiences turned to television and new film movements. This analysis challenges views of spectator passivity, demonstrating that spectators' enigmatic desires elude complete capture and can trigger systemic crisis.

The Hollywood studio system crisis was a pivotal event that fundamentally changed the structure of the film industry, both in the United States, and globally. The first indications of a crisis came in the late 1940s, when US audiences began to diminish. As Gomery details, by "the early 1960s they were half what they had been during the glory days, and thousands of formerly flourishing theatres had closed forever."² From this initial depletion, events such as the anti-trust interventions of the Supreme Court, the blacklisting campaign against potential Communist infiltration of Hollywood, and the expansion of cinematic technology all formed as complex symptoms of the crisis. The interpretation that will follow will frame the economic, cultural and

¹ The author would like to acknowledge that another version of this work was published under the title of "A Crisis of Enjoyment: The Libidinal Economy of the Hollywood Studio Decline" in the journal *Cinematheme*. Laurent Shervington, "A Crisis of Enjoyment: The Libidinal Economy of the Hollywood Studio Decline" *Cinematheme*, no.1 (2022): 24-34.

² Douglas Gomery, "Transformation of the Hollywood Studio System" in *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 443. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

industrial events through the perspective of the libidinal, following the psychoanalytic thesis that enjoyment (*jouissance*) is the central mechanism driving and sustaining the Hollywood studio crisis. Broadly speaking, the underlying structural contradiction of the crisis, as well as perhaps cinema in general, is the enigmatic desire of the spectator, which poses the eternal question: What does the spectator want? Certainly, there have been periods in Hollywood's history which have responded well to such a question, garnering enormous audience attendance and enthusiasm. In Adorno and Horkheimer's influential chapter from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," the spectator is constructed as a figure at the mercy of the economic imperatives of the studio system. As they propose: "The spectator must need no thoughts of his own: the product prescribes each reaction ... Any logical connection presupposing mental capacity is scrupulously avoided."³ However, in paying close attention to the nature of the Hollywood studio crisis, it can be seen that rather than seamlessly fitting into the pre-made mould of the studio, the unpredictable desire of the spectator, which, is perhaps, most enigmatic to the spectator themselves, threatens to unleash a spectatorial crisis at any possible point. In this sense, guessing the audience's desire has formed a central art of the economic and cultural function of film. As James Monaco has posed, "[b]ecause film production involves exceptionally high unit costs and is – even under the most favourable of circumstances – a high-risk venture, film-makers can rarely afford to give way to their own notions. They must, instead, give play to what they believe are the shared tastes of the mass audience."⁴ Likewise, Peter Bachlin writes that the "popularity of a film, indeed the very reason for its existence, arises on the whole from the adaptation of its contents to the dominant thoughts, conceptions, and instinctual wishes of contemporary society."⁵ While the Hollywood audience attendance had reached an all-time high in early 1946, the desires of the post-war audience could not be responded to within the studio system; the constellation of major production and distribution studios which held a stable dominance over the United States film industry both economically and aesthetically from the 1920s to the later 1950s.

The section of film studies which has historically paid most attention to the desires of the audience has been psychoanalytic film theory, which views the motion picture as analogous to the dream-work. As Freud pointed out in

³ Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 109.

⁴ James Monaco. *Cinema and Society: France and Germany During the Twenties*. (Amsterdam: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1976) 4.

⁵ Peter Bachlin quoted in James Monaco, *Cinema and Society: France and Germany During the Twenties*. (Amsterdam: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1976), 4.

The Interpretation of Dreams, in every dream a wish inheres.⁶ From this orientation, Hollywood, the veritable dream factory, was now losing its grip on its major capacity to allure. Prior to the 1990s, psychoanalytic film theory had emphasised the spectator's desire to identify with the screen image, with film theorists such as Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Baudry and Raymond Bellour characterising film as operating within the imagistic or imaginary realm. Since the 1990s, psychoanalytic film theorists have claimed that rather than identification, it is film's mediation of the traumatic which is what garners its fascination and crucially, the spectator's enjoyment. Such theorists, which include Joan Copjec, Slavoj Žižek and Todd McGowan, claim that cinema has a privileged proximity to the domain of enjoyment that runs through the spectator, the formal qualities of the medium and the structure of the cinema industry. As McGowan writes:

Enjoyment rules the cinema. Though minimalist films that try to downplay the spectator's enjoyment certainly exist, film is inherently an excessive art. It aims at bombarding the spectator with more than she or he can process.⁷

Recognising film's integral relationship with enjoyment allows the crisis of the studio system to be seen as a crisis of enjoyment.

In the context of the Hollywood studio system, the crisis was one in which its once dedicated audience had begun to wane in the wake of the Second World War. The early 1940s had seen a period of relative stability and prosperity for the film industry, with the initial part of 1946 standing out as the highest point of viewership and engagement. One of the most significant changes of this period in the United States was the population shift towards the suburbs, which subsequently saw middle class audiences investing more time and money in their homes and living further away from popular film theatres. Indeed, such a cultural shift provides some context for the sudden rise of the specifically domestic form of enjoyment that was television, which offered its own novel serial format. Furthermore, within this conjecture, a growing dissatisfaction over the totalising dominance of the major studios grew both within the industry workforce and the independent theatre owners outside of it, the latter of which sought greater ability to exhibit. It was these two factors which helped to deepen the structural contradiction within the studio system: specifically, the fact that the desire of the cinema spectator could no longer be consistently captured, with the advent of the post-war period provoking a

⁶ Sigmund Freud. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 145.

⁷ Todd McGowan. *Psychoanalytic Film Theory and The Rules of the Game*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 55.

desire for artistic novelty in both form and content. It was this that led to the first indications of the crisis.

Symptoms of the Crisis

Turning towards the specific events which initiated the crisis and the responses that followed, it is worth considering Jacques Lacan's idea that what characterises a traumatic event is the inability for it to be consistently symbolised. Following this logic, if the crisis of Hollywood was in fact traumatic, then it cannot be grasped directly, but only through the symptoms it produced. In considering the dynamics of the crisis with particular attention to the psychic resonance of particular events, it is useful to posit a libidinal economy that underpins the material economy of the industry. Within such an economy, psychic investments, prohibitions and displacements mark the movements of the system. While the dynamics of the libidinal system have no inherent tendency or teleology, Hollywood's response is characterised as one of recuperation, in which the major studios attempted to somehow resuscitate the waning enjoyment which it imagined it once commanded.

i) The Prohibition of Prohibition: The Demise of the Studio Lords and the Law of Desire

In the years during and after the Second World War, the Supreme Court in the United States would decisively intervene in the economic and cultural domain of Hollywood. Such interventions were the initiating events of the Hollywood crisis and pushed against the absolute dominance of the studios. These rulings were made firmly against the oligopolistic structure of the major studios, following considerable public dissatisfaction about the level of dominance Paramount, RKO Pictures, MGM-Mayer and Warner Bros had over multiple levels of the film industry.

The first area of expression was the legal action taken by actress Olivia de Havilland in 1944, which was hugely consequential for the studio system. Prior to the decision, major studios were able to exercise almost total control over their acting staff, being able to force them to only work within specific studio productions. If an actor or actress refused to appear in a certain contract for any reason, the studio was able to extend their contract, meaning stars were essentially bound to their studios. The court ruling in the de Havilland case prohibited the studios from perpetually prolonging acting contracts in this way. Broadly, it worked in the favour of granting more creative freedom to performers, in turn, marking one of the first decisive blows in reducing the jurisdiction of studios.

The ruling that would further this point would be the 1948 anti-trust decision against block-booking, known as the *United States v. Paramount*

Pictures Inc., et al. Like the de Havilland case, the suit was first filed much earlier (in 1938) against the major companies MGM, RKO, Twentieth Century-Fox, Warner Bros. and Paramount, but by the later years of the 1940s, the consent decree that had been settled was now seen as too lenient, as it allowed the studios to merely scale down the booking practice rather than abolish it. An industry standard, the practice of block booking meant a studio wielded the ability to coerce exhibitors and theatres to take a studio production company's full catalogue of films, many of which were of a lesser quality, in order to gain access to the highly sought after exceptional films. The result of the decision meant that films were now individually sold on their own merits, rather than as a wholesale package deal. The restriction of such an industry standard pushed the major studios to place significant limitations on their production model, making much fewer films, but with higher budgets. The main outcome of these decisions against the major studios was that they no longer had direct access to distribution and exhibition and now had to compete with each other for the attention of theatres. Around the same time, the US government filed suits against the colour process companies Kodak and Technicolor, also in the name of violating anti-trust laws. In this case, the charge was that these two companies controlled the production of colour in the film industry. By the end of 1948, Kodak agreed to make their patents available to their competitors, opening up the possibility for producers outside the major studios to access the use of colour.

Finally, another crucial judicial decision that was instrumental to the collapse of the studio system was one related to the release of Roberto Rossellini's film *L'Amore* (1948), specifically the second section of the film titled: "The Miracle." This sequence featured a tramp who has a child with a mentally unwell woman, who claims it to be the son of God. In response to the film, the Catholic Church started a campaign which enlisted New York State Board of Regents to ban its release in the United States in December 1950 on the grounds of sacrilege. Such a reaction was fiercely opposed by the film's distributor in America, leading to the unexpected Supreme Court decision that the banning of Rossellini's film was a violation of the separation of Church and State. With the overturning of the film's ban by the "Miracle" Decision, the Hayes production code, which had acted as the definitive judge for what was allowed to play in Hollywood, began to show signs of impotence.

In this new configuration of the studio system, the organisations which had previously held an almost uncontested dominance over the film industry were now unravelling. In symbolic terms, the capacity for prohibition, specifically, what content filmmakers and screenwriters were allowed to put in their productions, the conditions upon which a studio has say in which projects actors are allowed to participate in, and what films exhibitors are able to accept and screen, was itself becoming prohibited. Such a dynamic led to the loosening of several crucial areas of the market and the growing deficiency of

these once symbolically proficient markers of authority. A suitable metaphor employed by Dixon for the decline of the studio heads is the ‘death of the moguls’, which goes some way in capturing the significance of such decisions.⁸ The dissipation of oligopolistic control caused a kind of symbolic ‘death’ of figures such as MGM’s Louis B. Mayer, Paramount’s Adolph Zukor and Warner Bros’ Jack Warner. By 1948, RKO sold all their theatres in anticipation of further government action, closely followed by Twentieth Century Fox, MGM and Warner, marking the end of the era of vertical integration.

It is often accepted that the Supreme Court rulings and the subsequent major studio decisions to sell their theatres marked the decisive and final events of the Hollywood studio crisis. However, to conclude the lineage of the crisis here would be to miss the way in which subsequent responses to the crisis, in fact, form part of the crisis itself. Such a reading is predicated upon the idea that the prohibitions laid down by the Supreme Court actually mandated for further excess to be sought. Such a reading is shared by the Lacanian thesis that desire and law are analogous, which pushes against the idea that the imposition of Law acts purely as an obstacle to desire. Elaborated simply, Lacan points to the psychoanalytic insight that the obstacle that stands in the way of desire is in fact crucial to the desiring subjectivity. Specifically, the failed satisfaction of desire produces a surplus in the form of enjoyment (*jouissance*). Reading the extent of this as part of the broader libidinal economy of the Hollywood system, this thesis allows us to understand the reactions to the Supreme Court cases against the studio system as the emergence of an excessive enjoyment as inaugurated by the prohibitions. Such responses were widely excessive in tone and suffused with enjoyment, traversing the extra and intra-cinematic spaces of Hollywood, standing out as attempts to entice spectators back to the film theatres.

ii) The Provocation of Excess: Blacklisting and Cinematic Excess

The response to the demise of the studio system can be read as reaction-formations to the initial prohibitions put in place by the Supreme Court. The two responses, namely, the blacklisting campaign against suspected Communist sympathies with Hollywood, as well as the influx of cinematic technology are both responses to the supposed deficiency of Hollywood to provide enjoyment. The blacklisting campaign follows the logic of stolen *jouissance* – that a certain figure has taken away the enjoyment that used to

⁸ Wheeler Winston Dixon, *Death of the Moguls: The End of Classical Hollywood*. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

reside with the studio system, namely, the radical Communist – while the technological advancement can be read as an attempt to recuperate and return the ephemeral enjoyment in the form of various new advancements in how cinema can be bodily experienced.

