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Miles Davis drama diminishes domestic abuse

REVIEWS

Tim Kroenert

Miles Ahead (M). Director: Don Cheadle. Starring: Don Cheadle, Ewan McGregor, Emayatzy Corinealdi. 101 minutes

The original title for this semi-fictional biopic about jazz great Miles Davis was Kill the Trumpet Player. In a way it would have been a more fitting moniker than the hokey, hollow pun 'miles ahead' that made its way onto movie posters. It better evokes the 'biography as gangster movie' mode in which the film operates. The switch to a more genteel title however reflects a deeper identity crisis within the film itself. Iconoclasm grapples with reverence. In the end reverence wins, to the film's detriment.

It opens in the late 1970s with Davis (played by Cheadle, who also co-wrote and serves as first-time director) living alone, battling chronic pain from a hip operation, and existing in a haze of drugs, booze, creative impoverishment and bad memories. A (fictional) Rolling Stone reporter, Dave Braden (McGregor) shows up, chasing a story by trying to coax Davis out of retirement. When a recording of new music is stolen from Davis' home, Braden is dragged into helping a gun-toting Davis get it back.

It's no surprise to find that Cheadle's performance is terrific; he is a fine actor. He learned to play the trumpet for the role, and does a convincing job of emulating the technique and mannerisms of the trumpet player. His world-weary, tough-talking 1970s Davis is a treat to behold, his voice a wreck but replete with menace and hard-won wisdom, his posture bold despite his pronounced limp. McGregor's Braden is softer and sneakier. As a cinematic double act, they work.
Yet the film bears the marks of a long-time actor who has decided he has what it takes to transition to directing. You get the sense Cheadle as director didn't want to make a mere movie; this is a Film.

"The flashbacks deal with Davis' (documented) abuse of his wife Frances Taylor, but only to show us why 1970s Davis is so desolate. Taylor herself is marginalised."

As such there are moments of artsy artifice that take the viewer out of the experience, rather than more deeply into it. It's not enough for Cheadle the filmmaker to cut to a flashback, for example. Instead he has Davis open a door in the back of an elevator and peer through to a scene from his past.

This overbearing artifice extends to the film's structure. It includes two timelines: the main one features the aforementioned caper in the late 1970s; the other, earlier one finds Davis at the peak of his career, and focuses on his courtship of and marriage to dancer and album cover model Frances Taylor (Corinealdi). These timelines flow in and out of each other with the insouciant rhythm of jazz itself, but such a shambolic structure also obscures and distracts from the slimness and shortcomings of the story.

Notably the fact that while the film pretends to warts-and-all authenticity, even the warts are exhibited for sympathy. The flashbacks deal with Davis' (documented) abuse of Taylor, but only to show us why 1970s Davis is so desolate. Taylor is marginalised; in one scene, as she and Davis argue, the dialogue comes down and the score comes up; her voice is literally taken from her. When Davis then physically assaults her, the message is clear: his music and his violence are notches on the same spectrum.

This conflation of creativity with destructiveness is a typical error of mainstream biopics about great artists who were not nice people. It continues elsewhere, in a scene where 'younger' Davis plays trumpet in a boxing ring while 'older' Davis brawls below. Yet applied in the context of spousal abuse it is not only specious but an ethically dubious, even downright dangerous perspective, which is tone deaf to more nuanced notions of
creativity and the origins of male violence, against women and otherwise.

Davis was a great artist, and his music features prominently in the film. Fans might be better served purchasing the soundtrack rather than a movie ticket.

Tim Kroenert is acting editor of *Eureka Street*. 
Legal grey area hinders Aboriginal repatriation

AUSTRALIA

Kate Galloway

Last week the bodies of 33 Australians were repatriated from overseas burial. The remains included service personnel interred in Malaysia, and an Australian who died during the Vietnam War who had been interred in Singapore.

As a society, we continue to feel a deep and solemn connection to those who have died on foreign soil, and a strong desire to bring them home.

But it is not only the bodies of deceased Australian military personnel that remain overseas. Last month, remains of Aboriginal people, centuries old, were returned to their home in the Western Goldfields of WA from various overseas institutions. The repatriation of six sets of remains is part of a project organised by the WA Museum. Until the 1940s, bodies of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were sent to museum, scientific, and private collections around the world. Collectors were not satisfied with grave robbing and there are also terrible stories of humans being killed for the purposes of adding to collections. Many such remains still form part of overseas exhibits, some of which are mislabelled as animal bones. Indeed the remains of more than 1000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians continue to be held overseas in collections.

Holding human remains of colonised peoples, and their cultural belongings, as exhibits, whether scientific or cultural, is deeply offensive to the descendants of those taken, and
to Indigenous Australians more widely. It should be offensive to all Australians.

The practice is a remnant of colonial attitudes that treated indigenous peoples worldwide as curiosities. That human remains and cultural belongings continue to be held overseas represents the ongoing effects of global colonialism.

"Traditional beliefs hold that for the spirit to be at peace, the remains must return to their country. This is not very different from the beliefs that cause us to expend so much effort to repatriate military personnel."

In addition, failing to repatriate the remains is hurtful to the spiritual beliefs of the descendants of those taken. Traditional beliefs hold that for the spirit of a deceased person to be at peace, the remains must return to their country. This is not very different from the beliefs that cause us to expend so much effort to repatriate Australian military personnel, or to compensate for non-repatriation through the solemn rituals espoused by the ADF including ANZAC Day commemorations.

Indigenous Australians have worked tirelessly towards repatriation of human remains and cultural belongings, and there has been some success in recent decades. Unfortunately, the remains have tended to fall into a grey area of Australian law. There are myriad state and Commonwealth heritage laws that provide, in broad terms, for the ownership of such remains and cultural artefacts by descendants of the relevant people. There are however difficulties with the existing legislative regime.

First, these laws do not afford protection for remains or artefacts taken before the items were protected. Further, Australian law does not apply in other jurisdictions. For remains already overseas, the legislation provides no assistance. Indigenous Australians who have been working for repatriation for many years are reliant on the policies of overseas institutions or other national laws, to negotiate release of remains and artefacts.

A further widely recognised problem with cultural heritage protection more broadly is that it takes a Western perspective to artefacts - a 'museum' approach that preserves items whose use and purpose has passed. Instead, these items are part of an ongoing continuous culture. As Indigenous lawyer Terri Janke pointed out in her 2011 Mabo Oration:

'Too ancient for copyright, or where the author is unknown, [cultural artefacts] too are at risk of being treated as terra nullius. But just like land, these things are connected to a living people. These institutions are realising that they must consult with Indigenous people concerning the display, exhibition, repatriation and interpretation of their traditional intellectual property.'

Importantly, with Australia's signing of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and a greater commitment to observe its obligations under the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the Australian government has in recent years developed policy to assist Indigenous Australians with the return of their ancestors' remains and other cultural artefacts.

Since 2012 for example, there has been Australian government support for repatriation, including for remains from overseas. Many Australian institutions have likewise sought to
engage in a respectful and consultative process for returning human remains and sacred objects to their rightful place. Janke points out that museums have ongoing obligations to consult with traditional owners as to ongoing use, to respect the cultural rights of Indigenous peoples.

Each time I see the sad and solemn return of the remains of Australian military personnel or their commemoration overseas, including in respect of those who died many years ago, I am reminded of the ongoing pain of Indigenous Australians who seek the return of their ancestors’ remains. I can only hope that we will see the expedited return of remains and cultural belongings, to right this ongoing wrong.

