Advanced Australian Fear: A Review Essay

The 'fair' in the national anthem, Advance Australia Fair, did not mean 'equitable', when the song was written; it meant white (Cope & Kalantzis 2000). The Federation notion of having a new nation with unprecedented egalitarianism and an advanced standard of living (for white men), was predicated on the White Australia Policy. The 'working man's paradise' was to be a white man's paradise. Not only was one of the first acts of the Australian parliament, the Immigration Restriction Act, designed to keep out 'coolies' and indentured labour from North Asia, South Asia, the Pacific Islands, it was predicated on a deepseated fear of 'invasion' by hordes from our north: the 'Yellow Peril' (Marr & Wilkinson 2004:44). This anxiety that 'our' land could be taken away from 'us' has been explained in terms of the repressed cultural memory that the white people of European origin who held the land and the fear had so recently done just that to the indigenous inhabitants (Castles, Kalantzis, Cope & Morrissey 1992). The period since the 1996 federal election campaign and the emergence of Pauline Hanson MP and the One Nation party, has seen a renewal of populist White Australia ideology, in forms more or less rapidly incorporated into the political mainstream.

The White Australia Policy had become untenable following the period of postwar global decolonisation; the country then gradually saw a transition, from Indigenous affairs and ethnic affairs policies of assimilation to 'whiteness', to policies and rhetoric of multiculturalism. This enjoyed bipartisan support from the major political parties from the early 1970s until the 1996 federal election, and the advent of Hanson and then One Nation. The 1980s had seen a period of worrying on behalf of the nation about 'too many' South-East Asian immigrants, and especially 'invasions' of 'boat people' in the wake of the Vietnam War. Though apologists for this xenophobia had included prominent history professor Geoffrey Blainey and even then Opposition Leader John Howard, the bipartisan support for multiculturalism did not crack until 1996 (see Lygo 2004:5–6, 184; Marr & Wilkinson 2004:369). The winning of the federal election in that year by the conservative Coalition was widely attributed to their playing of the 'race card' (Lygo 2004:22–29) and skillful engagement in 'wedge politics' over race issues, attacks on multiculturalism as supposedly imposed by an urban elite, and concomitant attacks on 'political correctness', a concept imported successfully from the right wing in the USA.

All four of these books, Kevin (2004), Lygo (2004), Manning (2004) and Marr and Wilkinson (2004) deal in various ways with the unfolding of this history in and around the Australian federal election campaign of 2001. In this campaign, the 'War on Terror' following September 11 combined with 'border protection' against 'invasion' by 'boat people', added to the earlier attacks on multiculturalism and the 'political correctness' of so-called elites, to bring the politics of fear to the centre of Australian society (Hogg 2002). There it has remained for the Howard government's third term of office, and was a vital aspect of the 2004 electoral campaign . Two of the books (Manning 2004; Lygo 2004) deal primarily with the media in these connections, and two (Marr & Wilkinson 2004; Kevin 2004) with the political and bureaucratic operators, their manipulation of the military and security forces for political ends, and their operations in close symbiosis with the media. All these books are properly sympathetic to those who are racialised and hurt by these workings.

Marr and Wilkinson's definitive *Dark Victory* (first published 2003) is by now deservedly well-known and in its second edition (2004). This book of the various 'boat people' affairs from 2001 which shaped the outcome of the Australian federal election of that year — including the 'Tampa Crisis', the 'Children Overboard' affair, SIEV X, the 'Pacific Solution' — is painstakingly researched, exhaustively referenced and elegantly narrated. The analysis and the social criticism is woven seamlessly through the beautifully written investigative story.

Their account begins, appropriately, with the stories of the asylum seekers. They have names, identities, families, lives. When the Howard government was intent on keeping the asylum-seekers faceless, anonymous and silenced for propaganda purposes (Burnside 2002; Senate Select Committee on a Certain Maritime Incident 2002; Lygo 2004:30–31; Marr & Wilkinson 2004:107–108, 152, 180; Kevin 2004:17–18), I was reminded of the Woody Guthrie song, 'Plane Wreck At Los Gatos' about the 'illegal immigrants' who perished when their aircraft went down as they were being deported from the USA in 1948. 'Some of us are illegal, and others not wanted ... You won't have a name when you ride the big airplane. And all they will call you will be "deportees"'. Guthrie was angry with the media reports of nameless victims, denying them identity and humanity, doubtless in line with government thinking. With the recent asylum seekers, as with those deportees, the only decent response is to give them their names, to convey their humanity, to tell their stories. Marr and Wilkinson (2004:1–2) do this masterfully. Their account of the, by now famous, Norwegian container ship *Tampa's* rescue of the people aboard the foundering fishing boat, *KM Palapa 1*, begins the book's second paragraph with:

> Sarwari, a teacher, sat jammed between his wife, their three children and his brother on the boat's flimsy upper deck. The family was fleeing the Taliban. So were most of the people on the *Palapa*. By now they were exhausted, ill and thirsty. Most had spent the last few days vomiting. They had faced death the previous night in a violent storm which they believed they survived only by a miracle. Now a cargo boat was bearing down on them. ...

This approach does not entail making saints (and sinners) of the protagonists, and the authors are far too good journalists to do that, whatever barking ideologues like columnists Andrew Bolt and Piers Akerman may baldly assert (Lygo 2004:88–89).

Dark Victory proceeds through a factual narrative, informed by myriad sources, of events from the 'Tampa Crisis' to the 'Pacific Solution', their intended effects on the 2001 election and their lasting, damaging transformation of Australian political culture and civil society. It does not refrain from commentary, but this is invariably well founded (whether one agrees or not), mostly insightful, never gratuitous and often pithily understated:

> Though never eloquent, [John Howard] is a master of political speech. He can spin, block, prevaricate, sidestep, confound and just keep talking through everything. His very muscular jaw has been working hard at this all his life. Above all, Howard is a master of the political art of deceiving without lying. And he lies (Marr & Wilkinson 2004:65).

This latter is no empty accusation. The book shows, chapter and verse, just how, and how often, Howard and his ministers have lied: that those rescued from the *Palapa* by the *Tampa* were closer to an Indonesian port than Christmas Island (Marr & Wilkinson 2004:66); that children were thrown overboard from the *Olong* (2004:257–278); that SIEV X sank in Indonesian waters (2004:316); that the disembarkations on Nauru from the *Manoora* were voluntary (2004:211–224); that not one asylum-seeker rescued by the *Tampa* would set foot in Australia (2004:228, 392–3).

Here is an equally sharp-lined pen sketch of Minister for Immigration Philip Ruddock, in the context of his canvassing of the dubious 'disruption' of people-smuggler boats, of the sort which has been linked (Marr & Wilkinson 2004:384; Kevin 2004) with the sinking of SIEV X:

> Philip Ruddock — former national president of the Young Liberals, a suburban solicitor sitting in parliament even before the first boat people reached Australia [in the late 1970s], a decent politician who put his career on the line defending non-racist immigration — was now an essential figure in the Howard government and minister responsible for refugees, slipping into Jakarta to plug a few gaps in the system [jokily suggesting sabotage of people-smuggler boats]. He and Australia had come a long way together (Marr & Wilkinson 2004:43).

To trace a case study of this transformation in 'Australia' is clearly an important purpose of the book. This plainly annoys those critics who cast Marr and Wilkinson as elitists, since they appear to be excised from this Australia (like an inconvenient island?) and exempted from its shortcomings. These critics, especially of Marr, can be found aplenty in the *Australian* newspaper: editorial, opinion columns, letters. I admit I also found this seemingly ahistorical and monolithic categorical 'Australia/n' irritating at times, and certainly unsatisfying, as it leaves largely (though not wholly) unquestioned how this 'Australia' is produced, and the role of their own colleagues and their own profession in this process. (Australia has not always been that way, and never uniformly so):

> ... Australians have a long antipathy to boat people and are uncomfortable with *any* arriving on their shores. That the latest boats were carrying refugees fleeing persecution in Iraq and Afghanistan made no difference. Australians saw them as 'illegals' for having no visas; 'queue jumpers' for making their own way to Australia: and rich people paying people smugglers for the journey (2004:38).

> Few Australians cared about the cost. Spending a billion or so dollars, violating obligations abroad and the rule of law at home, antagonising Indonesia, closing the borders to refugees, endangering their lives at sea, forcing them to distant islands and imprisoning them without charge or trial — all this was worth the result as far as most Australians were concerned (2004:384).