Blacklisting: The Construction of the Fantasy Figure

Developing from the events of the Great Depression, the Second World War, but given urgency by the emergence of the Cold War, the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) hearings and blacklisting campaign made a huge impact upon Hollywood, both within the industry and the films themselves. Blacklisting was the practice of banning supposed Communist Party USA (CPUSA) members or sympathisers from employment in the entertainment industry. The HUAC had released a report in 1938 that Hollywood was infected by Communism, a declaration which intensified in the early 1940s, until its peak from 1952-1956. As several reports indicate, the HUAC hearings in October 1947 were an obscenely excessive affair, recreating the type of cinematic spectacle that would draw people away from television and back into the theatre. As Doherty (2018) posits, “the hearings boasted all the trappings of a gala Hollywood premiere— glamorous stars, colorful moguls, emotional outbursts, and wide-eyed looky-loos, all recorded under the hot lights of the newsreel cameras and broadcast over radio” (p. viii).⁹ Likewise, as Florence S. Lowe (1947) of the *Daily Variety* put it, “[e]ven before the gavel of committee chairman Parnell Thomas gave the signal for ‘lights, camera, action,’ the big caucus room of the House of Representatives building took on all the drama and tenseness of a studio lot just before shooting.”¹⁰ Despite the heightened atmosphere of the hearings, legal convictions of Hollywood workers didn’t follow, which frustrated the McCarthy and HUAC followers. Desperate to continue their campaign and fuelled by enjoyment, their approach became more excessive, demanding more enjoyment in the form of more names of the guilty.

Reading the political and libidinal economies of this period in tandem, the fantasmatic framing of the figure of the Communist can be read as an attempt to satisfy the desire of their diminishing audience. Like all figures of fantasy, the Communist took on wildly contradictory traits and sparked heightened paranoia about their ability to potentially be behind any production as a screenwriter, actor or director. In her 1975 memoir *Scoundrel Time*, Lillian Hellman, a noted American playwright and victim of the HUAC hearings,

⁹ Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Show Trial: Hollywood, HUAC, and the Birth of the Blacklist*. (New York: Columbia University, 2018), viii.

¹⁰ Florence S. Lowe, “Hearing Opens with Pomp of Big Show Debut,” *Daily Variety*, October 21, 1947.

details how the paranoia embedded itself in the social fabric at the time through the figure of the radical:

To many intellectuals the radicals had become the chief, perhaps the only, enemy ... Not alone because the radical's intellectual reasons were suspect, but because his convictions would lead to a world that deprived the rest of us what we had. Very few people are capable of admitting anything so simple: the radical had to be made into an immoral man who justified murder, prison camps, torture, any means to an end.¹¹

Hellman's testimony points to the symptomatic status of the radical, which stood for the figure who deprived the rest (of American society) of what they thought they had. This fact of a stolen substance, namely, enjoyment, is what grounds the figure of the radical Communist.

With the legitimisation and persistence of the anti-Communist trend until the 1960s, Hollywood had, in some ways conscious and in other ways unconscious, manufactured an excessive enjoyment that would appeal to the wide public. Certainly, the HUAC campaign, the subsequent blacklistings, and the plethora of anti-Communist films that emerged show a subtle shift from the crisis of enjoyment to the enjoyment of the crisis. Such a shift is perhaps best captured in the figure of McCarthy himself, in particular, with regard to the 1954 Army-McCarthy hearings. These televised hearings were held to investigate the accusation that McCarthy and his chief counsel Roy Cohn had blackmailed the Army into giving preferred treatment to a former McCarthy aide. During the course of the proceedings, McCarthy countered these claims with multiple accusations that the army was a major security threat because of their infiltration by Communists. At certain point, counsel member Joseph Welch pushed McCarthy on his relentless attacks on the lawyer Fred Fisher, proclaiming the famous lines: "Have you no sense of decency, sir?" This case would have a highly detrimental impact on McCarthy's credibility, but despite this, there are several reports that after the case had concluded, McCarthy continued to talk and accuse others, even after being told to stand down. The image of the senator in empty Senate rooms, endlessly orating elaborate Communist plots situates him as a Lacanian figure of the drive, refusing to give up the jouissance he manufactured from his endless repetitive tirades against any and all suspects. In this way he is akin to Žižek's characterisation of the figure of the zombie as "slowly dragging itself around in a catatonic mode but persisting forever."¹² Such a positioning reveals McCarthy crucially without a

¹¹ Lillian Hellman, *Scoundrel Time*. (London: Macmillan London Limited, 1976), 72-73.

¹² Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*. (London: Verso, 2012), 341.

fantasy frame, as a figure of pure repetition without goal. McCarthy would pass away only a few years later in 1957, shorn of his ability to drive public opinion, and crucially, their forms of enjoyment.

Cinematic Spectacle: The Expansion of Colour, CinemaScope, 3-D, and Cinerama

While the Hollywood blacklisting was making waves outside the cinema, as well as the themes explored within it, change was also taking place in the technology of cinema itself. In effect, what the crisis of enjoyment faced by Hollywood meant, was that new technology needed to be implemented in order to sustain the desire for film in the broader public. Returning to McGowan's thesis that the medium of cinema is one infused with enjoyment, he further comments:

We shouldn't be surprised that studios and filmmakers constantly seek to make cinema ever more excessive. They add sound, color, wide-screen formats, Sensurround, Smell-O-Vision, IMAX, THX, 3-D, and so on. These excesses are not betrayals of the cinematic art but the logical extension of its excessiveness. The enjoyment that cinema provides leads to cinephilia or addiction, just as heroin or any other substance that proffers enjoyment.¹³

McGowan's reference to these technical features of films is central to the current argument, as during the period of the 1950s, Hollywood studios implemented some of the most far-reaching and experimental techniques to prove the excessive capabilities of cinema, which included the nearly complete introduction of colour in motion pictures and the use of Cinemascope and Cinerama, techniques which widened the camera's field of vision, often provoking physical sensations of movement. The link between technology and enjoyment is clear to see, as the introduction of physicality was central to remaking cinema as *the* medium of *jouissance*.

Despite its best attempts, the demise of the vertically integrated studio system was not overcome, with the 1960s standing out as a decade in which the consequences of the studio crisis were felt commercially. As costs were cut across the board and fewer films were made within the studios, audiences turned to television and the emerging new cinema movements as novel forms of spectatorial enjoyment to partake in. While in the decade that followed, New Hollywood would mark an artistic return for cinema in the United States, the Hollywood studio crisis stands out as a moment in which the implications of

¹³ Todd McGowan, *Psychoanalytic Film Theory and The Rules of the Game*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 55.

the enigmatic desire of the spectator were inscribed, making a lasting impact on the history of cinema. In considering this particular case study, this article has pushed back against theoretical writings which have assigned a kind of primary passivity to the spectator with regard to their desiring status. As this crisis reveals, the enigmatic desire of the spectator avoids the total trapping of the culture industry, threatening to provoke a crisis at seemingly any point.

Strange Things Are Happening: Reaching for the Retro in Response to Contemporary Crisis

Julia Garas¹
Curtin University

"You wanna know the worst thing that's ever happened here in the four years I've been working here? Do you wanna know the worst thing? It was when an owl attacked Eleanor Gillespie's head because it thought that her hair was a nest."

(Jim Hopper, *Stranger Things*, Season One, Episode One)

6th of November 1983, Hawkins, Indiana. A fictional, small, midwestern town in the US, located about 80 miles outside Indianapolis. Inside a suburban house, a group of middle-school friends, Mike Wheeler (played by Finn Wolfhard), Dustin Henderson (played by Gaten Matarazzo), Lucas Sinclair (played by Caleb McLaughlin) and Will Byers (played by Noah Schnapp), are playing *Dungeons and Dragons* in the basement. A poster of *The Thing*, a 1982 science-fiction horror film, visible in the background. Mike's mother, Karen (played by Cara Buono), interrupts, clad in high-waisted mom jeans, telling Mike that it is time for his friends to go home since it is a school night. In the carport, next to the family station wagon, Dustin, Lucas and Will prepare to leave on their bikes. As they ride off and down the street, the scene is familiar; we have seen this before in movies like *The Goonies* (1985) or *ET the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), these very scenes inform the first five minutes of season one, episode one of *Stranger Things* (2016).

Created by the Duffer brothers, the series infuses references to the popular culture of the 1980s, taking inspiration from the works of Steven Spielberg, John Carpenter, David Lynch, Stephen King, Wes Craven and H. P. Lovecraft, as well as drawing on the history of Cold War experiments and conspiracy theories. *Stranger Things* utilises this retro aesthetic to denote a connection between the past (on screen) and the present viewership. There is no shortage of research into *Stranger Things* and the nostalgia it invokes for the 1980s.² Following the release of season one, the popularity of the series has been

¹ ORCID: 0000-0002-0732-0117

² See, for example, Zachary Griffith. 2022. "Stranger Things, Nostalgia, and Aesthetics." *Journal of Film and Video* 74 (1-2): 3-18. <https://doi.org/10.5406/19346018.74.1.2.01>; Dan Hassler-Forest. 2020. "When You Get There, You Will Already Be There: Stranger Things, Twin Peaks and the Nostalgia Industry." *Science Fiction Film and Television* 13 (2): 175-97. <https://doi.org/10.3828/sfvtv.2020.10>.

considered as the cause of increased attention toward 'arcade games, Dungeons & Dragons roleplaying, and other cult historical and musical referents of the 1980s'.³ This highlights the viewer's emotional identification with consumer goods and cultural artifacts represented in *Stranger Things*, as the television series reflects the desire to find comfort in what is known to us. This essay argues that the representation of the 1980s in the television series *Stranger Things* is a manifestation of a contemporary identity crisis. By exploring how the unpredictability of the present compels people to seek comfort in the past, a seemingly stable place, we can see how people temporally anchor themselves to what they know to abate their fears about the future. In an attempt to return to this period of time, we ultimately end up only creating an idealised, nostalgic representation of the past. All attempts at evoking the past will be limited by stylised nostalgic representations, as there is a need for aesthetic cultural features and artefacts that the audience is able to quickly recognise, because we cannot ever recreate the specific temporal circumstances.

The 1980s marks a particularly important time in memory studies, being linked to increasing globalisation. Migration in the 70s and 80s due to globalisation played a key role in altering people's experiences and understanding of time and space.⁴ The rapid and unprecedented movement of people saw the 'uprooting and dissolution of ties [grown] in traditional societies'.⁵ With this disintegration of familiarity, memory became critical for anchoring people and their identities in new places and spaces. Alison Landsberg proposes the term 'prosthetic memory' to explain collective memory in contemporary society, given the mass migration and technological advances in the twentieth century that severed traditional memory practices defined by family, social or religious communities.⁶ Prosthetic memory considers how contemporary communities and their memories are created and influenced by media, which allows people to connect and negotiate their relationship with the past.⁷ The link between culture and memory has been clearly determined through understanding how human cultures create temporal frameworks of knowledge.⁸ In the collective memory of a community, each new generation follows temporal frameworks that recall,

³ Lu Kevin, Greta Kaluzeviciute, and William Sharp, 'Things Can Only Get Stranger: Theoretical and Clinical Reflections on Netflix's *Stranger Things*,' *Journal of Popular Culture* 55, no. 3 (2022): 619, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpcu.13143>.

⁴ Sérgio Campos Matos, 'History, Memory and Fiction: What Boundaries,' *História da Historiografia* 8, no. 17 (2015): 427-439, 428, <https://doi.org/10.15848/hh.v0i17.930>.

⁵ Matos, 'History, Memory and Fiction,' 428.

⁶ Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 7.

⁷ Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 4.