Kate Galloway is a legal academic with an interest in social justice.

Pictured: Elders and school children gather at Mount Margaret Mission in the WA's northern Goldfields for the repatriation of Aboriginal remains.
Elder abuse thrives on silence

AUSTRALIA

Andrew Hamilton

Images of old age in promotions are usually taken in soft focus and set in autumn. They depict smiling, animated and well-dressed couples who are clearly delighted with the financial services, insurance, or other commodities with which they have been blessed.

The image is real. We all know elderly people who are healthy, active, care for themselves and are blessed with loving families.

For many of us, too, our grannies have been central in our lives: a source of care and unaltering affection, they connect us with a world beyond our nuclear family.

But the image represents only part of the reality of old age. Many elderly people are ill, have lost their partners, live alone with little connection to their families, suffer from incipient dementia, and are dependent on others for the daily business of living. If they appear at all in the media, it is usually in bad news stories. They are seen as people different from us.

A significant minority of older people, too, suffer from abuse. They have a special day dedicated to them: World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, celebrated on 15 June. Its title suggests that most people are unaware of the reality of abuse and of its extent.

The limited studies conducted on elder abuse suggest that between one and five percent of elderly people throughout the world are abused.
The abuse is often physical, sometimes sexual, and also financial. Although the more publicised instances are of abuse by strangers and carers, family members are responsible for much of it. As has been the case with all domestic violence, much goes unreported. The isolation and shame of the victims contribute to the silence.

Financial abuse is particularly insidious. Anyone who has been associated with people through their illness and deaths sees how death brings out the best and worst in families. Sometimes family members care generously for their sick parents and are scrupulous in ensuring that their wishes for the distribution of their wealth are faithfully carried out. Death brings the family closer together.

"When close relatives die a childhood sense of entitlement and doubt about being loved can return and are expressed in greed."

But sometimes the response to elderly relatives is dominated by greed. People who have shut their homeless father out of their lives make contact in their last illness to ensure that they will inherit any goods he leaves. Family members squabble over the details and execution of the will. Of course, it would be wrong to judge people's character by these responses. When close relatives die a childhood sense of entitlement and doubt about being loved can return and are expressed in greed.

The greed that asserts itself at times of death can also dominate people's relationship to their living parents. They will dissuade them from spending money on themselves. They will offer to take over their parent's financial affairs and appropriate their money for themselves. Some will manipulate or bully their parents to finance their own enterprises, and get them to sign off on financial obligations they do not understand.

The stories of abuse are as broad as they are distressing. But distasteful though they are they form another facet of the way ageing is experienced in society. As with other forms of domestic abuse, financial abuse is protected and allowed to flourish most effectively by silence. To be aware of it and to keep it before our eyes is the first step in preventing it.

These stories are also relevant to the discussion of legalising euthanasia. I am opposed to this on ethical grounds, but I acknowledge that my position is not shared by many Australians. So a considered judgement of its legalisation must take account of many arguments and human situations. Its proponents usually offer images, notably of an ageing person, fully in possession of her mind and supported by her family, beset by a painful illness and close to death, who longs for euthanasia to be legally available. That image, of course also is real, one facet of the experience of ageing.

A considered judgment about legalising it must not attend only to images and stories of people making a clearly free and unpressured decision to do so and of relatives who have only their relatives' best interests at heart. It must also take into account the stories of vulnerable and isolated people whose relatives want access to their wealth and who see in their parent's painless death an opportunity. It must reckon with the vulnerability to emotional manipulation of people who do not want to be a trouble to others and to the misrepresentation of their desires by relatives with a financial interest.

People who freely want to end their lives and people beset by others who want their lives ended are minorities in society. But the libertarian argument that anyone who wishes should be able legally to have access to euthanasia needs to grapple with the probability
that in some cases the wish will not be their own.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of *Eureka Street*.
Losing and finding Dad in dementia

CREATIVE

Julie Guirgis

It's nearly 6pm; I'm winding down from a day's work and thinking about preparing dinner. Then Dad appears in the kitchen doorway and asks 'Am I going out today?'

He can no longer tell the time. For him, 6pm could be 6am in the morning. 'The day is over, it's night time,' I say. 'Look outside.' I don't shout, but there's an edge to my voice. As soon as I've spoken I regret it.

Sometimes I wipe away a tear and vow to do better. But five minutes later, when he again asks 'Am I going out today?' I know I'm probably not going to succeed.

One day I walked past the bathroom and noticed a pale yellow puddle with an odour worse than an unflushed toilet. I cringed at the putrid stench, with the realisation that I had to wash urine off the floor. In that moment my life felt insignificant. Freedom, once as natural to me as breathing, is now competing with a barrage of demands.

A week later I was lounging on the bed reading, when Dad abruptly banged on the door and yelled, 'Where's Anthony?' Anthony is my intellectually handicapped brother. 'He's at the day program Dad.' He repeated the question, only this time louder: 'Where's Anthony?' I felt frustration surge through my chest and spill out my mouth. 'He's at school, Dad,' I said, louder now, too.

One minute lapsed before he repeated the question a third time. At this point I could no longer mask my rage. 'Are you dumb?' I asked, overemphasising each word. Although
oblivious to the insult, he was aware of my anger, and made his anger known by banging on the door even louder.

Then he yelled out yet again, 'Where's Anthony?', pounding on the door so brashly that it sounded like a gun in a Mad Max movie. Without a bulletproof vest to protect me I felt the metal penetrate my skin. I laid there immobilised, and let out an unfamiliar scream before I burst into tears.

"'They are going to kill me if I go outside,' he cried. He became so paranoid that he thought the fridge door was a point of entry for these imaginary perpetrators."

Not long after the incident in my bedroom Dad displayed more concerning behaviour. The ugly side of dementia had once again raised havoc in his tormented head. 'They are going to kill me if I go outside,' he cried with the helplessness of a child.

His terror-filled eyes stood out against his frail, distraught face while his breath came out in ragged gasps. He became so paranoid that he thought the fridge door was a point of entry for these imaginary perpetrators. When I would open the fridge he would scream 'Shut the door,' slamming it with such force that it nearly crushed me.

*****

Dad's illness sometimes causes ambiguous loss. It is unclear, has no resolution or closure. He is like someone I don't know anymore; he is gone-but-still-there. This leads to complicated grief. I search for Dad's familiar face, but even that has changed. His eyes that once shone are glazed with confusion and fear. I barely see a glimpse of him. I can't look at him without seeing a fading picture of who he used to be, and speak of him in the past tense.

When I reflect on who he was before, it helps me separate him from the illness. I gaze lovingly at the photos of him resting on the mantelpiece. I see a jovial man with a warm smile, who loves his family more than life itself. My impatience softens. I press the photo against my chest, closing my eyes and remembering the magical moments. Days of going to the beach, soaking the sun and fresh air, frolicking in the sand. Calmness comes over me, remembering a time when I felt safe and at peace.

Dementia can be spiteful and cruel, travelling with its hideous companions, delusions and aggression. It is an impostor trying to steal Dad away. When I am feeling strong I can push it out of the way, to find remnants of Dad. On other days I can succumb. These are the days I would gladly hand him over to someone else. Even for a few hours. Nothing prepared me for the labour of love needed to care for him. Not only did it change his personality, it changed me into a person I no longer liked.

I never envisaged it would turn out this way. Nevertheless I’ve taken over the reins, although they were shaking in my hands. Despite the sadness and difficulties that go with dementia, I see the paradox. I’m able to experience all the different parts of him; the vulnerable side, the childlike side, and the fighter in him. I have learned to go into
his world instead of expecting him to come into mine.