To be fair, Marr analyses admirably in other places, notably *Media Watch* (and see also his *Overland* lecture, 2004) how Australians are persuaded to these attitudes. Quentin Dempster (2004) has remarked that the profession of journalism, deeply complicit in the demonising of boat people at our borders or Muslims in our midst, redeems itself periodically through books such as this one. Journalistic authors will do so more effectively if they do not exculpate their profession from the processes they analyse. We return to these questions later in this review essay, since they are of central concern to Manning (2004) and Lygo (2004).

Many of Marr's and Wilkinson's detractors, of the curiously self-styled 'anti-elite' variety, accuse these authors and other members of the 'chattering classes' of being 'Howard-haters' and thus partisan supporters of the Labor side of politics. (The irony that these critics are invariably champions of conservative politics appears to elude them.) This is manifestly not true of *Dark Victory*. Marr and Wilkinson recall how it was the Hawke-led Labor government in 1992 that introduced the mandatory detention of asylum seekers arriving without visas. This was virtually without precedent in Western countries, and breached several United Nations conventions, including on refugees and on the rights of the child (2004:47). They note that Labor under Kim Beazley supported the Howard government's introduction of Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs), themselves adopted from One Nation policy (2004:47, 120). They argue, as does Tony Kevin, that this policy leaves overseas asylum-seeker families of TPV-holders in Australia no choice but to embark on leaky boats at the mercy of exploitative smuggles and the elements, if they want to re-unite (Marr & Wilkinson 2004:121, 317; Kevin 2004:35–36). They observe that opposition leader Mark Latham is as unsympathetic to refugees as his predecessor, and that 'Labor continues to support mandatory detention, temporary protection visas and the blockading of boats bringing asylum seekers to Australia' (2004:380).

Perhaps one of *Dark Victory*'s greatest contrasts, one with which it begins and ends, is between the straightforward common sense and humanity represented in the longstanding international conventions on Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), altruistically acted upon by the Captain of the *Tampa*, Arne Rinnan; and the mean and tricky prevarication over these (and other international conventions and agreements) engaged in for electoral advantage by the Howard government and pusillanimously (with some honourable exceptions) carried out by the Australian State with Howard at the helm. The United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea is incorporated into Australian law (as are the SOLAS conventions), and:

> obliges every ship's master 'in so far as he can do so without serious danger to the ship, the crew or the passengers, to render assistance to any person found at sea in danger of being lost' and 'to proceed with all possible speed to the rescue of persons in distress' (Marr & Wilkinson 2004:21).

Likewise, SOLAS rules oblige mariners 'to rescue those in peril at sea. How those people find themselves in trouble does not matter'. They even call for rescuing enemies in wartime from drowning (2004:174). In the Tampa crisis and encounters with subsequent Suspected Illegal Entry Vessels (SIEVs), these obligations were overlooked, put aside, skated around and countermanded by Australian officers and officials. Captain Rinnan, on the other hand, never wavered. The book concludes with his words, 'It's an unwritten law of the sea to rescue people in distress. I would do it again and I hope all my seafaring colleagues would do the same' (2004:395).

A Certain Maritime Incident: The sinking of the SIEV X (Kevin, 2004) is equally meticulous with the evidence and scrupulously thorough about sources. Tony Kevin is a former senior public servant and diplomat who became convinced there was Australian state cover-up concerned with, and probably a measure of involvement and culpability in, the sinking of SIEV X on 19 October 2001, in which 353 people died, most of them Middle Eastern asylum seekers. By his own account, Kevin has been dismissed in government circles as a conspiracy theorist (2004:10, 241). He should take this as a compliment. True, neither societies nor nation-states are shaped or directed primarily by conspiracies, and so identifying conspiracy (or corruption) does not suffice to explain the way things are: hence the derogatory connotation of the tag 'conspiracy theory'. Yet only a fool would believe that, in deeply unequal societies, the ruling cliques do not actually, continually conspire. Tony

Kevin is no such fool, and knows the mechanisms of state too well to be fooled. He knows instinctively how to follow the paper trail of the bureaucracy, and he leads the reader in these ways.