⁸ Aledia Assman, 'Canon and Archive,' In *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 97.

relate and reinterpret information from the past.⁹ Thus, memory has a double vision, looking both to the past and the present, with the present informing the past and vice versa. Landsberg argues that these memories are ‘transportable and therefore challenge more traditional forms of memory that are premised on claims of authenticity, “heritage” and “ownership”’.¹⁰

Landsberg’s concept of prosthetic memory conceptualises collective memory practices within distinct communities (often embodied as the nation-state) as no longer being the primary bearer of collective memory, arguing instead that memory is thrust upon us through mass cultural technologies such as cinema.¹¹ If a sense of belonging in the modern nation-state relies on a shared community, curated by cultural memory and policies that create a distinction between nations, then Landsberg asks in relation to contemporary memory, ‘to what extent do modern technologies of mass culture such as film with their ability to transport individuals through time and space function as technologies of memory?’¹² Consumption of television now primarily rests on the medium of streaming services, such as Netflix, Stan, Amazon Prime, Disney Plus and Binge. These services are accessible on any device capable of connecting to the internet, meaning that we can view television from a traditional setting via a television in the living room, our phones on a morning train commute, or even a plane going from one side of the world to the other. Streaming media, according to Gambarato, Heuman and Lindberg, has had a ‘palpable impact on mediating practices of memories of the past and consequently, on understanding the present world’.¹³ *Stranger Things* functions as a technology of memory, creating the shared temporal and social frameworks needed for a sense of identity by drawing together the past and present. Its setting within the 1980s speaks to a time on the precipice of change while also still retaining the cultural and temporal regionalisms of 1980s small-town America.

With increasing globalisation and the development of new technologies throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the emergence of global commodities impacted processes of consumption. Natan Sznajder and Rainer Winter argue that:

⁹ Assman, ‘Canon and Archive,’ 97.

¹⁰ Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 3.

¹¹ Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 2.

Landsberg draws on the term ‘collective memory’ coined by Maurice Halbwachs in his seminal 1925 text *On Collective Memory*. Collective memory, according to this definition exists through social frameworks traditionally formed through family, religion or social class.

¹² Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 1.

¹³ Renira Rampazzo Gambarato, Johannes Heuman, and Ylva Lindberg, ‘Streaming Media and the Dynamics of Remembering and Forgetting: The Chernobyl Case,’ *Memory Studies* 15, no. 2 (2022): 271–286, 271, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980211037287>.

While diversification and the corresponding product marketing aim to manage differences globally, various creative forms of appropriation develop in the processes of localization. These forms give specific meaning to cultural – ideal or material – commodities circulated around the world. They effectively take over these commodities and make them resources for creating and developing a personal identity.¹⁴

With these changes to the structure of traditional societies, alongside developing global and transnational processes of production, circulation, and reception of cultural commodities (often dominated by American products), the critical reliance on memory for identity becomes associated with specific goods that can be temporally, (as opposed to spatially), located. These material objects, many of which are still in existence, as well as the re-production of new versions of these objects, become another layer with which we can actively connect to the past.

Stranger Things constructs a representation of the past based on what has survived the passage of time and can still be recognised in the present as valuable. The representation of material culture thus acts as a symbolic instrument that evokes the past. Key cultural items draw associations to specific decades. Just as the Beatles and their music dominated the 1960s, the Sony Walkman revolutionised the 1980s, and the flip phone was an icon of the 1990s, *Stranger Things* draws attention to the 1980s with its utilisation of objects that can be temporally located. Prominently featured in Season 4 of *Stranger Things*, Max Mayfield (played by Sadie Sink) is rarely seen without her Sony Walkman WM-8 portable cassette player, from which Kate Bush's song 'Running Up That Hill' is repeatedly heard and forms a major narrative element by tying Max to reality through the sound. The association between time and object is powerful and shapes how we continue to view and value material culture. Accordingly, when we reminisce, remember, or memorialise these objects into new forms of cultural output, the object is recontextualised for the present. Mark Currie approaches this through the concept of 'accelerated recontextualisation', which views the 'recycling of the increasingly recent past, [as] one model [in] which the present is understood as the bearer of historical traces'.¹⁵ As such, traces of the past become easier to discern in the present, which contributes to a linear narrative of identity progression. Currie uses fashion trend cycles as an example of this but highlights that the recontextualised object must have references to the past while its new format

¹⁴ Natan Sznajder and Rainer Winter, 'Introduction,' In *Global America?: The Cultural Consequences of Globalization*, ed. Ulrich Beck (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 4.

¹⁵ Mark Currie, *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 10.

and relation to its current existence are altered. The specific focus on recreating the cultural landscape of 1980s America relies on portraying outdated objects through a nostalgic lens.

The deliberate orientation of contemporary screen representations toward the past provides an opportunity to capture the transience of human life and how we evoke and reanimate past spaces and times to enable a critical understanding of our present. The success of *Stranger Things* (which was the most streamed Netflix program in 2022 following the release of season four) speaks to a desire for the past and a perceived sense of stability that the time period suggests. Some scholars believe the growing desire for this form of memory is due to its ability to act as a 'temporal anchoring' in an increasingly fast-paced world.¹⁶ Fragments of the past provide an escapism from the uncertainty of the future. This desire to slow time to maintain what is known to us or to seek out what was once known to us is memory in the form of nostalgia. According to Svetlana Boym, nostalgia is a 'longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed'.¹⁷ Boym outlines two styles of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. For Boym these different styles of nostalgia are expressed through the same triggers of memory and symbols yet ultimately tell different stories; restorative nostalgia being nationally based and reflective nostalgia being about individual and cultural memory.¹⁸ Restorative nostalgia aims to rebuild the collective home and patch up memory gaps, 'characterising national and nationalist revivals worldwide, which engage in the antimodern myth-making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths'.¹⁹ In the absence of a distinct nation-state within the globalised present and consequent lack of national memory and, therefore, national identity, the audience of *Stranger Things* forms a shared community that fosters a sense of belonging necessary for identity. The nostalgia identified in *Stranger Things* has been termed 'Goonies-Inflected Nostalgia'. Giulia Taurino defines this as:

a nostalgia built upon narrative and visual citations of Stephen King's stories and Steven Spielberg's movies, as well as on popular culture references to the 1980s and 1990s decades. Far from being a purely aesthetic choice, this longing-for-the-past comes with simulacra and objects fitting in the plot, in order to take the audience back to another era.²⁰

¹⁶ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 28.

¹⁷ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiii.

¹⁸ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 49.

¹⁹ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 41.

²⁰ Giulia Taurino, 'Crossing Eras: Exploring Nostalgic Reconfigurations in Media Franchises,' In *Netflix Nostalgia: Streaming the Past on Demand*, ed. by Kathryn Pallister (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019), 11.

The role of the television series in contemporary identity formation speaks to a changing transnational process around memory. The cultural referents are recognisable on a global scale, reflective of the changing consumption processes of the time period and the growing interconnections, particularly in the Western world where an English song ('Running Up That Hill' by Kate Bush) becomes the soundtrack to American narrative conventions (Spielberg and King). We can even go so far as to say that the mullets of characters such as Billy Hargrove (Max Mayfield's half-brother played by Dacre Montgomery) and Steve Harrington (love interest to Mike's sister Nancy and friend to Dustin Henderson, played by Joe Keery), speak to recognisable Australian cultural trends. Despite the small-town vision of America, *Stranger Things* indicates how television mediates a shared sense of identity across national boundaries.

While *Stranger Things* evokes an idealistic representation of the past through nostalgic cultural objects and aesthetics, it also omits the anxieties of the 1980s regarding global change following World War Two and amidst the Cold War that also characterised the period. To a certain extent, the perceived stability of the 1980s can be linked to the conservative American politics under President Ronald Reagan, who served from 1981-1988. In season two, episode one of *Stranger Things*, a Reagan-Bush '84 sign can be seen in front of the Wheeler family's home. The Wheelers themselves embody a conservative nuclear family composed of a leading father, a home-making mother and three biological children. Conservative representations of the past have the ability to reassure already-held ideological positions, contributing to a sense of stability in the present. Just as the popular culture aspects of the 80s have managed to cling to the cultural consciousness, so has its politics. It must be said that *Stranger Things* doesn't entirely omit the presence of political crisis as it does draw heavily on the memory of the Cold War. Jason Landrum notes, however, that the series doesn't engage with the historical version of the Cold War, instead only drawing on it 'metaphorically, leaving it to operate like a historical shadow'.²¹ Murray Bauman (played by Brett Gelman) plays the partly comedic role of Hawkin's conspiracy theorist, concluding that the strange supernatural events occurring are evidence of a full-scale Russian invasion. While clever, Murray's eccentric personality undermines any real sense of fear about nuclear war or communist invasion that was notable in this era. The references to Russian technology and experiments in *Stranger Things*—inspired by the Cold War—are not representative of political crisis as they draw on elements of the supernatural, science-fiction and horror to reinforce nostalgia for media such as that produced by Steven Spielberg and Steven King, and therefore offer only a selective interpretation of the past.

²¹ Jason Landrum, 'Nostalgia, Fantasy, and Loss: *Stranger Things* and the Digital Gothic,' *Intertexts* 21, no. 1 (2017): 136-158, 141, <https://doi.org/10.1353/itx.2017.0006>.

So why can the Cold War be passed off as a supernatural threat with comedic elements? On one hand, the Cold War may provide insight into what it was like living in a state of uncertainty, the very same problem we are trying to avoid now. Framing it through the cinematic and narrative conventions of Spielberg and King locates it within a clear plot line from which we can trace the beginning and middle through to a recognisable and already solved resolution. On the other hand, the Cold War is potentially easier to overlook as a crisis because no physical war occurred. An ideological struggle is far simpler to recover from than an ongoing physical conflict, especially when the United States emerged as the world's sole superpower following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. When looking at the multiple threats that face the current world, while many involve ideological conflict, they are marked by widespread images of death and destruction shared across social media. In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic, which has a global impact, continues to cause a drastic loss of human life and socio-economic problems. In 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine in an escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War that originally began in 2014, with the invasion becoming the largest attack on a European country since World War Two. In 2023, Israel declared war against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip following an attack by Hamas, an Islamist militant movement and one of the Palestinian territories' major political parties. There are multiple overlapping sources of anxiety in the present that are harder to overlook within a media-dominated world than the fictional 1980s small town of Hawkins, Indiana, where television was limited to the living room and corded phones were the most common form of communication.

Broadly, nostalgia forms a powerful force in the face of disruption. In the American context, for example, nostalgia has been identified within and among political rhetoric:

Donald Trump emerged victorious in the US election wearing a baseball cap emblazoned with the words "Make America Great Again", envisioning a return to the greatness of an America recently victorious in the second world war.²²

This desire for nostalgic sentiment indicates a collective identity crisis within the present, where the anchor to the past reaches across generations in its yearning for continuity on both an individual and group level. *Stranger Things* is situated within Trump's desired image of America, as despite its focus on supernatural childhood adventure, the series revolves around watching America defeat Russia and become the sole global superpower. Matt and Ross Duffer, while born in 1984, are not children of the 1980s in the generalised way

²² Stephen, Brown, 'Retro Galore! Is There No End to Nostalgia?', *Journal of Customer Behaviour* 17, no. 1 (2018): 17, doi.org/10.1362/147539218X15208755279216.

that people who were adolescents or young adults in the time period refer to themselves. The effect of pop culture would have had very little impact on the Duffer brothers until the 1990s. In episode one alone, the viewer is exposed to Dungeons and Dragons, X-Men comic books, references to *The Hobbit*, *The Poltergeist*, and audios of songs such as 'Africa' by Toto. So, what is their connection to a decade they were too young to experience? More importantly, what is the connection between the pop culture of the 1980s and the contemporary teenage and young adult viewership with the decade they have chosen to represent? Lu, Kaluzeviciute and Sharp identify how representation of the past and its escapism in *Stranger Things* works across multiple generations. They write:

Two processes of mourning are thus evoked in *Stranger Things* audiences: a mourning embedded in a desire to return to a once experienced and now phantasmised childhood and a mourning of childhood that is seemingly no longer possible in today's world of surveillance and digital technology. In this sense, several audiences are united in their object of nostalgic desire: childhood.²³

This nostalgia is really a 'pseudo-nostalgia' because younger consumers have never experienced the original. Tom van Laer and Davide Orazi link the pseudo-nostalgia for *Stranger Things* to 'retromarketing', 'the relaunch or revival of a product or service from a historical period, which marketers usually update to ultramodern standards of functioning, performance or taste'.²⁴ As commodities reflect what is culturally relevant and contribute to a sense of contemporary identity formation, it is fitting that this nostalgic force extends to the product market. However, the nostalgia here also expresses an eagerness to restore a sense of simplicity to the world that no longer feels possible amidst widespread and ongoing crises. It is an eagerness to abate fears about the state of the world by returning to childhood innocence and adventure.