Julie Guirgis is an international freelance writer residing in Sydney Australia. Her work has appeared in *Madonna, Majellan, Signs of the Times, Significant Living, Vibrant Life, The Edge, Now What?, Writer's Weekly*, and more.

Main image: [Shutterstock](https://www.eurekastreet.com.au)
Orlando shooting brings hate to its natural conclusion

INTERNATIONAL

Fatima Measham

The tragedy in Orlando, Florida over the weekend is hate brought to its natural conclusion. In the wake of competing truths, this is what emerges and perhaps what matters most, if we are to make our way past.

So far, analyses of what happened at Pulse nightclub - an LGBTQ venue - follows a pattern made familiar in recent years.

The gunman Omar Mateen, for instance, is described as having been unstable and aggressive. The upshot being that the violence bears no further explanation than individual choice, a flaw in character.

It is an explanation that withers wretchedly against the incandescence of 300 lives, of which 49 were extinguished and 53 wounded.

It is also inadequate against a host of other elements: the ideologies internalised by the perpetrator (including notions of masculinity), the circumstances in which he was able to access assault rifles, biases that are now heightened by the violence, the temperature of political responses, law enforcement accountability, and public perceptions of global threat.

At the epicentre of all this is a place where young, queer men and women had felt safe and free to be themselves. It was a Latino-themed night, drawing many whose families had moved north for a better life. The nightclub itself was named by its co-founder for
her brother, who had died of AIDS in 1991. Pulse, for the heart that beats on.

It lies arrested at the intersection of the hatreds that continue to grip western societies. The dead are almost all black, brown, gay and working class. The gunman bears a Muslim name. Based on comments from his ex-wife, he harboured contempt for women - a trait he shares with lone-actor shooters such as Anders Breivik (Utøya) and Elliot Rodger (Isla Vista).

If, as Dr Cornel West has often said, justice is what love looks like in public, then injustice must be what hate looks like, and there is perhaps no greater injustice than murder. Mass murder is hatred realised in full grotesque proportion.

"When we adopt discriminatory language and policy, we shift further toward the prospect of real violence."

What this means is that the little things we do to validate hatred are not inconsequential.

When gays and lesbians are spoken of as if they are sub-human, when their relationships do not bear equality before the law, when their parenting or teaching is described as child abuse, when their murderers can lodge a defence based on 'provocation', when their presence is policed (all the way to the toilet in the US), then their safety is rendered at particular risk. Society is held together or comes undone through the permissions that we give each other. These permissions lie along a continuum, from embracing difference to rigid hostility. When we adopt discriminatory language and policy, we shift further and further toward the prospect of real violence.

The response from the global LGBTQ community to the violence in Orlando has something to teach us in this regard, though it is a lesson that has come at unbearably painful cost. As public figures latched onto Omar Mateen's (speculated) ethno-religious motives, the pushback was unambiguous. In a widely circulated Facebook post, writer and activist Nic Holas seethes: 'I'm angry at the conservatives who bully and lobby to make our lives worse, who today will use the dead bodies of my queer siblings and their friends to try and make me hate Muslims.'

Comedian Rebecca Shaw reinforced this sentiment in an SBS article: 'If you are someone who has argued against our humanity, who has used hateful rhetoric, who has fought actively against our rights - you do not get to use us now, pretending to care for us and love us, wielding us like a hammer that you can use to nail an agenda against people of a different faith. You are disingenuous, and we see you. We remember the damage that has been caused to us, the deaths that are on the hands of people of all sorts of religions. You do not get to use us this way.'

In the harsh aftermath of Orlando, it is clear that love does not always win despite what rainbow-flagged advocates might say, and it can be hard to struggle on amid the erasure of queer lives. But at the very least it shouldn't be so easy for hate to prevail.

'You do not get to use us this way.' If only this could become our standard response every time public figures look to cultivate animosity, fear and resentment.
Fatima Measham is a *Eureka Street* consulting editor. She tweets [@foomeister](https://twitter.com/foomeister) and blogs at [This is Complicated](http://thisiscomplicated.com.au).

Cartoon by Fiona Katauskas
How financial markets are stymying climate action

ECONOMICS

David James

There is little doubt that the means to dramatically reduce the amount of pollution produced by developed economies is already theoretically available. It is perfectly possible to redesign industrial systems so that they do not pollute and do not consume finite resources at a rate that is unsustainable.

But it requires a radical shift - and the biggest barrier to that shift occurring, the financial markets, is barely even mentioned in discussions of the challenge.

One of the ironies of humanity's post-industrial predicament is that many of the great triumphs of the industrial era, such as centralised power grids, are now the cause of our problems.

Instead, the world is relying on changes to slowly bubble up, and there are signs that a turning point has been reached, especially with fossil fuels. The world's largest coal producer, Peabody, has filed for bankruptcy.

Coal fired power plants are increasingly 'out of the money'. China has suspended new coal power plant approvals. Saudi Arabia is planning to sell five per cent of its state oil company Aramco to create a $US2 trillion sovereign wealth fund that can help the country prepare for the post fossil fuel era.

Bloomberg's 2015 New Energy Outlook report forecasts there will be investment of $8 trillion in renewables by 2024. By that date, 60 per cent of world energy will come from zero emission technology (although there will be enough legacy fossil fuel plants and investment in new coal-fired capacity in developing countries to ensure that global
carbon dioxide emissions continue rising until 2029).

The likelihood, however, is that much of this adaptation will be too slow to address the systemic challenges. Worse, the politics of environmentalism is too often based on ignorance of how economies and financial markets work.

For example, we do not need less economic growth. Growth is simply the rate of transactions, the movement of money. What is required is less consumption of resources and despoliation of the environment. Transactions can increase without greater consumption or such despoliation occurring.

"There is no prospect that banks will lend for innovative ways of reconfiguring our industrial systems. Indeed, they would laugh at the very idea."

Indeed, that is exactly what is happening. Financial services, for example, create 'economic growth' but they are typically the shifting of minute pieces of data that consume almost no resources.

Another commonly cited solution, that people need to stop having babies, is also false. In fact, that has already occurred and yet we still have growing pollution problems. The global fertility rate has halved from its level in the 1950s: from five to about 2.3. It is projected to be at replacement rate by the middle of the century.

It is also not true that 'market based' solutions, such as Emission Trading Schemes, are the solution. In fact, as demonstrated in Europe, ETSs do not have a good track record in reducing consumption at all.

A fourth commonly cited solution is to appeal for government action. Government fiat can help shape what companies do and prevent some of the worst excesses, but governments in the developed world, even with the best will in the world, simply do not have the money to instigate the kind of changes needed. They are all broke. And the one government that is not broke, China, has disappointingly not been a leader in establishing post-industrial, non-polluting cities, despite having the world's largest pool of highly trained engineers.

What is required is a change to our financial markets. The greatest point of resistance to genuine change is how banks, and to a lesser extent stock markets, allocate capital. As Lord Adair Turner, the former head of the United Kingdom's Financial Services Authority points out, only 15 per cent of bank lending funds new capital and investment. Of that, only a tiny proportion will be directed at the kind of reconfiguring of industrial systems that is required.

The majority of bank lending reinforces the problems of the industrial era. Eighty five per cent is directed at real estate investment and consumption. There is no prospect that banks will lend for innovative ways of reconfiguring our industrial systems. Indeed, they would laugh at the very idea - and then ask for any lending to be secured against land assets.