The very fly leaves of the book reproduce a cable sent on 23 October 2001 from the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, to the Prime Minister, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Immigration, Defence and others, the Attorney-General, the Chief of the Defence Force, the Director General of Coastwatch, the Federal Commissioner of Police, the Head of ASIO, and many others, giving quite accurate information about the approximate location of SIEV X when it sank: some 60 nautical miles south of the Sunda Strait, in international waters and within Australia's Operation Relex surveillance zone. It also contained information which could only come from surveillance, and revealed that the sources must have known about the boat's departure, in a condition which would ensure it would not arrive. The cable was not released until February 2003 (and then significantly censored) (Kevin 2004:95–104), long after the federal election and well after the Senate Select Committee on a Certain Maritime Incident:

> accepted official evidence from Defence, AFP [Australian Federal Police] and PM&C [Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet], in concluding that 'the exact location where the boat sank remains in doubt, with speculation that it might have gone down in the Sunda Strait, within Indonesian waters' (Kevin 2004:242).

Kevin carefully triangulates the location from the embassy cable with four other independent sources, all giving similar locations, all publicly available contemporaneously. Yet the Prime Minister lied repeatedly about the location ('in Indonesian waters'), as did Defence Minister Robert Hill ('we don't know' and 'in Sunda Strait'); Immigration Minister Ruddock at best misled and equivocated (2004:5, 95–97, 180).

As well as what wrongs a concerted cover-up might point to, Kevin is deeply concerned, in itself, by the corruption of the public service which it entails. In this process, Kevin attests, moral scruples become discarded as 'personal baggage':

> The Prime Minister's Department was put in charge of new policy making [about 'border protection']. Jane Halton, then [department head] Moore-Wilton's trusted deputy, chaired interdepartmental committees to draw the new policy lines together. ... 'Leave your personal baggage ... at the door', was her reported watchword to the most timid or scrupulous (Kevin 2004:22; see also Marr & Wilkinson 2004:72).

Halton and her People Smuggling Taskforce were also a central conduit for the misinformation about 'Children Overboard', and heavily implicated in covering for the untruths, about this, of Howard, Reith, Ruddock and others (Marr & Wilkinson 2004:262–271, 347–8).

Kevin (2004:183–200) also adduces evidence that Australian Orion surveillance aircraft must have flown directly above the sinking SIEV X, though no record of sightings is publicly available. He further finds an hour's discrepancy in the flight paths and times, consistent with diverting to circle and observe the vessel (2004:195–200). There are outright contradictions, moreover, in various reports of the weather in connection with these flights, their whereabouts and their observations (2004:199). Military type boats (probably Indonesian) with lights were present as passengers of the sunken boat floundered in the water (Kevin 2004:84–5; see also Marr & Wilkinson 2004:309); they must have been directed to the location. Indonesian fishing vessels were ordered to the location to rescue survivors (Kevin 2004:81–6). Kevin asks, how did the authorities know of its sinking and its location?

The boat had been modified by the addition of an upper deck, sacrificing stability and rendering it unseaworthy. It was deliberately overloaded. It had a loose plank, visible upon embarkation, letting water in. Indonesian police were observed and reported by numerous sources as in league with the people smugglers. Unwilling passengers were forced aboard at gunpoint. Survivors were shown by Australian investigators, probably federal police, an aerial or satellite surveillance photo of that boat, with its upper deck already modified for the cramming, in the Indonesian port (Kevin 2004:75–9; see also Marr & Wilkinson 2004:314). There was, demonstrably, on-the-ground intelligence about the departure of the boat. Kevin draws strong inferences (and Marr & Wilkinson much weaker and more implicit ones) about connections between the disablement and sinking of the SIEV X (and other SIEVs), the intelligence about the vessel, the cover-up, and the undercover disruption of asylum seeker boats (Kevin 2004:201–225; Marr & Wilkinson 2004:46, 52–5). Kevin does not mince words; it is 'secrets about large-scale state crimes' that he is interested to uncover, and for that he is calling, as did the Senate, for a full-powers judicial inquiry (2004:xii).