Stranger Things represents how we evoke and reanimate past spaces and times to enable a critical understanding of our present and capture the transience of human life. The text's preoccupation with elements of the 1980s raises questions not only about what drives memory but also what sustains memory when there is no feasible future. It's a version of the 1980s where music, fashion and cinema are shared across national boundaries, and technology exists but doesn't overwhelm us, presenting a temporal safe space.

²³ Lu, Kaluzeviciute, and Sharp, 'Things Can Only Get Stranger,' 621.

²⁴ Tom van Laer and Davide Orazi, 'It's not nostalgia. *Stranger Things* is fuelling a pseudo-nostalgia of the 1980s,' *The Conversation*, July 11, 2022, <https://theconversation.com/its-not-nostalgia-stranger-things-is-fuelling-a-pseudo-nostalgia-of-the-1980s-186389>

The specific 'Goonies-Inflected Nostalgia' conveys a desire for childhood simplicity that is no longer attainable by contemporary consumerism practices. More than anything, *Stranger Things* provides a sense of continuity in the face of discontinuity and disruption.

Millennial Prize Problems

Tess Ezzy
Macquarie University

This creative investigation presents a series of pantoum compositions that scrutinise millennials' existential predicaments, particularly those pertaining to senescence and contemporaneous societal phenomena. The objective was to elucidate the phenomenon of millennial maturation through a confluence of ethnographic inquiry and poetic expression. My research transcended conventional barriers, enabling a holistic and empathetic engagement with the millennial cohort. The synthesis of this enquiry into pantoum verse, replete with linguistic ingenuity and symbolic references to the millennium problems and the pejorative 'snowflake generation' moniker, serves not only to challenge prevailing methodological and ethical quandaries but also to provide a poignant introspection into the millennial psyche. This work contributes to the discourse on generational aging, identity formation, and societal transformation through an amalgamation of ethnographic rigour and literary exploration, offering profound insights into the lived experiences of the millennial generation within the context of contemporary social dynamics.

I. P vs NP Problem

The P vs NP problem questions whether problems whose solution can be quickly verified (NP) in polynomial time can also be solved quickly (P) in polynomial time.

3 A.M strikes and Doubt again rises
Ten long years in a career unforeseen
'Imposter', he shrieks - he won't subside
'Like P vs NP, she's less than machine.'

Ten long years in a career unforeseen
The paths shine less brightly and the futures incite
'Like P vs NP, she's less than machine'
Pretty but vapid, no computational might

The paths shine less brightly and the futures incite
Do they know I'm pretending to know what I'm doing?
Pretty but vapid, no computational might
But I never was able to make up my mind quickly.

Do they know I'm pretending to know what I'm doing?
'Imposter', he shrieks - he won't subside
But I never was able to make up my mind quickly
3 A.M strikes and Doubt again rises

II. Hodge Conjecture

The Hodge Conjecture suggests that certain algebraic classes can represent the cohomology classes of a projective algebraic variety, that is complex shapes and spaces can ultimately be understood through simpler, underlying principles.

Where bodies heave in the club's heady air
Dark spaces, loud music, attempted *tête-à-tête*
I've never met someone as (adjective) as her
Could this be the start of something *chouette*?

Dark spaces, loud music, attempted *tête-à-tête*
'Let's get an uber - My place?', I said.
Could this be the start of a something *chouette*?
Peel off layers and complexity, we dive into bed

'Let's get an uber - My place?', I said.
Pleasure crescendoes and then algebraic boom
Peel off layers and complexity, we dive into bed
I feel naked. I am naked. This bond will not bloom

Pleasure crescendoes and then algebraic boom
I've never met someone as (adjective) as her
I feel naked. I am naked. This bond will not bloom
Where bodies heave in the club's heady air

III. Poincaré Conjecture (Solved)

The Poincaré Conjecture asserted that every simply connected, closed 3-manifold is homeomorphic to the 3-sphere.

Sometimes I watch crowds, a sonderous sea
and wonder if they too feel this alone
Do they feel too young yet too old? Have they got ADHD?
Do they look at this crowd and too feel unknown?

And I wonder if they too feel this alone
That beneath our dermis and keratin pieces
Do they look at this crowd and too feel unknown?
Similar blood, and bones, and faces, and creases

That beneath our dermis and keratin pieces
The Poincaré Conjecture, we find unity in topology
Similar blood, and bones, and faces, and creases
We can all be distilled into spherical mythology

The Poincaré Conjecture, we find unity in topology
Do they feel too young yet too old? Have they got ADHD?
We can all be distilled into spherical mythology
Sometimes I watch crowds, a sonderous sea

IV. Navier-Stokes Existence and Smoothness

The Navier-Stokes Existence and Smoothness problem concerns the behaviour of viscous fluid flow and seeks to determine whether solutions to the Navier-Stokes equations always exist and remain smooth under all conditions in three-dimensional spaces. It challenges mathematicians to prove that, despite complex interactions within fluids, such as water or air, there can be a predictable, stable solution that doesn't blow up to infinity for any initial condition or over any period.

I know there is pathetic fallacy to climate change
Where my mental health has ozone holes
Our mother, our body, unstable and in danger
Of becoming incompatible with #lifegoals

Where my mental health has ozone holes
The Navier-Stokes of my being, trying to predict
Of becoming incompatible with #lifegoals
How currents of emotions and reason conflict

The Navier-Stokes of my being, trying to predict
Icebergs of viscous fluid begin to melt
How currents of emotions and reason conflict
Under the heat of guilt and shame so keenly felt

The icebergs of viscous fluid begin to melt
Our mother, our body, linked and in danger
Under the heat of guilt and shame so keenly felt
I know there is pathetic fallacy to climate change

Buried

Rachel Denham-White

Curtin University

Nuclear waste disposal is an environmental issue that forms part of our oncoming climate crisis, but uranium itself will not decay for thousands of years. In the nuclear disposal locations currently being built across the globe, notably in Carlsbad, New Mexico, with the intended completion date of 2038, the question remains: How do you indicate the danger of nuclear waste to the upcoming several generations? Scientific diagrams, nuclear trefoils, chemical symbols and even the written word may be obsolete within the next couple of centuries, so how should today's science communicate with an unknowable future? What does the universal "Keep Out" or "Danger" sign look like? This creative non-fiction piece weaves together research and personal prose, questioning the undoubtedly nihilistic task of keeping the nuclear disposal sites secure and undisturbed, when we have no way of predicting the course of history, human or para-human evolution and scientific understanding.

East of Carlsbad, New Mexico, in a landscape of empty, cracked desert, a hole is being dug. It is currently 910 meters wide and over 650m deep.

A similar excavation can be found in the Olkiluto Island in Western Finland, where a tunnel more than half a kilometre deep has been bored downwards into the rock.

This hole is called Onkalo, which is the Finnish term for "cave" or "cavity" or sometimes "hiding place."

(Thousands of years from now).

I walk through a desert, parched, salt-scrubbed earth baking under the unrelenting sun. This land is unfamiliar to me. But it undeniably cherishes life, as I tread my way through dotted spots of greenery with small cacti and shrubs pressing up from the shifting, wavering ground.

Then I reach a desolation.

Empty sand. Bare gravel. A wall of jagged earth blocks my path.

I scale it and see long sheets of black stone stretching out before me, sucking the breeze from the air and throwing searing heat back into my face. I reel from each burning punch. The temperature makes breathing almost unbearable, but I press on. I have to know what happened here.

The black stone ends and then the spikes begin. Jutting thorns and knife-like spires press up from the ground at sharp angles, painting a tangle of black scribbles over the landscape, rising to pierce the wide sheet of blue. It could be

a vestige from some ancient metal forest, maybe a broken sea of circuitry and wiring made by long-dead juggernauts? If I listen, can I hear a groaning message as the wind whistles between the spikes? My mind does not know how to wrestle meaning from this brutal environment. But still I fight my way through.

The next wall is made of granite and towers five meters above my head. A small, narrow opening beckons me to enter, and I make my way through the concrete city. Dark, square blocks form neat rows across the salt flats, studded with irregular polygons of stone. As I near the centre, I start to find ancient carvings. Each one is the face of an eradiated being, with hollow pits for eyes and mouth drawn down in a gaping ecstasy that could be a scream.

It cannot be a warning to stay away, surely? *Surely!* Why would the forebearers leave it all out in the open, just begging for someone to find? It must be a grave. Or a memorial to some terrifying cataclysm, long since passed. I step tentatively, unwillingly, yet deadly curious to know what bones might crowd together under my feet. The shade morphs into silhouettes of mangled bodies. The spikes are far behind me, but I still hear screaming on the wind.

Cubes tower above my head, blocking out the sun but trapping me in a vice of heat. They are crowned with a stone obelisk, reaching sharpened fingers towards the sky. Everything is vast, geometric, sterile, and formidable, but undeniably made.

I wonder what reasoning led to a place of such hatred.

We are going to tell you what lies underground, why you should not disturb this place, and what may happen if you do.

If you asked me what substance lasts forever, if I was in a whimsical mood, I'd say "love."

On any other day, I'd say "uranium."

It's been almost 20 years since the official end of the Cold War, and even if we'd like to think this period of history is over, the nuclear weapons made in this time still have nowhere to go. Uranium can be harnessed to cause cataclysmic destruction, but it can never be destroyed. The average fuel rod of enriched uranium and zirconium alloy will stay burning hot, unstable, and toxic for millennia after it leaves the reactor of a nuclear power plant.

How to dispose of radioactive matter? Bury it beneath the ocean floor? Shoot it into space? Scream at it, cajole it, kick it out of sight, forget about it? It seems a quiet grave is the only solution. For in New Mexico and Finland and Belgium and other secure locations around the globe, plans are being made for how to entomb uranium in the ground and leave it to decay. But instead of the sweet, swollen bloat of a corpse as it gives back to the earth, uranium will exist unchanged. Maybe one day the atoms might have broken down enough to

release harmless radon gas, but that won't happen in our children's, children's, children's, children's lifetimes.

The Onkalo facility in Finland is meant to last for 100,000 years. I picture this site as a live burial, with a cadaver that can ceaselessly destroy even a myriad after its death.

This site was known as the WIPP (Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Site) when it was closed in 2038 A.D.

I first became invested in the disposal of nuclear waste when I picked up Robert McFarlane's book *Underland: A Deep Time Journey*. I immediately skipped ahead to chapter 12, past thousands of years of cave paintings and Paris catacombs and dark matter, to read 'The Hiding Place,' which led me to the New Mexico site in the Carlsbad desert. This remote location is intended to store large quantities of transuranic matter: materials that have had brief contact with live uranium. These are only by-products of nuclear weaponry, but still, these objects can remain harmfully radioactive for decades. Beneath the desert, 800,000 fifty-five-gallon drums full of clothes, tools, buttons, gloves, and personal protective equipment are being stacked in the underground containment facility.

That is only step one of the disposal. All across the USA, the defence-generated nuclear sludge and runoff from the last fifty years is being transported to Carlsbad and poured into 2-meter-high steel and lead-lined canisters. These substances are so toxic that an adult human would be dead in three to four hours if standing unprotected in a room with them. Once all the nuclear waste is safely sealed, these canisters will be stored in huge round holes bored into underground chamber, and finally barricaded behind the stacked barrels of transuranic waste.

Underland was published in 2019. This is all happening now.

And once every last container of uranic and transuranic material is safely hidden away, the tunnels will be collapsed. Over thousands of years, the salt from the desert will eventually leak through the ceiling and seep into the canisters, hopefully neutralizing the spread of the radiation. Hopefully.

The waste was generated during the manufacture of nuclear weapons, also called atomic bombs.

Parasites or bacteria multiply within a body to feed, and viruses hijack our DNA to create new extensions of themselves. I'm capable of sympathising with a tapeworm due to its undeniable motive to survive, but uranium is not living.

Uranium is the closest thing I can compare to a Lovecraftian entity that exists on this Earth. It will literally unknit you.