Neither are big corporations much use. They are increasingly hoarding cash, using it to buy back their own shares. And in any case big businesses are notoriously poor at innovating and changing direction. Once they have developed commercial habits, they
remain rusted on, even with the best intentions. Oil companies, for example, may talk about becoming more invested in renewables, but they will inevitably all rise and fall in line with the consumption of oil.

Governments, whether because they were fooled or cynical, have, citing the oxymoron of 'financial de-regulation', ceded power to private banks, almost in totality. Those banks are now acting as parasites on much of the world economy, paralysing the host. And a paralysed host cannot change. If humans are to adapt to the challenges of the post-industrial world, the first place to look is the financial system that they have created, and change what it does.

David James is the managing editor of businessadvantagepng.com
Orlando

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas
Social order of wallabies

CREATIVE

Chris Wallace-Crabbe

Demurely, Bruny

Brunette or shocking white, these wallabies have their own special nook nearby, under that blackwood.
Why just there,
I ask myself: no particular foliage has given a meaning to the spot.

Something about bone-dry shadow under those boughs appears to murmur clan or family. Yes, I know that sounds kind of patronising, but when these animals go through their routines we can see a social order clear as day.

First, and utterly visible, there's the milkwhite mother with joey in pouch, moth-brown in hue, as are all the rest of this little clan, one of them plainly a mum too, with her teenager.

Some littoral nights, three tidy wallabies sleep beside Blanche under the darksome tree, loitering there - if we don't jerk into view. Suddenness sends them bounding off downhill, except for the white one. Yes, she's at home.

You could say she's got the game by the balls, a calming mother, white as vanilla snow.

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Chris Wallace-Crabbe is an Australian poet and emeritus professor in the Australian Centre, University of Melbourne.
Prognosis negative as election health debate stagnates

AUSTRALIA

Melissa Sweet

As I think about the critical health issues that should be dominating policy and public debate as we approach the federal election, a photograph from Canada keeps recurring in my mind’s eye.

It was taken by photojournalist Mark Blinch on 7 May, and shows a huge storm of fire and dark smoke billowing behind a solitary vehicle on the highway near Fort McMurray, Alberta.

The apocalyptic image speaks powerfully to the vulnerability of humanity as extreme weather events become ever more common - as people now are experiencing right around the globe, from Paris to Texas to Tasmania, among other places.

It also encapsulates why so much of our public dialogue around health and health policy - particularly during elections - is deeply unhealthy, undermining the likelihood of current and future generations experiencing good health.

When politicians and journalists speak about ‘health’ in an election context, they invariably are referring to healthcare, and usually hospitals at that.

However, the health of individuals and communities is the result of many factors, of which access to healthcare is just one determinant. When we focus so much on healthcare, we limit the possibilities for addressing some of those wider determinants.

Evidence suggests that healthcare services contribute somewhere around 20 per cent to overall health, while broader social and economic factors account for most of the rest, according to Professor Fran Baum, Director of the Southgate Institute of Health, Society and Equity at Flinders University.

She made this observation in the context of a recent submission urging the Medical Research Future Fund to take a broader focus in funding research than the fund’s name suggests is likely. The submission highlights the importance to health of factors such as income and wealth distribution and the extent of publicly provided health, education and welfare services.

"I’d vote ONE for a party promising to appoint a minister with the power to work across
portfolios, ensuring that the health impacts of wider policies are routinely assessed."

Baum states: 'While it seems that finding cures for diseases would make the biggest contribution to promoting health, this isn't the case. Introducing preventive measures which make small changes in the non-medical risk across a whole population is much more effective at creating a healthier population.'

Meanwhile, climate change - the defining issue for public health this century, according to the World Health Organization's outgoing director general Dr Margaret Chan - barely figures in election health debate. Perhaps this is not surprising, given how little health policy work has been done in this area.

Fiona Armstrong, executive director of the Climate and Health Alliance, says: 'In places like the United States there is longterm and detailed plans and preparation underway to support the health care sector and protect people's health from the adverse effects of climate change. Yet in Australia there is a significant lack of policy direction and leadership from most political parties.'

Over at Croakey.org, the social journalism project for health of which I am founding editor, we have been running a hashtag project - #healthelection16 - to try and inject some of these wider health considerations into election debate. Early in the campaign, I nominated my five priorities for #healthelection16 as: climate change; human rights; healthy, safe environments; action on the social determinants of health; and equitable access to healthcare, particularly primary healthcare. Addressing these five priorities has the potential to help reduce health inequities, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

At last count, more than 2500 participants have engaged in #healthelection16. But this is like a pimple on an elephant compared to what is needed to recast our health narratives, so that they promote rather than undermine community health. Turning the ship around is a monumental effort given all the structures and systems and careers invested in the status quo. One way forward would be for government structures to empower health in all policies (HiAP) approaches. WHO has some suggestions for how to do this.

Personally, I’d vote ONE for a party promising to appoint a HiAP minister with the power to work across portfolios, ensuring that the health impacts of wider policies are routinely assessed and incorporated into decision-making processes. The ministers for Health Care and for Population Health would report to this minister. The HiAP minister might take up John Hewson’s recent suggestion to introduce health equity assessments, to assess whether policies are likely to exacerbate health disparities. Applying this lens to policy - in health and other portfolios - would likely produce some very different policy debates to those we now endure.

None of this is to say that equitable access to safe, quality healthcare is not important. Of course it is, and cuts since the 2013 election have been destructive at so many levels. The respective parties should be judged on their healthcare histories as much as their election promises. But we are all, metaphorically, in that photo from Canada, looking very vulnerable in the face of looming disasters.

On 20 June, the Climate and Health Alliance plans to release a scorecard of the political parties' commitment to issues such as the creation of a national climate and health strategy (yes, believe it or not, we don't have one), greenhouse gas emissions reduction
targets, phasing out of coal and unconventional gas mining, and a national moratorium of new mines.

We should read the scorecard closely.

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Original artwork by Chris Johnston
The bleak ballad of Wilson Parking

CREATIVE

Ellena Savage

I have to take my contorted body into town for an early osteo appointment, but it's winter so I sleep through my alarm, so I'm running late, so my friend and I drive, so instead of finding street parking and walking the extra mile, we park in a commercial parking lot right round the corner from the clinic - and there's an early bird deal if you get in before 9.30am!
The osteo tells me what I already know, that I need to not spend ten hours in a row at the computer, that I need to stretch more, massage my muscles more, text less. I leave feeling better but also more or less the same, and I go back to the car so I can start my work day. When my friend and I get to the payment station of the car park, it says we owe 70 bucks, which can't be right because we got the early bird special which was a quarter of that, so, nah.

We call the parking lot people and say we can't pay $70 for a couple of hours' parking, that can't be right, and she says look at the fine print, it clearly states that the early bird deal only applies if you leave the car park after 3pm. It's still 11, and soon our parking fee will go up to 80 bucks, which better resembles a parking fine, and there it is in the fine print which it didn't occur to us to read when we saw the early bird rate advertised big and bright.

My friend says something vaguely threatening about the 'consumer watchdog' to the parking lot person, and I say 'look, we don't have the money right now,' which is true in the sense that, while I haven't checked my account, I'm fairly certain there's no spare $70 this week.

The person on the intercom says that for an extra $5 she can text me an invoice, but the osteo said I have to stop texting so much, and I am fairly certain there will never be a spare $70 to pay Wilson Parking, Wilson Parking being a subsidiary of a subcontractor of Transfield Services, which runs security at Nauru and Manus Island, so I grow petulant and say I'll wait til 3pm.