Kevin's method is forensic; he seeks to 'join the dots' in the face of the covering up of evidence. He offers, not proof, but a series of hypotheses 'that best explain the accumulation of facts that cannot reasonably be explained in any other way' (2004:xii). This may not be a 'courtroom proof' (2004:xiii), but it is actually the way science works. Like Marr's and Wilkinson's, the moral stance of Kevin's account will attract criticism, both from those who maintain the myth of objectivity and from those (often the same) who accuse him of Howard-hating bias. The book is the better for it. The Australian Federal Police, Kevin points out, have a list of the 353 dead from SIEV X, 146 of them children and 142 women. They will not release the list, for fear of compromising sources, they say (Kevin 2004:17–18). Most will remain nameless 'SUNCs': Suspected Unauthorised Non-Citizens. We can be sorry, collectively ashamed, and angry about their needless deaths, or we can accord them all the importance of the drowning of a sackful of kittens, in keeping with a morality that puts children in cages like animals.

How can otherwise decent people be persuaded to think that the victims brought it on themselves, and that 353 lives is a price worth paying to send a strong signal to would-be 'boat people'? Populist political leaders and opinion-leaders help assemble an image of the Other, which is unlike 'us' in our humanity. 'We' are good-hearted, generous, honest, open, advanced, democratic, egalitarian, law-abiding and kind to children. 'They' are heartless, lawless, dishonest, inclined to evil, backward, unassimilable, violent, misogynistic, and throw their own children overboard. And they are complicit with terrorism. So we were told repeatedly and relentlessly in the leadup to the last election. Lygo (2004) and Manning (2004) deal with the role of Australian media in this portrayal.

We know now that we were lied to by ministers, the prime minister and their minders, about children being thrown overboard from the *Olong*. We were lied to by the same about the SIEV X sinking in Indonesian waters. We know there were clever prevarications and complex cover-ups, though we don't yet know the extent of the cover-ups. I want now to ask, however, why were Australian people so prepared to believe these stories? Or perhaps not to care whether the detail was true, because of a general disposition towards this Other that I have described?

Perhaps we can see an answer to this in the Norma Khouri syndrome. Her bestselling fabrication in *Forbidden Love*, the supposedly true story of an 'honour killing' of her Jordanian friend, was apparently patently false to anyone familiar with Jordanian life. Most Australians are not. The book's best sales internationally, by far, were in Australia (Shalbak

2004). So many Australians were ready to believe the stories of honour killings, because they 'just knew' of the misogyny of Arab patriarchy. The lies rang true. That is to say, they reverberated with the rhetoric already in place.

So too, the big and very effective lie that little boatfuls of families desperately fleeing the regimes of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein, would bring a subversive fifth column into our suburbs, undermining our good fight against these very forces of evil (Lygo 2004:45–8), that Al Qaeda would send terrorist sleepers on leaking fishing trawlers. Reith, Ruddock and Howard all said it and they were given credence. Sure the Alan Joneses, the John Lawses, the Piers Akermans were helping push this line, but they know their market and they know what product sells.

Iain Lygo's (2004) book, *News Overboard: The tabloid media, race politics and Islam*, deals knowledgeably with these processes, with a great deal of valuably collected media material, above all from commercial talkback radio. Lygo wrote the book when a postgraduate student in journalism, and the host of a current affairs FM radio program. He is also a Greens activist and sometime candidate. He knows how the media work, and shares his insight well.

Lygo begins by presenting some egregious examples of racial vilification of Muslims and asylum seekers in letters to the editor of tabloid newspapers of Sydney and Melbourne. (The Victorian content in *News Overboard* adds a dimension not found in Manning (2004) or in Poynting, Noble, Tabar & Collins (2004)):

> I would like to know why Muslims insist on coming here and hating our customs, our beliefs our lifestyle and our religion as they do? It would be better for all concerned, mostly Australians, if asylum seekers were refused entry into Australia as the mix will never work as long as Middle Eastern boat people refuse to assimilate and live as Australians do (unidentified letter reproduced in Lygo 2004:1).

The usefulness of these extracts would be enhanced by careful referencing (the lack of which mars the book throughout). Chapter 3 presents and analyses — again with examples from New South Wales and Victoria — how talkback radio (and tabloid television) pursue the same themes. The collection of electronic media extracts in the book is invaluable, since they are not so easily traced, and they are arguably the most powerful media in producing 'public opinion' of the sort analysed here. There is a close understanding of how talkback works:

> Callers are screened so dissenting opinions never get to air, or if they do go to air the announcer is suitably prepared to ridicule or demean the caller. Stan Zemanek regularly uses ridicule to counter anyone opposing his views. Callers are called, 'boofheads', 'idiots', and 'bleeding hearts' ... He is intensely proud of being the, 'most complained about broadcaster in Australia' and uses this phrase in his promotional material (2004:9).