If exposed to ionizing radiation, your white blood cell count will drop to almost zero. Then uranium atoms hammer through your body, smashing the fragile, spiralling webbing of DNA. Organs fail and the stomach lining begins to break down, leading to a terrifying risk of septicaemia as your gastric tract opens into the rest of your internal systems. The radiation marches on, undeterred by drugs or antibiotics, because now your blood is spilling out of dissolving veins and arteries. Eventually, your very skin begins to melt.

If nothing else, uranium forces you to see your body as nothing but a sack of loose meat, held together by a quickly deteriorating sleeve of perforated flesh. A living corpse, that gets to witness its own decomposition in real time; staring into the thriving metropolis of decay.

We believe that we have an obligation to protect future generations from the hazards that we have created.

This obligation will last 100,000 years. How to even start?

For the first century after its intended completion in 2038, the WIIP site will have ‘active institutional controls’ in place. This means guards will be posted around the facility to ensure there is no digging or drilling, and to keep unsuspecting travellers away. But this is not a long-lasting solution, so eventually, the site will be abandoned and left up to ‘passive institutional controls.’ Which begs the question: How do you universally communicate the nature of this terrible stretch of land to the future?

The minds behind this project are the Human Interference Task Force, created by the US Department of Energy and made up of scientists, social psychologists, nuclear waste disposal experts, linguists and science fiction writers. Their proposed first step was to construct thirteen layers of solid concrete blocking the passages into the containment rooms. Next come a series of underground anterooms filled with granite steles, engraved with warnings written in the six universal languages of the United Nations, as well as Navajo; the most widely spoken Native American language in the US.

Above ground, the passive controls will be implemented through ‘hostile architecture’, made up of buildings designed to be deliberately difficult, threatening and uncomfortable to navigate. The sealed containment site will be crowned with the jutting ‘Landscape of Thorns’, the burning ‘Black Hole’ of heat-repelling stone, and the massive ‘Forbidding Blocks.’ Spikes, monoliths and massive granite cubes will extend out for miles out in every direction, to repel any curious explorers for the next 100,000 years.

I try to maintain a positive outlook, but it all seems a bit hopeless to me.

If nothing else, the sheer human hubris to presume that language will remain static for the next thousand centuries leaves me with a bitter taste in my mouth.

The Rosetta stone is one of the earliest examples of written human language, and it is just over 5,500 years old. Today, perhaps a thousand people in the world can understand cuneiform or ancient hieroglyphs. How can we even fathom a way to correspond with the next 1000 years, let alone ten times that amount? Or a hundred times! Written language cannot be considered a guarantee of the future, so what's left? How to express 'danger' over an unknown chasm of time?

The nuclear trefoil? A nice idea, but it could only take a few centuries before this symbol drops out of all understanding, until it becomes merely a black and yellow flower housed within a bordered triangle.

The pictogram feels like a long shot. Maybe the future humans or alien beings who stumble across this site will laugh at the ungainly, bipedal stick figures falling down pits and shattered by cartoon explosions. These strange little cave paintings could be showing some sort of uncultured animal. Or pet. Or a children's tale inscribed on the wall of this underground cavern.

There was even the idea to carve Edvard Munch's 'The Scream' into the Forbidding Blocks, cause what's more horrifying than a slack-jawed, emaciated nightmare creature leering out at you, as if trapped in the rock? But then again, who's to say that won't be beautiful 10,000 years in the future?

A fairytale might be one of the only options left. Like the seeds of an apocryphal story, the Human Interference Task Force has been dreaming up ways to pass the knowledge safely through the next millennium: in art, music, myth, and legend. Some suggestions have included genetically modifying flowers or breeding domestic cats to change colour in the presence of high radioactivity. This 'danger' colour could then be deliberately introduced into commissioned art and literature as a sign of imminent peril, hopefully conditioning the future to stay away.

Another suggestion was to introduce a community of "atomic priests." These individuals would be sworn to live near the site and pass along the generational message as a religion, singing hosanna's and Ave Maria's in the name of their great Lord whose name is Ur Ran Eye Em.

But these current thinkers still have to prepare for the worst possible outcome: for their messages being misinterpreted or bastardised, or just plain ignored.

A crumbling ruin suggests something old and magnificent but rendered safely dead by time. What if leaving such a grandiose message above the nuclear site openly invites the future humans to come and explore? The Hernan Cortez's, Howard Carter's, Alan Quatermain's, Indiana Jones's and Rick O'Connell's kept digging, no matter what curses were thrown at them. Who's to say our descendants won't excavate for treasure in the Landscape of Thorns,

ignoring the “Here be monsters” printed on the edges of the map and carved into every granite tomb.

Any intelligent society of the future will be curious, and, in this case, curiosity *will* kill the cat.

In my mind, I think of the New Mexico site as a real-life R’lyeh, a nightmare-corpse city that was “built in measureless aeons behind history.” If the high priests of the future can convince their flock that a great unknowable ‘something’ lies dreaming below the fragile Earth’s surface, then maybe it’ll never be disturbed.

This message is a warning about danger.

Across the board of climate activism, from the United Nations to Extinction Rebellion to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the point of no return for the Earth’s devastation is often estimated at 2040. The WIIP site is scheduled to be sealed in 2038. Something in me keeps asking “What’s the point?”

Climate change for me feels like the buzzword of the last decade. But we can’t ignore that we are facing an oncoming global apocalypse, and my generation is the one that will have to face it.

Climate grief is an interesting series of emotions. Guilt and shame intermingle with ruefulness, as well as a perverse, mothering need to ‘kiss it better.’ Evasion and denial join the mix. “*It wasn’t me! I didn’t do this!*” But don’t I make everything on the Earth worse by existing? Do I even bother to mourn if it feels like humanity won’t make it to the next century?

Then again, grieving for our “dying Earth” as a concept feels a little disingenuous. No matter what scratches humans make on its surface, the 4.5-billion-year-old rock will never truly die by our hand and can probably survive anything the universe can throw at it. The 10,000 years after the extinction of the dinosaurs is pretty solid evidence. We’re not crying for the Earth itself, but for our inevitably unsustainable way of life.

So, eco-nihilism is pointless. Why not eco-positivism?

In a certain light, the nuclear waste disposal project *can* appear as the ultimate signifier of human cooperation. We can work together against a common adversity: the unfathomable uranium atom. Bringing great minds together in an elegiac glorification of our own exceptionalism. Isn’t it great that we’re all cooperating!

But I see no joy in this vast graveyard.

Maybe that’s why the New Mexico site haunts me so deeply. No matter what safe truths we try to spin around its reasons for existing, this burial mound will remain static. An ultimate marker of shame. A grave testament to the Anthropocene.

Unlike the Landscape of Thorns, once the *Onkalo* burial chamber in the Olkiluto woods in Finland is sealed, it will be left to nature to dispose of. The Finnish forest will grow over this vast chasm, until natural landslides and wildfires fires and oncoming Ice Ages have completely erased all markers. It may take a millennium, but is this the best, no, the safest way to credit humanity's long stream of mistakes? By letting them drop out of all knowledge.

However, as of 2019, at the Onkalo site there is a grey, metallic plaque besides the cavernous hole. It reads:

"This place is not a place of honor... no highly esteemed deed is commemorated here... nothing valued is here. What is here was dangerous and repulsive to us. Sending this message was important to us. We considered ourselves to be a powerful culture."

I don't read this message as speaking to the future. I think it's for us, right now. And I really like the use of the word "We." It gives a sense of group accountability, that the people who built this site have already accepted the inevitable fall of our civilisation.

Instead of the talk of 'protection' and 'obligation' and the consequences of disturbing the containment facility, placing the blame squarely on the unknowable entities of the future, the plaque at Onkalo is an apology. To me, it says "We did this. We let ourselves down when it counted. So this is our effort to heal."

Under vast and trunkless legs of stone, the walls declaim a warning. The messages are engraved in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic and Navajo.

If the coming observers can read it, they will see:

We are going to tell you what lies underground, why you should not disturb this place, and what may happen if you do.

This site was known as the WIPP (Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Site) when it was closed in 2038 A.D.

The waste was generated during the manufacture of nuclear weapons, also called atomic bombs.

We believe that we have an obligation to protect future generations from the hazards that we have created.

This message is a warning about danger.

We urge you to keep the room intact and buried.

Do they dig?

Barry, Bernice, *A Lady's Pen: The botanical letters of Georgiana Molloy, Witchcliffe, Western Australia, UWA Publishing, 2023; paperback; pp. 251, 30 colour images, 6 b/w images, RRP: \$39.99incl GST, ISBN: 9780994206411*

Georgiana Molloy is credited as the first woman in Western Australia to become an internationally successful botanical collector. Born in Cumberland in 1905, Georgiana settled in Augusta in 1829 and began an epistolary relationship with James Mangles' – a self-established collector of artifacts and curiosities based in London. After several years of exchanging letters, he displayed and circulated her stunning specimens of West Australian flora, botanical collections which undoubtedly helped her to rise to international acclaim after her death. However, only Mangles' record of Georgiana's letters remain in archives, and none of his replies have survived. Berenice Barry's 2023 publication *A Lady's Pen: The Botanical Letters of Georgiana Molloy* tells the 'tenuous' story of these handwritten exchanges between Georgiana and James Mangles, in a one-sided tale unexplored for one hundred and eighty years (1).

This is Barry's second book on Georgiana Molloy. Her first was the 2015 publication *Georgiana Molloy: The Mind that Shines* – an official biography that addresses Georgiana's early life and puts an increased focus on her husband John Molloy and his influences. Consequently, as Barry has covered it all before, this book has little to say on Georgiana's beginnings, with only four pages covering her childhood and twenties in England and Scotland. James Mangles may make a brief appearance in *The Mind that Shines*, but his presence in *A Lady's Pen* confirms that he is fundamental to this specific period of Georgiana's life.

The introduction outlines the context of our 'main characters', and the next two chapters are biographies of Georgiana Molloy and James Mangles respectively. Section three is a 20-page note on the letters, exploring their historical context and her grammatical and stylistic choices when transcribing the documents. The remainder of the book is composed of Georgiana's 10 letters to Mangles, and three appendices – a list of the botanical species she collected, a comparative document (one of Georgiana's letters to her mother), and a brief autoethnographic note from the author, about an antique pen nib she found in the process of researching.

Barry has clearly spent an extensive amount of time with Georgiana. Therefore, this work has a far more lyrical focus than a typical biography, even venturing into a tone of historical fiction at times. Her writing is expressive, subjective, and narrativized, with Barry trying to delve into Georgiana's inner thoughts by asking rhetorical phrases such as 'what prompted her to agree?' (20). Barry justifies this narrativising as creating a history mystery, a story of what would James Mangles have written back to

her since there are no surviving records of his own works (2). One can even read a metatextual quality into Barry's writing, as she mimics Georgiana's specific tone of a mix of 'scientific and emotive' writing that defined her letters and her approach to botany (4-5).

In the introduction, Barry establishes that this book is an entry into the long line of translations of Georgiana's letters. She frames her attempt as a combined effect of several different lenses (3) – citing Mangles' own selection leading to the letters that remain today, and secondly referencing the 1955 original transcriptions by biographer Alexandra Hasluck. She also briefly mentions the 1994 text by William J. Lines, *An All-Consuming Passion: Origins, Modernity and the Australian Life of Georgiana Molloy*, which, while also a biography, takes time to focus on the first settlers and the Indigenous Noongar people who were dispossessed in the early colonies. While covering the mundane details of Molloy's everyday settler life, Lines' book can be considered an extensive look at the larger political, religious, cultural and philosophical debates of the time. Barry's book has none of this. Her wider debates in reference to gender, racism and settler colonialism are only briefly mentioned in relation to Georgiana's experiences and letters.

Nonetheless, *A Lady's Pen* still provides key historical context and explanations of Georgiana's botanical practices. She repeatedly stresses the difficulty of preserving and shipping these precious flowers, providing descriptions of Georgiana's many failed attempts (36, 45, 46). The second appendix (dated 1831) is a fascinating view of the nineteenth-century written literacy, relating Georgiana's crossing to the Swan River Colony and her experiences of being a heavily pregnant settler. This letter serves its purpose as an essential comparative, for, as Barry states, it contrasts with Mangles' letters which show Georgiana as her 'most eloquent, witty and definitively charming' (111). When talking to her mother, the reader receives the most unedited view.