I can work anywhere, I think. What difference does it make that I have only paper and a pen, no computer, no thesis to work on, that it's raining so much that every space in the city feels as though it's contained within a glass box ricocheting with metallic noise.

From my moral high ground I will spend my money at an independent café; to eat an overpriced and fairly average tomato soup, rather than fund the torture of innocents trapped on tropical islands.
Such is the spectacle of a spiral of no control. The salvific instinct kicks in.

"Where I melt with frustration at a day taken out of my control, the corporation shows no such cracks. It is rational and utterly inhuman, and in contrast, I'm a hot mess."

The work I set out to do begins with good intentions, and devolves into pages of hand-written complaints.

Complaints accumulated over the past fortnight, wherein an artist friend was thrown under the bus for protesting her municipal government's suspension of democracy (and when I wrote a line of support for her on twitter I too received threats of sexual assault and was told I belonged in jail). Complaints about the toxic inertia of watching the reef turn to rot. Complaints about the ideological cuts to the arts that state loud and clear that the winner in our society is Wilson Parking and not the humans that burrow underground for the privilege of living in an affluent city, not a living body of natural splendour, not the artists who transform drudgerous days into meaningful ones.

In the solitude of writing, or thinking, one is never solitary: there's a rich entanglement of voices, some a whisper and others a scalding, they build and disrupt a train of thought until the thought itself is commanded by other voices. While I write, these voices spiral violently. Conversely, the unnamed and unnameable enemy of this human activity is the faceless entity 'Wilson Parking' stands in for: one that is purely accumulative and unperturbed by the movement of human tempers. No corporation navigates these shrill internal monologues.

'The corporation' of course sounds like a John Grisham-level conspiracy, but what it is, is the inverse of human flailing. Where I melt with frustration at a day taken out of my control, the corporation shows no such cracks. It doesn't choose between petty modes of individual consumption, it doesn't make exceptions; it drives the insistence that endless earning and endless purchasing is necessary. It doesn't ask whether it's right to profit from human rights violations, it accepts the violence of things and turns this into a managerial activity. It is rational and utterly inhuman, and in contrast, I'm a hot mess.

So we pack away our books, I wrap my scarf round my hair, and we walk through human traffic, and rain, for a couple hours. I collide with other bodies, dodge cars and homeless people sleeping and instructions to purchase the best ever deals. My friend and I hatch plans for bringing down Wilson Parking, but what we are doing, really, is longing for a new cosmopolis.

Ellena Savage is Editor at The Lifted Brow, and is undertaking a PhD in creative writing at Monash University.

Main image: Shutterstock
The moral conundrum of casting a vote on 2 July

AUSTRALIA

Frank Brennan

According to the latest Newspoll, 15 per cent of voters are planning to vote for the minor parties or for an independent candidate. Support for the Greens is running at ten per cent. The leaders of the major parties are worried.

Malcolm Turnbull is warning, 'A vote for the Greens, independents, risks the chaos and instability that we saw in the years of the Julia Gillard government. The only way to be sure that there will be a stable federal government commitment to a national economic plan that will deliver stronger economic growth and more and better jobs is to vote for the Coalition.'

The changes to the Senate voting system made just before the election and the double dissolution of the Parliament have been aimed at reducing the political influence of independents and the minor parties. Understandably, the government is arguing that the difficult economic times ahead will require government to make and implement difficult decisions, and this in turn will require the Senate not to be dysfunctional or unduly obstructionist.

But our government ministers are not just economic managers, and our parliament does not concern itself only with taxation and economic development.

Sadly, the major political parties have forfeited any claim to govern in their own right because they have caused such disillusionment among so many voters about other policy issues with strong moral overtones. Justifiably many voters think they could not trust the Coalition or the Labor Party to implement a fair and coherent asylum and refugee policy
or to address the challenge of climate change with the required urgency.

Any voter impressed with Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si' or inspired by his visits to asylum seekers on the islands of Lampedusa and Lesbos could not blithely vote for either of the major parties, without first determining how to place some continuing political and moral pressure on them.

Consider the voter of good conscience who is committed to equity, jobs and growth for all Australians, but who is also concerned about the situation of the asylum seekers and proven refugees being held on Nauru and Manus Island.

Neither the Labor Party nor the Coalition during this election campaign is prepared to suggest any realistic solution. They are not prepared to welcome, accept or even discuss New Zealand's offer to take up to 150 refugees a year from these places. The major parties have made a judgment about the majority of voters. They think most voters are so indifferent to these voiceless and faceless victims of Australia's tough border protection policy that it is best to offer no solution whatever to their plight.

"Being misty eyed can be a problem for the clear sighted, but it's better than being willfully blind as both Turnbull and Bill Shorten are being on this issue."

The voter of good conscience could decide that no party deserves to govern in their own right if they are not prepared to offer any solution to this problem which Australia created and which remains in part our responsibility. Malcolm Turnbull says we can't afford to be misty-eyed about these people being held on Nauru and Manus Island. Being misty eyed can be a problem for the clear sighted, but it's better than being willfully blind as both Turnbull and Bill Shorten are being on this issue.

The Australian Catholic Bishops have urged voters to consider 'a vote for the voiceless'. They say they have issued their very modest election manifesto 'not in order to push an ideological line or simply to defend the Church's interests but to give a voice to the voiceless and make their faces seen'. The first of the voiceless and faceless groups commended for our attention by the bishops are 'refugees and asylum seekers who are often seen as a problem to be solved rather than as human beings in need of our help'.

Returning to work after his five-month absence due to illness, Archbishop Anthony Fisher was interviewed by Tess Livingstone, Cardinal Pell's erstwhile biographer. She reported in The Australian that Fisher 'was uncomfortable with aspects of the major parties' asylum seeker policies, especially offshore detention'. He did not endorse the approach of any particular party or politician. He did take 'aim at the Greens' support for the removal of religious "exemptions" to anti-discrimination laws'.

But Fisher did not go anywhere near as far as his predecessor Pell who urged voters in 2010 'to examine the policies of the Greens on their website and judge for themselves how thoroughly anti-Christian they are'. Some of the Greens' policies are far more Christian than those of the major parties. But then again, they can afford to be, because they are not seeking to form government in our increasingly secular pluralist democracy.

"Exposing legislation to open scrutiny in a parliament not controlled by the government and requiring the government to barter economic gains for the moral entitlements of the
voiceless will be the only way to obtain morally sound laws and policies."

A voter wanting one of the major parties to form government while being mistrustful of their capacity to make a moral decision about the plight of asylum seekers would be very sensible to cast a vote in such a way as to ensure that the new government does not govern in its own right by being assured automatic passage of all its legislation through both houses of parliament once the legislation has been approved by the party room. The party rooms of the major parties are now prejudiced closed chambers when it comes to the interests of the voiceless.

Exposing legislation to open scrutiny in a parliament not controlled by the government and requiring the government to barter economic gains for the moral entitlements of the voiceless will be the only way to obtain morally sound laws and policies. Parliamentary pressure needs to be placed on any new government wanting to provide equity, jobs and growth, so that it will also do more to resolve the plight of asylum seekers and to be more attentive to the urgent requirements of the environment subject to the depredations of climate change.