Lygo argues that 'the talkback industry has pushed the boundaries of acceptable debate in this country. While far right commentators see this as a golden age of free-speech and an end to absurd political correctness, other [sic] see some talkback programs as a conduit for hate speech' (2004:21).

Throughout the book, almost repetitively so, is the observation that right-wing talkback entertainers and opinion-peddling columnists have acted powerfully as 'cheerleaders' for the conservative government and its policing of the national boundaries, without and within (2004:34–71 and passim). There is also the pertinent observation that this sort of product 'sells': it is a very saleable and apparently sought-after commodity. I would like to have seen some consideration, from this media-savvy author, of the relationship between the two observations. While there is some exploration of the lack of an alternative, given media oligopolies (and in several capital cities, press monopolies) and attacks on, curbs on, and

cutbacks to the public broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) (eg 2004:88–90), there is not the analysis of this connection which this author would be well placed to undertake.

That said, there is a wealth of empirical material in *News Overboard*, and Lygo has done a considerable service to the study of the media in gathering all this in one book, as well as giving glimpses into the workings of the media which produce and are sustained by this commodification of 'othering'. All this and more is to be found, in abundant detail: the 'race card' election of 2001; government media 'spin', control and censorship; othering of refugees; demonisation of asylum-seeker children in detention; 'elite-bashing'; court-bashing; the Tampa crisis; moral panic about 'ethnic crime gangs' and 'ethnic gang rape' in Western Sydney; the aftermath of September 11; the suburban 'War on Terror'; silly media beatups about Muslim 'others'; attacks on mosques and Muslims.

While Tony Kevin's deeply disturbing and despairing book finishes with a long-term hope, sadly too little sustained by its content (except by dint of example) and with a forlorn but deeply human multifaith prayer (2004:257), Iain Lygo's book ends with a wish:

> When Australians rediscover their collective values of decency, tolerance and a 'fair go', that lies next to our xenophobia, the Australian tabloid media will be there to cheer us along. After all, ratings are their lifeblood, and the tabloid media is just another business (2004:189).

While I can say 'amen' to that, too, I am again left with the question of how much this very 'business' is helping produce these 'Australians' of such xenophobia. It may be unfair to ask this of these books, since it is not their purpose, but I am left craving: Please, please: explain!

Peter Manning's (2004) book, *Dog Whistle Politics and Journalism: Reporting Arabic and Muslim people in Sydney newspapers*, examines the content of the two major Sydney daily newspapers, the Fairfax broadsheet *Sydney Morning Herald* and the Murdoch tabloid *Daily Telegraph*, as well as their Sunday stablemates, in connection with Arabs and Muslims for the two years spanning 11 September 2001. The book actually consists of two research papers, comprising Section A and Section B of the study: a 'qualitative data analysis' and a textual analysis respectively. I will discuss the textual analysis first, since it is here that Manning's experience and insight most shine through.

The author has been Executive Producer at the ABC's flagship investigative current affairs program, Four Corners; Head of News and Current Affairs at ABC TV; and then at the Seven Network. In his writing as Adjunct Professor of Journalism at University of Technology, Sydney, Manning's is an authoritative critique of reporting from within the profession, with the critical distance allowed by his present position. Manning deals initially with the Palestine/Israeli conflict, then with many of the issues also covered by Lygo: 'Lebanese rape gangs', asylum seekers, September 11, and Islam and Arabs in general. His selection of representative material bespeaks a skilled editorial eye; his critique is concise and incisive.