Barry's love of Georgiana's work is ever-present in her poignant descriptions of her letters. She puts an onus on the reader to acknowledge that these documents require an 'awareness ... a recognition of the layers history has laid over them like a fine veil' (108). Therefore, considering my limited knowledge of botany and horticulture, the most captivating sections of the book for me were Barry's discussions of historical letter-writing. Barry takes a brief look into the culture of late Georgian communication and the 'shared social understandings of language,' noting the stylistic influences that may have affected Georgiana's writings (108). She points out how Georgiana's work was tailored to 'demonstrate the importance of being a lady' – through functions such as a wide vocabulary, a skill in structuring complex sentences and a knowledge of French and Italian phrases (5). Section three provides essential context to the transcriptions; as Barry writes that Australian settlers typically painted a 'picture of success, achievement and happiness', the 'true

picture of their lives was often deliberately blurred' (110). In her second letter to Mangles, Georgiana relates the heartbreaking experience of the death of her only son. With Barry's analysis in mind, the reader is left to imagine what unthinkable hardships Georgiana is omitting.

The author writes how she intends this transcription to be a 'closer and more accurate reading of the nearest thing there is to Georgiana's original writings' (120). She attempts to replicate the punctuation in Georgiana's original letters, and puts emphasis on the miniscule changes and re-positioning of sentences between Hasluck's published versions and Mangles' original copies. Therefore, I believe *A Lady's Pen* would benefit from some more structure regarding the letters. A key of typographical conventions, (underlining, missing words, abbreviations) would be useful, as well as including a summary of each letter within the table of contents. Barry's methodology and her explanations are occasionally within the paragraphs on the page, and considering this book accommodates the seasoned scholars of Georgiana's work hoping to compare versions, a few structural additions would help the process.

Barry's work is a worthy addition to the scholarship surrounding Georgiana Molloy, not only providing a comprehensive new transcription, but also presenting the letters as a missing half of a conversation. Georgiana's letters are framed as 'the lines that James Mangles chose to keep for posterity' – a combined outcome of *her* writing and *his* intervention (9). Barry maintains that Mangles' influence does not limit Georgiana's own achievements, but the author's engaging and incredibly subjective tone captures the bittersweet notion of lost history; her story cannot be fully told without him. The author's methodology of approaching the transcriptions is well-explained, and I enjoyed the humble tone of considering her work as not the first, and certainly not the last attempt to understand this incredible woman 'who travelled to the other side of the world and fell in love with the wildflowers she found there' (9).

Rachel Denham-White¹
Curtin University

¹ ORCID: 0009-0002-1801-0912

Cowie, Helen Louise, *Victims of Fashion: Animal Commodities in Victorian Britain*; Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2022; hardback, pp. viii + 290, 30 b/w illustrations; RRP: \$56.95, ISBN: 9781108495172.

In the nineteenth-century, the Victorians were dressed head-to-toe in animal commodities. An upper-class lady might wear an alpaca-wool dress, a whalebone corset, a sealskin jacket, tortoiseshell combs, ivory jewellery, a hat with exotic plumage, and luxury cosmetics of ambergris and musk (6).

Professor at the University of York, Cowie specializes in the history of animals and science. In her 2014 publication *Exhibiting Animals in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, she focused on the ethics of zoos, menageries, and the monetization of animals in public places. *Victims of Fashion: Animal Commodities in Victorian Britain* addresses the history of animals from a new perspective: the British fashion industries use of animal commodities from 1800–1914. Through a variety of lenses – social, political and colonial – her book explores the destruction wrought by animal-based fashions, often contributing to species that are endangered in our modern world. It goes without saying that this book carries an intense content warning for animal cruelty and exploitation.

Cowie's intention is to consider the 'social and ecological impact' of the Victorian and Edwardian fashion industry (8). She has four central interests: contemporary global sourcing and supply chains (8), manipulating the natural world for profit (9), and the emergence of animal welfare groups (10). In my opinion, her most interesting topic is her fourth; as consumerist fashion was a novel phenomenon (9), Cowie considers the impacts of new-fangled mass marketing, and mass media spreading activism for animal rights (12). Cowie establishes that, through a 'range of different voices and perspectives', this book is her attempt to speak "for" the affected victims, as animal voices 'are harder to recover' from history than human voices and had limited agency in the commodification process (14-16).

Cowie's first chapter 'Murderous Millinery' sets a macabre tone with a quote from 1878, describing a show-stopping ball dress 'trimmed with the skins of 300 robins' (17). The next four chapters, covering sealskin, ivory, alpaca wool, and luxury perfumes respectively, follow a recognizable pattern. Cowie introduces the origins and farming of the fashion item, then analyses its relationship to the four categories from her introduction.

Cowie frames the book as covering multiple topics. Therefore, each chapter focuses on her chosen categories to a varying degree. For example, chapter two 'The Seal and His Jacket' is especially concerned with Victorian animal preservation. Aside from the argument to protect seal populations because sealskin was 'useful to man', Victorian scientists began to argue for preserving animals 'for their own sake...or posterity' (84–85), and Cowie

stresses this perspective might have been a cornerstone of modern environmentalism (86). By contrast, chapter five 'Bitter Perfumes' is more focused on marketing. Luxury perfume-producing creatures, such as bears, musk deer, and civet cats, were kept as close to the British public as possible to reduce suspicious of counterfeit products, as she notes bears' grease was often swapped out for 'almond oil, hogs' lard, or mutton suet' (182).

These chapters share the same methodological structure as a case study – there is minimal overlap of the content and analysis for each animal. However, one consistent through-line are the Victorian people's reaction towards exploitation and cruelty, with the most noticeable connecting point being British imperialism and its knock-on effects. Chapters one, three, four and five all focus on attempts to naturalise and domesticate the featured wild animals on English soil, and chapter three describes elephants being embraced as an 'active ally in the colonisation of the Dark Continent' (107). This chapter details several major attempts at using elephants for labour and transportation, fuelled by the contemporary (and so-called 'humanitarian') argument that the British were 'rescuing [the elephants] from barbarous extermination' to become 'willing servants ... to the care of British property' (121). Her book presents a Western view of colonialism, as the majority of anecdotes are from British sources, and rarely touch on the exploitation of the native inhabitants handling and killing these animal victims.

Cowie states upfront that she means to be a voice for the animal population which suffered during this time. However, her text is relatively free of 'animal voices' (14). Apart from a few memorable exceptions, such as a court case regarding two captive bears which made the street 'resound [during the night] with hideous howls' (168), the majority of her animal studies regard the species as a unit. This makes chapter six 'Monkey Business' a standout, as she covers the trade of exotic pets in Britain.

This section is arguably the most horrific of the book. Cowie does not stint on describing the abuse of monkeys, parrots, guinea pigs, tortoises, and other exotic animals who could not adapt to British weather and domestic life. As bleak as this subject is, there are some passages that verge on darkly comedic, with accounts from the 'Agony & Advice' columns of animal-themed publications. Cowie frames each pet owner's intentions as misguided abuse, but the reader cannot help but laugh at these almost 200-years old viral animals, such as the disobedient pet lemur who demanded his 'daily breakfast of coffee and marmalade' (210).

Therefore, Cowie's final chapter attempts to tap into the mystifying double standards of normalised hunting, farming, and killing, compared to the obvious love felt towards these exotic pets. I believe this book could benefit from further accounts of these victimised animals while they were still living commodities. Cowie has already demonstrated her interest through her

Exhibiting Animals publication (2014), and this subject is far too intriguing for just the final chapter.

Cowie's subject matter is extensive, incorporating decades of history into 290 pages. However, there are intentional omissions. Her book rarely touches on clothing or 'fashion' trends outside of their relationship to animals. Cowie briefly quotes Alison Matthews David's 2015 *Fashion Victims: The Dangers of Dress Past and Present*, but this book stands apart from traditional fashion history, as related by Matthews David's *Fashion Victims* (2015) or *Killer Style* (2019). Aside from Joshua Katcher's 2019 publication *Fashion Animals* (which puts more of a focus on fur and recognizable modern brands such as Vogue) Cowie's book stands as the best example of her specific field.

Victims of Fashion is an excellent reading experience. Cowie's chosen frameworks of analysis are well-realised in each case study, with language that is accessible to every reader. Despite the similar structure of each chapter, the book stays engaging by varying its tone between unpleasant and confronting, to surprisingly funny. Despite her dark subject matter and the plethora of diatribes from period RSPCA advocates, Cowie's own perception of the Victorians remains entirely neutral. Her book seeks to explore and the practises and trends of period fashion, not to condemn, and she does an exemplary job of making fashion even more fascinating.

Rachel Denham-White¹
Curtin University

¹ ORCID: 0009-0002-1801-0912

Grand-Clément, Adeline and Ribeyrol, Charlotte (eds), *The Smells and Senses of Antiquity in the Modern Imagination, Imagines – Classical Receptions in the Visual and Performing Arts 3*; London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2023; paperback, pp.xiv + 274; 14 colour and 18 b/w illustrations; RRP \$59.99 AUD; ISBN: 9781350251632.

The Smells and Senses of Antiquity is the third addition to the ongoing *Imagines* series in classical reception published by Bloomsbury, now available as of 2023 in paperback. For this volume, editors Adeline Grand-Clément and Charlotte Ribeyrol bring together twelve contributions, plus their own introduction and a guest *envoi*, on the theme of the modern reception of the senses in antiquity, with particular focus on the sense of smell. The choice to focus on the olfactory sense is itself significant. As the editors and many contributors note, smells are inherently elusive, intangible, and difficult to describe, and how they affect us can be intensely personal and emotional, and therefore highly subjective. Smell has therefore only rarely been the topic of scholarly works in Classics. This volume is thus a welcome contribution to scholarly discussions for that reason alone.

This volume presents works in classical reception, a sub-field of Classics that, as the editors put it in their introduction, is ‘less about Antiquity itself than about the societies which have decided to take up and own, or on the contrary reject, part of the ancient past’ (5). Classical reception is thus an increasingly important field for Classics as a whole, as it tackles head-on the critical question that the modern discipline faces of why the study of the ancient world, and particularly ancient Greece and Rome, still matters today. *The Smells and Senses of Antiquity* addresses such a question by demonstrating that our modern world and its visual and performance media are still captivated by the imaginative power of ancient smells and sensory experiences, even though the living peoples and cultures of antiquity have long disappeared.

As is the case with the other editions in the *Imagines* series, the chapters of this volume are largely derived from papers given at an international conference on classical reception, in this instance one held in October 2018 at the Université Jean Jaurès in Toulouse. Readers will observe that as a result, contributors’ chapters take a wide variety of different approaches and media formats – a welcome diversity that makes the volume of potential interest to a broad audience, including classicists but also art historians, ancient historians, archaeologists, and students and researchers in literature, media studies, and the performing arts.

Grand-Clément and Ribeyrol’s introduction briefly outlines what classical reception is and proceeds to discuss some of the recurrent challenges, themes, and observations that often characterise scholarly approaches to smell

and the senses. This does a fine job of preparing the reader for the rest of the volume, especially given the diversity of its chapters, by priming us with the recurring thematic threads that run throughout.

Part one of the volume explores modern imaginations and representations of the smells and sensorial experience of ancient religious ritual, first through Arthur Machen's 1907 novel *Hill of Dreams* as investigated by Catherine Maxwell, and then in Anna Guédon's analysis of film adaptations of Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1834 novel *The Last Days of Pompeii* and their use of visual cues to imply odour.

Part two investigates the persistent connections between smell, gender, and the human body in ancient and modern times. It begins with Margaret Day Elsner's unpacking of New Age alternative women's health treatments and their connections to ancient misogynistic ideas about monstrosity and women's bodies, followed by an exploration by Tiphaine-Annabelle Besnard and Fabien Bièvre-Perrin of smell and the ancient aesthetics of the human body and how these influence aesthetic values in twenty-first century visual media.