None of the parties likely to form government after the election has an asylum policy which is acceptable. I urge people of goodwill when casting their vote to consider the desirability of a parliament which is not readily controlled by the government of the day, and which therefore might make the new government enact a more humane policy. I encourage people to cast a vote for a member or senators (whether members of the major parties or not) who have a commitment to reviewing the existing government policy, providing a more humane outcome both for those presently being held on Nauru and Manus Island as well as for those waiting in the Australian community without adequate work and welfare rights.

I would hope that we could all then start the long term cooperative work needed to increase our humanitarian migration quota and to develop a regional solution with neighbouring countries assisted by the good offices of UNHCR, while accepting even with a heavy heart and conscientious reservation that the boats will be stopped. We need to negotiate the ethical dividend for stopping the boats. I am not opposed to equity, jobs and growth for all Australians. But I think that is only part the story, and I want my vote to count in relation to the whole story of Australia’s place in the world.

For starters, I want any new Australian government to empty the camps on Nauru and Manus Island in a timely and dignified manner. And I know a vote straight down the ticket for Turnbull or Shorten won’t do that.

Frank Brennan SJ is professor of law at Australian Catholic University and adjunct professor at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. He was recently interviewed, alongside Amanda Vanstone, on the question of whether ‘Australia’s asylum seeker policy too harsh too soft or have we got it right’, by the ABC’s Emma Alberici.
Angst and insecurity in public school battle of wills

REVIEWS

Tim Kroenert

Is This the Real World (MA). Director: Martin McKenna. Starring: Sean Keenan, Greg Stone, Julia Blake, Charlotte Best, Susie Porter, Matt Colwell. 88 minutes

This one seems to be straight out of the First Time Filmmaker's Playbook (Australia Edition): 1: Take an introverted adolescent protagonist. 2: Wrap him in angst. 3: Give him a troubled past that sets him at odds with his natural environment. 4: Send him off on the path to catharsis, via gauntlets of trauma. 5: Add some bravura stylistic flourishes and a melancholic tone. 6: Call it art.

Is This the Real World, TV screenwriter McKenna's big-screen debut, is the second first-time feature of this ilk to arrive this month - the other being Grant Scicluna's rather more interesting Downriver. Scicluna's film, about a young man coming to terms with a crime he committed as a child, is steeped in themes of sin and redemption, and draws reams of symbolic meaning from its rural setting.

McKenna's film doesn't achieve the same levels of gravitas, some exceptional performances and a handful of superbly executed scenes aside. Its protagonist Mark (Keenan) is a prototypical kid in crisis; the middle child of a single mother (Porter), whose older brother (Colwell) is an ex-con, and who himself has been kicked out of the private school to which he had earned a scholarship.
This last fact brings him into the orbit of Mr Rickard (Stone), vice-principal of the public school at which Mark winds up. Rickard claims the credit for having lifting the status of the once struggling school, and identifies in the smart but troubled Mark both the potential to do well and a danger to his own legacy. From day one, Rickard takes a special interest in this enigmatic new student.

"It is only through her small revelations that we glimpse a man who failed as a husband and is failing as a father."

Mark, meanwhile, sees in Rickard a misguided do-gooer and, later, something a little more dangerous: an ambitious man whose ego is the flipside of insecurity. A battle of wills commences. The verbal and psychological power games the two men play are the richest vein of dramatic and thematic tension the film contains, executed with restraint and subtlety by Kennan and Stone.

It is regrettable that Rickard's life outside school is not explored more fully. Mark pursues a relationship with Rickard's daughter Kim (Best), and it is only through her small revelations that we glimpse a man who failed as a husband and is failing as a father. Later Rickard is the perpetrator of the film's most shocking act, which, due to the thinness of the characterisation, is also its most farfetched.

McKenna is clearly interested in exploring constructions of masculinity, both in Mark and in Rickard, but often these come across either as too clever or not properly thought through. Scenes where Mark allows himself to be repeatedly knocked to the ground during a schoolyard football scrap, and arranges for his brother to take him and a few school bullies for a joyride, don't ring true.

Likewise, the mirroring of Mark's emotional state - the result, in large part, of tensions and hardships in his home life - with the progress of the illness of a family pet, turns out to be laughably heavy-handed. More effective are the elegiac, dreamlike sequences of Mark practicing BMX tricks in a greylit aqueduct; where, in solitude, he seeks to embody
the grace that has eluded him in life.

Tim Kroenert is acting editor of *Eureka Street*. 
What lies beneath election campaign ethical silences

AUSTRALIA

Andrew Hamilton

Election times are full of sound and fury, much of it broadcast on a loop. But they are also marked by silences. Like the still water in the surf that indicates a rip, these silences indicate concealed perils in society.

In this election campaign two striking examples are the treatment of Indigenous Australians and of people who have sought protection from persecution in Australia.

Of course asylum seekers and young Indigenous people are spoken about, often noisily, by politicians, but always as the object of policy, not as people whose lives have been blighted by policy. The human beings who suffer are shrouded in silence. This silence is an ethical silence that covers people whom we want to keep out of mind.

Ethical silence allows people to be reduced to problems to which a practical solution is sought. Human beings are seen as means to be used as part of that solution.

From this perspective any conversation that focuses on human values, and so raises matters of conscience, is obstructive. It stands in the way of practical courses of action
and makes more difficult their implementation. So ethical silence may be a sign of pressure to be silent, and certainly presages attempts to enforce silence.

In this election campaign the dynamic is clear in the pressure placed on candidates to conceal their ethical difficulties with Australia's treatment of asylum seekers, and in the criticism of their parties for choosing as candidates people who differ with party policy.

Such attitudes suggest that there is no room in parties for conscientious disagreement. Party representatives are to be no more than loudspeakers that amplify another's voice. Anyone who adopts well thought out ethical positions will not be welcome unless they match the party line. And free votes on conscience matters will be denied in parliament.

It is a short step from imposing silence by party discipline to impose it by legislation. So some advocates of same sex marriage seek to make anti-discrimination laws prevent groups that are in principle opposed to same sex marriage from making their case in public. The proposal to force all marriage celebrants to conduct same sex marriages if asked would have the same effect.

"Tolerating zones of ethical silence creates a culture in which other groups will be more vulnerable to exclusion and defenceless against it."

The government have gone further in imposing a canopy of silence over the treatment of people who seek protection. It prohibits under severe penalties doctors and other health professionals from bringing into the open any criminal that they see in the course of their work. Here the effect of imposed silence is not simply to override the conscience of those affected by the law, but also to make the places where they work zones of ethical silence.

The consequences for society of tolerating zones of ethical silence are diffuse but considerable. It creates a culture in which other groups will be more vulnerable to exclusion and defenceless against it. Silence insinuates itself throughout society.

When views based on the welfare of human beings are silenced in political parties, too, the range of people welcomed there will become narrower. As divergent views are no longer heard, the party will quickly become out of touch with the larger community. It will also lose vitality, because it will deprive itself of precisely the people with the ethical passion needed to provide energy and to attract future leaders. When conversation within the party is restricted to the convinced talking to the convinced, its members will find it impossible to recognise the need for change in order to address the challenges posed by a changing society and world.

When ethical silence festers in society, people lose faith in political parties and public institutions. They recognise that these bodies do not understand their predicaments, and will not act on their behalf. People become alienated from public life, and become ready to trust people who can mimic ethical passion even when it endorses the most unethical and contradictory courses of action. Ethical silence eventually gives way to unethical cacophony.