Manning shows how, particularly in simplistic populist accounts, 'events are reported without history or context' (2004:38). This is as much the case for the purported barbarity and brutality of the asylum seekers in the *Daily Telegraph*'s accounts (2004:36, 37–39), as it is in the case of Palestine, for the choice of the anodyne nouns 'settlements' or 'territory', conveniently inoffensive to the Israeli state, without the accurate adjectives 'illegal' or 'occupied'. Here, one particular *Sydney Morning Herald* stringer, Ross Dunn, is singled out for his strong tendency to select such words, which 'reduce the nature of the conflict to a

level playing field, without the context of history or law' (2004:18). In this account, terrorists are Arab, Muslim and Palestinian by definition, and the question of State terror by Israel simply cannot arise (2004:19–20). Thus Israeli political assassinations — state-sanctioned murders without arrest, charge or trial — become 'targetted killings' (2004:18): always in self-defence, always of known terrorists (2004:18–19). Innocent civilians, including children, killed in such attacks, are merely 'caught in the crossfire', if they are Palestinians (2004:21–24). The *Daily Telegraph*'s Piers Akerman follows the same 'propaganda line the Israeli, US and Australian governments might want to hear' (2004:26). These media are not uniformly propaganda-prone in this respect; other journalists for the same newspapers, Paul McGeough in the *Herald*, and *Chicago Tribune*'s Hugh Dellios in the *Telegraph*, do not follow the pro-Israel semantic line, but this does not mean they are journalistically 'carrying a gun' (to quote Robert Fisk, cited by Manning 2004:19) for the other side.

The excision of history and context render the armed struggle of the Palestinians apparently irrational, gratuitously violent, only explicable in terms of inhumanity and cruelty (2004:18, 26). As Arabs and indeed Islam have long been diabolised in these orientalist frames, the stories make common sense within an existing horizon of meaning.

The same ideological manoeuvres are applied to the terror of September 11 and its aftermath: the result of incomprehensible, 'inhuman ghoulishness' (2004:40). For example, Prime Minister Howard, in full election flight, deployed the 'dog whistle' indicated in the book's title to send a message, inaudible to those liberals he would not want to alienate, which signalled clearly to the xenophobic who did not want Arabs or Muslims in their neighborhoods: 'there was a "terrorist threat from bin Laden cells in Australia"' (2004:41). Manning further shows how the *Daily Telegraph* enthusiastically adopted US President Bush's 'with us or against us' worldview (2004:41-2). In this tabloid's line, mindlessly repeated by columnist Miranda Devine (cited by Manning 2004:42), left, left-liberal and social-democratic public intellectuals, including some well-known journalists of these leanings, who 'spewed forth on newsprint' their 'hectares of bile', became 'handmaidens of Osama bin Laden', treacherous 'elites' in our midst. Manning is too professionally courteous to comment on the actual source, here, of the bile, and it is beyond his focus in the book to make the obvious comparison of this populist propaganda attacking the traitorous intellectual elite: that with the ideologues of the Third Reich.

Manning finds that asylum seekers were presented in both Sydney daily papers, as threatening, dishonest, undeserving, unappreciative: as cruel, inhumane and disgusting ('throwing their children overboard or breaking their bones') (2004:39). Apart from letters columns and certain conservative columnists, however (2004:37), the great bulk of the examples he gives are from the *Daily Telegraph*. Moreover, the few countervailing stories and those which reveal the extent of populist sentiment and government media manipulation, appear to be from the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Is he trying too hard to be 'even-handed' here?

He finds that the notions of illegality, terrorism and disgust are continually linked to the asylum seekers, and that the link with terrorism as well as illegality is picked up from government sources. The 'us' and 'them' theme of the 'War on Terror' is reprised: their unlawfulness as well as their inhumanity 'allows "us" to close the door on "them" both because they don't deserve entry and because they represent a threat in uncertain times' (2004:39).

The themes of a white Australian 'us' and an Arab 'them' also shape the reporting of the 'Lebanese rape gangs' moral panic:

> rape is typical of men of Middle Eastern extraction; it's the fault not just of the rapists but of the Muslim community that nurtures them; 'our' white girls are in danger; 'we' have reason to fear them (Middle Eastern Muslims); and 'they' (Middle Eastern Muslims) should accept the guilt and shame (2004:33).

This is accurate, but again Manning appears to suggest that this portrayal is spread evenly between 'both newspapers', which it is not. He cites repeatedly from the Fairfax Sunday tabloid, the *Sun-Herald* which indeed followed an approach similar to that of the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph*. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, however, did not market the racist moral panic to anything like the same extent. Incidentally, his assumption that the story was broken by the *Sun-Herald* on 15 October 2000 misses the article in the *Daily Telegraph* on 13 September 2000. His assertion that it 'lay dormant' for eight months is generally true, but omits the piece in the *Telegraph* on 8 December 2000.