Part three groups together two chapters that explore the relationship of smell to 'otherness' between the ancient and modern worlds, first through Giacomo Savani's analysis of nineteenth-century paintings of bathing scenes as 'sensory palimpsests', before moving to television with Kim Beerden, where we see the impact of smell in HBO's *Rome* using the concept of historical empathy.

Part four investigates modern recreations of ancient scents, beginning with an investigation by Cecilia Bembibre of recreated ancient perfumes kept at France's Osmothèque, followed by Giulia Corrente's discussion of the persistence of the ancient rose of Paestum in later imaginations and a recent attempt at grafting a modern version of this iconic plant. To finish off, the reader is treated to an interview with Amandine Leclercq regarding an experimental workshop that reproduced pellets of *kyphi*, a kind of ancient incense.

Part five presents three chapters that bring ancient smells directly to modern live audiences, starting with Raffaella Viccei on the Multimedia and Sensory Museum of the Milan Roman Theatre and visitor responses to its aromatic diffusers. Next is Martina Treu's investigation of smell in theatrical productions, focusing especially on a 1999 staging of *Libation Bearers*. Finally, Martin Lindner entertains an exploration of the role of smell in the world of historical reenactors.

To finish off, Mark Bradley provides a conclusion, using children's 'scratch and sniff' books as a launchpad towards wrapping up the overarching themes present throughout the book's chapters, effectively providing a neat summary of the important conclusions that this volume contributes as a whole to classical reception scholarship. Ancient smells and sensory experiences, as this volume makes evident, are still potent in the modern imagination. Smells

foul and fragrant continue to conjure in our minds, as in ancient ones, distinctions between 'us' and 'them,' rich and poor, illness and health, masculinity and femininity. In expounding the imaginative power of olfaction through its various case studies, this volume demonstrates the rich potential that smell and the senses, though often overlooked, have as a way to further investigate the impact of the ancient world in modern societies.

Though the chapters in *The Smells and Senses of Antiquity* are generally ordered logically within the book, in some parts there is slight dissonance between the stated theme of a section and the content of the chapters within it. In part one, for example, the reader anticipates a focus on smell and ancient ritual, yet this is really only a minor aspect of the section's first chapter. The same can be said for the second chapter of part four, which addresses the recreation of an ancient perfume only briefly in the final few paragraphs. However, such concerns are relatively minor and are generally par for the course when it comes to editing a volume based on a collection of diverse essays that largely began as conference papers.

The print quality of the illustrations in this paperback edition leaves a little to be desired, as the images are somewhat grainy. This is generally at its worst in the darker black and white illustrations. The book is otherwise cleanly presented, with each chapter followed by its own endnotes and bibliography. Typos are minimal and cause no major confusion to the reader. Aside from classical reception in isolation, *The Smells and Senses of Antiquity* makes an important contribution to Classics as a whole, a discipline which has seen its relevance increasingly come under question in our post-colonial world. Such questioning is wholly understandable: a whitewashed, idealised, ideological fantasy of Graeco-Roman antiquity was once used to argue for European cultural and racial supremacy and to justify modern imperialism and colonisation. Part of moving the discipline of Classics beyond this sombre history consists, in my opinion, of dismantling narratives of European exceptionalism, which this volume does by making ancient Greece and Rome smell – and not always in a fragrant way, at that. As the editors point out, making antiquity smell again has a similar effect to our discovery and acceptance of the polychromy of ancient statues (5-6). It allows us to view Graeco-Roman antiquity, once presented in terms of the sobriety and idealism of odourless white marble, as a colourful world filled with smells and other sensory stimuli.

Lars Sheppard-Larsen¹
University of Auckland

¹ ORCID: 0009-0006-5337-2088.

Joyce, Stephen J., *The Legacy of Gildas: Constructions of Authority in the Early Medieval West*; Woodbridge and Rochester: The Boydell Press, 2022; hardback, 204 pages, 6 b/w illustrations; RRP £70.00 / \$105.00 USD; ISBN: 9781783276721.

The British Latin writer Gildas is one of the pillars of early medieval literature, though less well-known than many of his continental contemporaries. As one of the only authors to both originate from and discuss post-Roman Britain (ca. 410–550 CE) in detail, Gildas holds a unique position as a chronicler of both British Christianity and British political identity in this period. However, because of the unusual genre of his most well-known work, *De Excidio Britanniae* ('On the Destruction of Britain'), Gildas is often viewed as idiosyncratic at best and illegitimate at worst, with other writings associated with him ignored in favour of *De Excidio*. Stephen Joyce's monograph, *The Legacy of Gildas: Constructions of Authority in the Early Medieval West*, offers a new perspective on Gildas, approaching him through the lens of his continental and insular Latinate successors and their acceptance of Gildas's authority as one of the earliest medieval religious and political theorists. Drawing from the fragmentary letters associated with Gildas (*fragmenta Gildae*) as well as from *De Excidio*, Joyce argues that Gildas should be examined as a foundational figure for models of religious and kingly authority in early medieval Europe.

Chapter one seeks to put Gildas in context with other accounts of early medieval Britain, introducing a timeline of the three main sources – St. Patrick's *Confessio* and *Epistola*, Constantius of Lyons' *Vita Germani Episcopi Autissiodorensis*, and Gildas himself. None of these texts reference each other and Joyce argues that none of them support corroborating narratives of the insular church. Instead, the reception of Gildas was influenced by changing perceptions of the British Isles, and more specifically, Insular Christianity, in the medieval period.

Chapter two has the initially misleading title of 'Images of Gildas', which suggests art and other visual material but instead refers to historiographical (both medieval and modern) views of Gildas, which Joyce divides up into Gildas *sapiens*, Gildas *auctor*, Gildas *historicus*, Gildas *sanctus*, Gildas *confessor*, and Gildas *historiographus*. This chapter explores the various ways in which medieval authors identified Gildas as both an authority figure in his own right and as a figure capable of defining secular and ecclesiastical authority across time.

In chapter three, Joyce moves away from receptions of Gildas's authority and returns to Gildas's own authority as a monastic figure, exploring the ways in which *De Excidio* engages with the monastic antecedents of Jerome, Cassian, and Augustine. Joyce identifies Gildas's intervention as his engagement with

anointed Christian kings, rather than with Roman emperors like his predecessors.

In chapter four, Joyce argues that in his letters to Gregory the Great, Columbanus invokes the authority of Gildas in his criticism of corrupt churchmen, particularly in the heresy of simony. While Joyce admits that it is unclear whether or not Gregory actually read Gildas, he argues that Columbanus wrote with the expectation that Gregory was familiar with Gildas, using *De Excidio* as a precedent for clerical authority on the subject of simony.

Similarly, chapter five on the collection of Irish canon law known as the *Hibernensis*, invokes Gildas's clerical authority on the subject of the insular tonsure (not addressed in *De Excidio*) and echoes his use of scripture in *De Excidio* and the *fragmenta*, linking Gildas's own authority with his use of biblical authority. This chapter is the weakest of the six, as at times Joyce seems to be reaching for connections: for example, one connection is not between the *Hibernensis*'s use of Gildas, but instead in its use of the same biblical quotes that also appear in *De Excidio*, and on several occasions Joyce remarks on the absence of direct references to *De Excidio* (117, 120).

Joyce saves Gildas's most significant, as well as most well-known, reception for the final chapter. While Gildas was one of Bede's main sources in the *Historia Ecclesiastica's* for the advent of the Saxons in Britain, Joyce highlights his usage of *De Excidio* as a model of providential history amidst political and ecclesiastical anxiety. At the same time, Bede also updated Gildas's presentation of the island of Britannia to account for both his present-day realities in the eighth century and his mission as an eschatological writer. He argues that Bede repurposes Gildas's prophetic authority as a framework through which he is able to create his own providential history of the English church. He returns to Bede in the conclusion, using Bede as 'our most reliable lens' to the early Middle Ages and the reception of Gildas (154). While Joyce does use Bede as a bridge briefly connecting Gildas and the other medieval authors covered in the book, his emphasis in the conclusion is on 'Bede's dark age' and how new readings of Gildas illuminate it (157).

Joyce's approach to Gildas is firmly rooted in the Middle Ages, rather than in Late Antiquity, leaving certain gaps that do not take into account recent scholarship on Roman and post-Roman Britain, such as Robin Fleming's works *Britain After Rome* (Allen Lane, 2010) and *The Material Fall of Roman Britain, 300–525 CE* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), or James Gerrard's *The Ruin of Roman Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2013). While Gildas's respect for *romanitas* is remarked on in several places (28, 56-58, 77), Joyce does not further interrogate it or define his own conception of *romanitas*, referring to it as 'a *romanitas* that situates Britain as a *natio* amongst *nationes* and not directly dependent on Roman imperial authority' (35). As his primary focus is on Gildas's medieval reception rather than Gildas's own historical and cultural context, these gaps do not negatively impact the book, but can be frustrating

for scholars approaching Gildas as a product of Late Antiquity rather than of the early Middle Ages. If Gildas's encounters with *romanitas* are not relevant to his early medieval reception, then why bring them up at all? Similarly, Joyce's focus on receptions of Gildas often comes at the cost of political and ecclesiastical complexity in the British Isles and the continent, though he addresses this lack early on in the book (9).

Throughout the book, Joyce's focus is on Gildas's titular legacy, particularly as an early medieval political theorist and its intersections with Christianity. By drawing on a wide survey of continental and insular narrators, Joyce presents numerous facets of Gildas's reception in the early middle ages, ranging from his position as a prophetic writer to his advocacy for clerical criticism of secular authority. In moving away from the usual discussions of *De Excidio* as a historical text, Joyce offers a new interpretation of Gildas that recontextualizes both his authority and his works in the early medieval period. While the book may be unsatisfying for scholars of Late Antiquity or Gildas specialists due to its focus on Gildas's medieval reception rather than on Gildas himself, for medievalists it provides a fresh look at a controversial author and his often-fraught legacy. Textual scholars otherwise unfamiliar with Gildas will find this book a fascinating look at the interconnections between geographically far-flung early medieval writers. Hopefully, it will spur further scholarship that explores these connections and the reception of now-obscure authors who, like Gildas, are lesser known or often studied within only one context. I recommend this book to medievalists interested in insular-continental connections or in religious literary history, but scholars of post-Roman Britain may find themselves frustrated.

Katrina Knight

University of South Dakota

Soucy, C. Luke, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: A New Translation, World Literature in Translation Series 27*; Oakland, University of California Press, 2023; paperback; pp. 680, 11 b/white illustrations, 1 map; \$17.95 USD; ISBN: 9780520394858.

Of new embodied shapes transformed, my mind
Is moved to speak! (Ov. *Met.* 1.1–2)

In these opening lines of *The Metamorphoses'* prologue, we are met with the Roman poet Ovid's thesis statement for his work: the theme of transformation prevalent across tales of the Greek and Roman mythological landscapes. This fifteen-book epic was composed in the early first century C.E., only a handful of months prior to the poet's exile. Ovid's work has been a vital basis for reception and interpretation of these mythologies since it was written, particularly as, for some tales, this is the only surviving source. It is difficult to overstate the impact of this work – both in terms of its depictions of mythology but also in terms of its poetry. Since its first full English translation in 1480, *The Metamorphoses* has been translated many times across numerous languages, with a list of more than half a dozen English translations alone currently in print. What then does C. Luke Soucy's 2023 translation add to this legacy and to how we receive this text?

Soucy's Translator Notes state that 'the goal of this work is to provide an accurate, poetic, and open-minded translation of *The Metamorphoses'* (21). In his decision to translate the dactylic hexameter of the original Latin into the iambic pentameter of blank verse, he trades the meter of ancient Greek and Latin epic for that of English epic – retaining the poetic conventions of the 'epic' across his translation. His choice of displaying the text as verse allows for Soucy to play with the poetical nature of this work in a way that stands out to me more than in prose translations of the text that I have read. Soucy makes clear that he is comfortable with the poetic nature of the material he is translating and takes full advantage of the opportunity to play with linguistic and poetic techniques.