We are fortunate in Australia that in this election we do not have to envisage such a dystopia. But if elections are times to submit the body politic to a medical check up, it will reveal disquieting symptoms of ethical silence chosen, pressured and legislated. The
evidence is there to be seen in its victims.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of *Eureka Street*. 
'Elitist' democracy not the answer to Trumpism

AUSTRALIA

Jeff Sparrow

In an essay for New York Magazine, the US commentator Andrew Sullivan voices an argument about Donald Trump at which other writers have preferred merely to hint.

Trump's rise, he says, exposes US politics as insufficiently elitist. Or, as the headline puts it, 'democracies end when they are too democratic'.

Much of what Sullivan says about the man now confirmed as the Republican candidate will seem familiar. Trump's a neo-fascist demagogue, a racist and an aspiring tyrant. 'In terms of our liberal democracy and constitutional order,' Sullivan argues, 'Trump is an extinction-level event.'

That's why, he says, the Trump ascendancy demonstrates the problem with the US system. Contemporary society has levelled hierarchies so effectively that America lacks the mechanisms to protect itself from Trump-style candidates.

Once, voting itself was restricted. Even when the franchise expanded, viable candidates still came from a small pool containing only those who had demonstrated various sorts of competencies. Now, though, 'that elitist sorting mechanism' has collapsed.

The rise of the internet has, Sullivan argues, 'given everyone a platform' and, as a result: 'We have lost authoritative sources for even a common set of facts. And without such common empirical ground, the emotional component of politics becomes inflamed and reason retreats even further. The more emotive the candidate, the more supporters he or
she will get.'

The way thus becomes clear for a Trump, a man, Sullivan says, using crass demagoguery to establish dictatorial power. Hence the essay's conclusion: 'It seems shocking to argue that we need elites in this democratic age - especially with vast inequalities of wealth and elite failures all around us. But we need them precisely to protect this precious democracy from its own destabilising excesses.'

But if the argument's shocking, it's only because of the bluntness with which Sullivan spells it out. The underlying sentiment's been with us ever since the Trump candidature gathered momentum, with repeated calls for him to be somehow excluded from the race.

"What makes these efforts so striking is that they're less motivated by a fear of Trump's politics than by a fear of his supporters."

For a long time, the most oft-touted mechanism involved a so-called 'contested convention', in which, if the Donald failed to achieve a majority of delegates, those gathered at the Republican Convention could award the nomination to someone else - even if Trump was clearly the most popular candidate.

As Vox explains, at a brokered convention, 'the choice would effectively be taken out of the hands of the 'people' and handed over to a select group: the delegates.' The plan was bolstered by an unprecedented intervention from right-wing billionaires, who used their resources to promote the selection of anti-Trump delegates. The other candidates tried (without a great deal of success) to seal #neverTrump alliances while Republican insiders discussed backing a third party candidate, a scheme that's still supposedly afoot. There was even muttering about the 'nuclear option', in which a Trump majority could be circumvented by the delegates voting to retrospectively change the rules.

What makes these efforts so striking is that they're less motivated by a fear of Trump's politics than by a fear of his supporters. Thus, the #neverTrump movement briefly championed Ted Cruz, who, at one point, seemed capable of stopping the billionaire. Cruz's positions are, if anything, much more extreme than Trump's (whom he repeatedly attacked for not being a 'true conservative'). He's a religious fanatic, who once attended a conference where speakers urged the death penalty for homosexuality. Where Trump promises to reduce tax, Cruz advocated the abolition of the IRS and the implementation of a ten per cent flat tax. As Amanda Marcotte points out, on immigration, Cruz 'not only has signed off on everything Trump wants to do, including mass deportation and ending birthright citizenship, but he goes a step further', by wanting to ban legal as well as illegal immigration.

But Cruz was a known quality, a Tea Party conservative willing to work within the Republican structures. Trump, by contrast, drew the bulk of his support from complete outsiders, enthusing previously apathetic voters into movement explicitly hostile to establishment politics. It was that rambunctious populism, much more than any particular policy, that motivated the anti-Trump campaign.

To understand Sullivan's call for a renewed elitism, it's helpful to revisit some old debates.
"Until the 19th century, democracy was mostly a term of approbation. It referred to a particular model of society, one in which the multitude ruled and the wealthy were suppressed."

These days, aside from a few fringe cranks, everyone endorses democracy. As C. Douglas Lummis says, 'The sentence, "I'm for democracy" communicates virtually no information ... The statement is likely to be met with a blank stare or with a puzzled response like, "How nice".'

But the almost universal enthusiasm is actually remarkably recent. Raymond Williams reminds us that, until the 19th century, democracy was mostly a term of approbation. It referred to a particular model of society, one in which the multitude ruled and the wealthy were suppressed: hence, in the revolutionary wave of 1848, the insurgent forces were known simply as 'The Democracy'. Roget's Thesaurus captures something of that usage by retaining 'democrat' as a synonym for 'commoner'.

But that meaning was challenged by a conception of democracy as representative rule on behalf of the masses. Thus, Alexander Hamilton, one of the US founders, insisted that vesting deliberative or judicial powers in the collective body of the people led to 'error, confusion and instability'. Against that, he advocated representative democracy as a kind of check on the multitude, 'where the right of election is well secured and regulated, and the exercise of the legislative executive and judicial authorities is vested in select persons'.

As Williams says, it's from this notion that the dominant modern sense of the term developed. Yet, throughout the 20th century, the old debate continued in a new form, reflected in the differing understandings of democracy in the liberal and socialist traditions. For socialists, democracy meant popular power; for liberals, it meant elections of representatives alongside the conditions that facilitated those elections. 'These two conceptions,' Williams argued, 'in their extreme forms, now confront each other as enemies'.

But that was written in 1976, a time in which the Left retained some of the vigour of the insurgent 60s. Today, the socialist tradition has been erased from public consciousness - and the radical definition of democracy largely forgotten. You can see the consequences in the debate about Trump.

Sullivan explicitly rehearses arguments from centuries earlier. 'To guard our democracy from the tyranny of the majority and the passions of the mob,' he says, '[the Founding Fathers] constructed large, hefty barriers between the popular will and the exercise of power.' With the radical conception of democracy as participation now rarely articulated, Sullivan's able to present the suppression of the mob as innately democratic. And, because many progressives cannot imagine democracy meaning anything other than representation, they're susceptible to arguments about elitism as a democratic value.

"If a grotesque billionaire's managed to present himself as a representative of the excluded and the marginalised, it's only because the Left's ceded that territory for too long."
That's been the problem with so much of the response to Trumpism. In July 2015, for instance, the left-leaning *Huffington Post* editorialised that its Trump coverage would no longer feature under the heading 'Politics'. 'Instead, we will cover his campaign as part of our Entertainment section. Our reason is simple: Trump's campaign is a sideshow. We won't take the bait. If you are interested in what the Donald has to say, you'll find it next to our stories on the Kardashians and *The Bachelorette*.'

The passage reeks of snooty condescension, implying Trump was a sideshow appealing only to rubes and thus of no interest to anyone who mattered.

Obviously, the approach didn't work. But you can see the same methodology in the growing calls for progressives to rally behind Hillary Clinton. She may be a shill for huge corporations; she may be a notorious warmonger; she may have played a huge role in the growth of American's prison-industrial complex, but she's a mainstream politician, the ultimate insider, and thus a better option than Trump.

The problem is that Trump's built his support by positioning himself as the antidote to mainstream political insiders. His campaign taps into the widespread disillusionment with elite politics and those who enforce it. That's why, after every supposed gaffe or stumble, he grows stronger. Trump supporters don't care about traditional politics. They want to see him insult the moderator and throw the debate into chaos.