Again, we have 'Terror in the suburbs' (2004:28) associated with Arabs, their barbarism, and their otherness. 'The stage was set — crime and violence, Muslims and Arabs' (2004:28). Others, including Lygo (2004:120) have pointed out that this moral panic about the Arab/Muslim other as misogynist, sexually predatory and prone to sexual violence, began before the Tampa crisis and may have conditioned it. In any case, the ideological elements of violence and lack of civilisation neatly dovetailed with those already in place.

This ideology analysis, or textual analysis, part of Manning's book is by far the stronger section. The 'qualitative data analysis' which comprises the first, and smaller, section A, is really a *quantitative* analysis of *qualitative* data rendered quantifiable by categorisation: it uses coding and a computer software package (NU*DIST) to measure with numbers and show in graphs the extent of various statistical connections between the categories. This is a useful exercise, in its producing hitherto unavailable detail, and in that it provides more convincing proof for those more impressed by the 'science' of numbers and graphs. I doubt that it produced any surprises for the researcher, or deepened his considerable understanding of these issues: there is little beyond the actual quanta in the findings which he did not already know. Andrew Jakubowicz (2003:15), in criticising the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board's (2003) report *Race for the Headlines: racism and media discourse* for naivete and seeking regulation against freedom of the press to vilify racially (criticisms which had emerged swiftly in the *Daily Telegraph*, and are also faintly echoed in Lygo (2004:124–5)), comments that:

> Discourse analysis remains a controversial methodology in media studies. While its systematic application to texts is valuable, it can hardly carry the weight of total explanation placed upon it by this Report. Usually discourse analysis is supported by a systematic content analysis ...

We see, in Manning's book how, while the numericalised content analysis goes first and perhaps has cachet, his trenchant 'discourse analysis' grasps the social reality more adequately, and says (beyond the figures) what the book really has to say.

For the record, however:

*   30% of items in these newspapers over the period concerned, dealing with the selected categories of Arabs, Muslims and refugees/asylum-seekers, dealt with 'Lebanese rapists'; 45% with the asylum seekers category (2004:11);

- The proportion of items mentioning the words 'Muslim'/'Islam' and also the words 'extremist', 'fundamentalist' or 'terrorist' increased approximately tenfold in the *Telegraph* and sixfold in the *Herald*, for the year after 11 September 2001. This proportion in the *Herald* is almost double that of the *Telegraph* before 11 September 2001, but only marginally more over the following year (2004:12). (This does not tell us so much without an analysis of the type, size, prominence, authorship, and so on, of items/articles, which is where Section B of the book comes into its own. As Manning notes (2004:16), the manual reading of his byline search was more important than the NU*DIST analysis.)

- 'Of those articles in the international news, [the] proportion of the total [that] mention the words "violent", "death", "attack", "kill", "bomb", "gun", "terror", "suicide" or "gunmen" whenever the words "Arab", "Palestinian", "Muslim" or "Islam" are used' is 58% (2004:13).

- 'Of those articles covering the Israeli/Palestine conflict, [the] proportion of the total mentioning the words [sic] "Palestinian" (and all its derivatives) [which] include the word "violence" (and its derivatives) in close proximity' is 72% (2004:13).

- The chronological graph of mentions of Arabs/Muslims in these newspapers peaks dramatically as the US attacks Afghanistan and Defence Minister Reith releases the (cropped and misrepresented) photographs of 'children overboard', and also spikes at the time of the trials, a year later, of the so-called 'Lebanese gang rapists' in Sydney (2004:6).

Each of these four books presents a different focus on, and a different approach to, the politics of fear of the Arab Other in Australia, particularly since 11 September 2001, and its disastrous consequences for the people — asylum seekers, Middle Eastern immigrants and religious minorities — so demonised. That populist politicians have exploited this national paranoia, that commercial media have exacerbated it for profit, and above all that so many Australians have been moved by it to dehumanise their neighbours and treat them appallingly and unlawfully, will in the future be a cause for national shame, as rightly was the White Australia Policy for so long. All the authors of these works have contributed, in their various ways, not only to analyse and record this recent history (so we may not be condemned to repeat it — again), but towards changing it for the better.

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