Displaying a wonderful ability to create a play on words in his translations, Soucy provides a playfulness and creativity of language that is very in-line with the work that Ovid sets before us: a work which finely treads the line of the comedic and the tragic. An example of this appears in the Orpheus and Eurydice narrative:

*Fax quoque, quam tenuit, lacrimoso stridula fumo
usque fuit nullosque invenit motibus ignes.*

His torch spat smoke that wrung tears from the eyes
 And would not catch, however it was held. (Ov. Met. 10.6–7)

Implementing these parallel actions of ‘catch’ and ‘held’ (with ‘catch’ having the in-text meaning of a fire being lit) is a tiny detail but one which adds to the greater enjoyment of the reader’s experience. This example diverges from other translations that have approached the same lines with a much more one-dimensional description of a torch unable to be lit. Such minor acts of wordplay, scattered across this text, create a wonderful effect of adding depth to the work while retaining its accuracy to the Latin. They also serve a further purpose: to concisely translate the narrative, which Soucy deemed vital to the impact of this translation.

Other modern English translators, he notes, have sacrificed the quickness of Ovid’s wording, its ‘snappiness’, adding more lines to get their point across. He argues this has resulted in some rather clunky translations – removing part of the charm of the Latin text (22). Soucy’s translation is notable in that he favours brevity. Indeed, his work is unique in that it retains the same number of lines as the original Latin. In most instances I find that this worked in his favour, as he keeps the narrative running swiftly and smoothly while maintaining the integrity of the episodes of Ovid’s work.

Examining now what has become one of the more controversial elements of Ovid’s works in recent years, and something that contemporary translators have shone light upon, is the translation of the rape narratives that are rampant in this poem. Soucy draws explicit attention to this in his introduction, and his use of language shows a conscious effort towards treating these narratives with the gravity they deserve (29-32). I argue that Soucy implements abrasive language in these rape narratives to build tension and sympathy towards the victims and heighten the power imbalances – removing any hint of the romantic and eroticized interpretations of some of some other translations. This is especially apparent within his depiction of the myth of Apollo’s pursuit (and attempted rape) of the nymph Daphne:

*ut canis in vacuo leporem cum Gallicus arvo
 vidit, et hic praedam pedibus petit, ille salutem;
 alter inhaesuro similis iam iamque tenere
 sperat et extento stringit vestigia rostro,
 alter in ambiguo est, an sit comprehensus, et ipsis
 morsibus eripitur tangentiaque ora relinquit:
 sic deus et virgo est hic spe celer, illa timore.*

A Gallic hound who spies a hare afield
 and seeks his prey while it seeks to be safe
 Will, when about to grab hold, now – and now! –

Think that he has and come upon its tracks.
 The hare, too, cannot tell if it's been caught,
 But flees the fangs and leaves the crushing jaws:
 So ran the god and girl, with hope and fear. (*Ov. Met.* 1.533–539)

We see more small details throughout the narrative. The god 'denied her rest' (*Ov. Met.* 1.541) and her fleeing is described as her 'toil' (*Ov. Met.* 1.543) – these lead us to be reminded of Daphne's lack of consent and suffering. He presents this for what it is: an attempted rape, not a 'ravishment' or any other diminishing language of which other translators have been guilty. Throughout his work, he consistently translates these narratives as rape and uses powerful language (Callisto in Book 2, Medusa in Book 4, Proserpine in Book 5, Philomena in Book 6, and Caenis becoming Caeneus in Book 12, just to list a few). I am glad that Soucy (and indeed other recent translators such as Stephanie McCarter) have moved toward these more serious translations of the rape narratives – engaging with a complex and sensitive topic without shying away from it.

Where the Soucy publication falls short for me is not actually in his translation itself, but with the inclusion of images throughout the text. If I was being generous, I would say that the images add a sense of the expanse of the reception of these myths and Ovid's work – that they add a layer of seeing how these myths have been depicted. If I were to remove such generosity, I would say that the combination of the types of images selected – often photographs of museum exhibits – and the black and white print of the images, lend the text the air of an academic textbook. It draws my focus away from my enjoyment of a piece of literary work. If this text were intended solely for an academic audience – particularly a student one, then I suppose that is somewhat defensible – but my impression from the translator's note is that this was meant for a broader readership.

Despite my reservations regarding the images included in this publication, this is a thoroughly enjoyable and engaging translation of Ovid's work. Soucy succeeds in his goals by providing an accurate and open-minded translation as well as an excellent piece of poetry in its own right. It is my hope that those who seek to expand their horizons in ancient Greek and Roman literature beyond such texts as Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*, would turn next to this modern translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Sophie Roberts
 University of Western Australia

Stone, Dan, *The Holocaust: An Unfinished History*; London; Pelican, 2024; paperback, pp.li + 401, 3 b/w illustrations, 6 maps; RRP £12.99; ISBN: 9780241508749.

Even if we admit that every generation has the right to write its own history, we admit no more than that it has the right to rearrange the facts in accordance with its own perspective; we don't admit the right to touch the factual matter itself (297).

In this timely contribution to the field, Dan Stone attempts to settle multiple popular misconceptions about the Holocaust and World War II in Europe. While the historiography of the Holocaust is vast, the Professor of Modern History and Director of the Holocaust Research Institute at Royal Holloway, University of London, provides a valuable contribution to the field with *The Holocaust: An Unfinished History*. His purpose is to provide a critical assessment of the genocide that challenges conventional understandings of the mechanisms of the mass killings, the extent of collaboration throughout Europe, and its place in current political, social, and ideological contexts.

This work builds upon his previous publications, most notably his 2015 book, *The Liberation of the Camps: The End of the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, which discusses the complex experiences of survivors in the aftermath of World War II. *The Holocaust: An Unfinished History* is structured into eight chapters, with figures and maps throughout. Chapters one through four analyse the racial ideologies and legal measures implemented by the Nazi regime that paved the way for the Holocaust. Chapter five explores the breadth of European collaboration, while chapter six focuses on the machinery of mass murder. Leaving the reader at a chilling end, chapters seven and eight delve into the harrowing experiences that Jewish people faced at liberation, as well as examining the impact of survivor testimony and the political dynamics that shape Holocaust memory throughout Europe. Aptly titled an 'unfinished history', Stone has produced an academically rigorous yet easily accessible document that unsettles any notion of the past being fixed or complete.

One simple interpretation of the term 'unfinished history' in relation to the Holocaust is that crucial aspects of the genocide are inadequately understood. The idea that the Holocaust was an 'industrial genocide' – that is, a large-scale extermination undertaken through modern technological methods and bureaucratic organisation – is just one of these misunderstood postulations. While extermination camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau have become the dominant symbol of the genocide, Stone emphasises the decentralised and often chaotic nature of the killings. He highlights the 'Holocaust by bullets' and introduces the audience to the little known,

widespread massacres carried out by the *Einstazgruppen* across Eastern Europe, in which Jews were murdered in their own towns and villages, often with direct participation or tacit approval of local populations (108). Chapter five's eye-opening analysis of the conditions in Transnistria, where in the winter of 1941–42, thousands of Jews were abandoned in pigsties and either froze to death or suffered inescapable epidemics, further challenges the conventional portrayal of the Holocaust as being carried out entirely within extermination camps.

Another central argument of Stone's analysis is his exploration of collaboration and complicity across Europe in the murder of some six million Jewish people. Although the Holocaust originated in Germany from Nazi ideology, it was ultimately a European project. In the book's fifth chapter, 'A Continent-wide Crime', Stone makes it abundantly clear that the Holocaust unfolded as it did largely due to the involvement of local collaborators – including Bulgarian police who deported Macedonian Jews to Treblinka, Croatia's management of its own extermination camp at Jasenovac, and collaboration within France, the Slovak Republic, and Hungary. Moreover, Stone provides evidence for the Holocaust to be viewed as a global history. The experiences of Jews in the colonial administrations of North Africa and in exile communities from Mauritius to Bolivia and the Philippines complicate the idea that non-German actors were merely passive bystanders, and instead highlight the active participation of numerous European and international societies in the genocide.

Australia cannot consider its hands clean of this global history. During World War II, Australia's restrictive immigration laws prevented thousands of refugees, mostly Jewish, from seeking asylum. Those who did manage to escape Europe to Australia did so on ships such as the HMT *Dunera* in 1940; however, Jewish refugees were forced to share facilities with Nazi sympathisers and Italian fascists – a decision formally sanctioned by both the British and Australian governments. Furthermore, the conditions were appalling – both on the ship and in Australia's internment camps. Cyril Pearl's 1983 publication, *The Dunera Scandal: Deported by Mistake*, describes the journey of the HMT *Dunera* and the severe conditions at the Hay internment camp in New South Wales, further demonstrating the Holocaust's broader entanglement with national histories on a global scale.

An 'unfinished history' can, too, be interpreted in relation to the complex processes of memorialisation of the Holocaust. Chapter eight of *The Holocaust: An Unfinished History* explores the contentious topic of Holocaust memory in depth; however, this theme is expertly woven through the pages of the entire monograph. Stone's analysis points to the fact that many post-communist Eastern European countries have been slow to acknowledge their level of complicity in the genocide. For example, he sheds light on the case of two Polish historians who were taken to court in 2021 after writing about a Polish man who betrayed scores of Jews to the Germans. This was based on the

2018 law which made it a criminal offence to accuse Poles of being complicit in the Nazi murder of the Jews. The after-effects of these, and other actions, 'are felt to this day in the spheres of politics and culture in many, often unexpected ways' (267).

Moreover, Stone challenges readers to view the Holocaust not as a concluded historical event, but as an ideological precursor to current global issues, including incidents such as the 6 January 2021 riot at the US Capitol. Here, radicals were seen wearing t-shirts marked with a logo for 'Camp Auschwitz' on the front, and the word 'Staff' on the back (266). Further contributing to the poignant topic today, Stone addresses the sensitive debates surrounding Holocaust memory in the context of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He highlights the British government's 2020 mandate that universities should adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, explaining how in its eleven examples of antisemitism, seven concern or make reference to Israel (265). The language of the definition is vague and open to interpretation, inviting a conflation of criticisms of Israel with antisemitism. Stone worries that the adaptation of this definition by universities may be leveraged for outing pro-Palestinian scholars and silencing anti-Zionist voices (266). With the rise of conflict in the Middle East, particularly in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and an increase of antisemitism on university campuses globally, institutions in Australia and the world over have adopted definitions of antisemitism that align with the IHRA. This is a move that has received both praise and criticism, reflecting the ongoing debate about balancing the fight against antisemitism with protecting free speech and academic freedom.

The book's main strength is its ability to synthesise a vast amount of historical research and present it in a clear manner that is fit for all audiences, from the general reader to scholars alike. Unlike some traditional accounts of the Holocaust by scholars such as Raul Hilberg and Christopher Browning, whose significant contributions emphasise the evolution of Nazi Jewish policy and established frameworks of victimhood, Stone interrogates the persistent ambiguities of the genocide. His prose is engaging and thought-provoking, and provides a perspective that challenges the reader to think beyond established narratives and consider the Holocaust's broader implications. However, this exact approach is what some readers may find unsettling. His insistence on confronting uncomfortable truths – such as widespread European complicity and the distortion of Holocaust memory – may provoke resistance among those who prefer more familiar narratives of the Holocaust as a unique and isolated atrocity. Nonetheless, this willingness to challenge established perspectives is precisely what makes the book so valuable.

To finish this review of *The Holocaust: An Unfinished History*, it is fitting to return to the opening quote from the political philosopher Hannah Arendt, also found in Stone's conclusion. Arendt asserts that while each generation may

reinterpret history through its own lens, the facts themselves remain unassailable. Stone's work embodies this very principle: he does not seek to rewrite the history of the Holocaust, but rather to challenge the selective ways in which it has been remembered and misrepresented. By highlighting overlooked facts and dismantling myths, Stone rearranges the historical narrative – not to distort the truth, but to restore the complexities that have been smoothed over by time and political convenience. This approach underscores Arendt's warning: the right to reinterpret history must never become a licence to alter the truth.

In an era marked by rising right-wing rhetoric, resurgent antisemitism, and the weaponisation of history for political gain, Stone's contribution confirms that while perspectives may evolve, the truth will endure. This book serves as a powerful reminder that history is never truly finished – that the past continues to shape the present, and that understanding the Holocaust remains crucial for addressing the challenges of our own time.

Georgia Whittaker¹
University of Western Australia

¹ ORCID ID: 0009-0000-8338-1651.