Will Clinton defeat Trump? Perhaps - but the polls already show him doing far better than anyone expected. More importantly, an electoral loss might mean the end of Donald Trump but it won't destroy Trumpism. The constituency into which the Donald has tapped will almost certainly grow under the administration of a corporate Democrat like Clinton, even if it manifests in a different form. And what then? How much larger and heftier will the barriers against the popular will have to become?

There is, however, an alternative. Rather than trying to crush Trump from above, progressives need to undermine him from below. For if a grotesque billionaire's managed to present himself as a representative of the excluded and the marginalised, it's only because the Left's ceded that territory for too long. The Bernie Sanders campaign showed the enthusiasm that a leftwing populism can generate. If, as seems likely, Sanders will soon bow out, it's even more important to repopularise the old notion of participatory democracy, to argue for a politics in which ordinary people do more than merely vote for one member of the elite or another every four years or so.

Jeff Sparrow is a writer, editor and honorary fellow at Victoria University.
The long and grimy road

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas
Pugilist-poet Ali's race legacy still packs a punch

INTERNATIONAL

Fatima Measham

The contest over Muhammad Ali began even as news spread of his passing.

Amid solemn recollection were the contrarian takes: regarding his name (here and here), the claim that he said far more racist things than Donald Trump, and that his death was being politicised.

Perhaps such contests fit the man. In death as in life, he defies distillation.

Muhammad Ali was a pugilist-poet. He was as intimidating in front of the microphone as he was in the boxing ring. The cadence of his speech, the sting in his rhyme, the lilt in his wit - he delivered knockouts bare-knuckled. His style, according to Rolling Stone, is in the hip-hop DNA.

His legend straddles the violence of his sport and the violence in which he refused to participate. Boxing can be brutal but it has rules and finite duration. In war, there are no rules and no one wins. Ali recognised a larger violence, chose his enemies, and
reimagined bravery.

The attempts to sublimate this legacy - such as comments about him 'transcending' race - resemble the systematic appropriation of Martin Luther King Jr by conservatives.

Dr King is often positioned in polarity against Malcolm X, as a nonviolent pacifist. In truth, both carried radical demands, employed disruptive methods, and were treated as dangerous by authorities. Muhammad Ali was not only their contemporary, but cut through black ideological divides.

Ali was only in his 20s during the civil rights era. He grew up at a time when in many states, blacks were virtually barred from public life. They were forced to enter the rear door of buses and establishments. They could not sit down at certain restaurants or movie theatres. In southern states, voting was made as difficult as possible for them to do.

"The grandson of a slave, his career ascending at time when blacks were being shot in their struggle for non-discrimination, he never let white America forget that he was black and Muslim."

Then, and perhaps even now, sport was one of few areas in which a black man could be seen to participate and succeed. Ali breached the terms of that success. He wasn't grateful. He wasn't apologetic. He was loud and confrontational. The grandson of a slave, his career ascending at time when blacks were being shot in their struggle for non-discrimination, he never let white America forget that he was black and Muslim. 'I am America,' he declared. 'I am the part you won't recognise. But get used to me. Black, confident, cocky. My name, not yours. My religion, not yours. My goals, my own.' He would not be owned. He wasn't for taming.

His words were largely addressed to a white audience, but a black audience heard them, too. The late Lawrence Guyot, a prominent Mississippi activist, described the effect: 'We were down there in these small, hot, dusty towns in an atmosphere thick with fear, trying to organise folk whose grandparents were slaves. And here was this beautifully arrogant, young man who made us proud to be us and proud to fight for our rights.'

As Dave Zirin wrote recently in The Nation: 'What Muhammad Ali did - in a culture that worships sports and violence as well as a culture that idolises black athletes while criminalising black skin - was redefine what it meant to be tough and collectivise the very idea of courage.' Ali's life was, perhaps above all, about giving others permission to defy.

Later on, he remained engaged with the world through humanitarian and philanthropic work, including helping to secure the release of 15 American prisoners in Iraq in 1990.

Only six years later at the Atlanta Olympics, the world first saw Parkinson's syndrome manifest in his body, cameras catching the tremble in his hands when he lit the flame. The man who once embodied athletic grace and revelled in his vanity, fronted up, shamelessly frail - reimagining again for us what it takes to be brave.

Muhammad Ali was not someone that could be contained, and it is likely a mistake to suppose that death makes him so, when he still has something to say to current
generations who now contend with the challenges of not being white in America.

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No sex please, we're praying

CREATIVE

Rodney Wetherell

Feeling flat

God, I feel flat. 
The scintillations have all shimmered off, 
the fibrillations have decelerated, 
the fabulations gone to spin and drivel. 
My plain is sandy, desert-brown - 
goannas lie in shade of boulders; 
do they live or die? Do I?

I feel God is flat. 
He craves our jubilation - but we miss his: 
celestial festivities have lost their funding, 
concelebrations only at committee stage. 
Heaven's up for lease or purchase, 
the sales pitch unconvincing, 
why bother moving in?

God feels I am flat. 
He knows I've tried his energising programs, 
his wordy Word, still in black and white, 
saw me merely startled by the trumpet voice. 
He can spot apathy a mile off - 
trouble is, he shares it, 
and empathy's no comfort.

God and I are on the couch. 
The finest counsellors have offered help, 
comforters brought rugs and camomile; 
spilling all has left us vacant. 
But if God has lost his touch 
who on earth can counsel him? 
We might as well get used to feeling flat.

Counting my blessings

I count my blessings at the end of day, 
and if I'm short, or void, I do the negatives: 
Lord, I thank you that you held back rain
for Sammy's picnic, and we did not feud -
it's the best that can be said for it.
No suicidal bombings featured in the news;
no scandal rocked the city, not today.

I did not surrender to vainglory, envy, pride,
nothing in that line need be confessed;
I did not pig out on muesli or warm salad,
there was no malice in my talk, or very little -
I may have slipped, in speaking of that dinner
when infidelities were breathlessly revealed -
need I confess, or merely ask indulgence?

No earthquake shook the Philippines,
nor Japan, New Zealand, Mexico;
bushfires did not roar through our brown land,
the sea devoured no beachside mansions.
The nations did not rage together
any more than usual, at least,
whales and rhinos had an easy day.

And you, Lord, did not cast us out
in any obvious way. From your silence
we assume your love and fatherly concern.
At number 12, nothing in fact happened
to disrupt our comfortable ways.
We praise you, Lord, for quiet nights
and days of limited enthusiasm.

**No sex please, we're praying**

In prayer, our minds are sex-free, let us hope;
our thoughts of God do not include the body,
his or ours, svelte or chunky,
ereptile perfume should be undetectable,
ditto the sense of orgiastic writhing
sent down to us from digital porn heaven.

That's hell, in fact - I've been there;
Hieronymus would have drawn it well,
the actors having extra sex organs.
They would not know the gentle joy of prayer,
eyes closed against assault by video game,
ears deaf to aircraft noise and chainsaws.

Should your inner eye pick out an angel,
beautiful, and fixing eyes on you,
or Jesus wearing little but a wisp of cloth
across a gym-toned body streaked with blood,
contact your counsellor, ring that number -
you've wandered to the opposition site.
The best backdrop for prayer is pale blue with dreamy clouds adrift, to music; our spiritual lives can be enacted here. First we adore, prostrate, or say we do - we remain a little vague about the object, know it's in the sky, spelt G-o-d.

We Christians say God came to earth embodied as a village tradesman - was his magnetism wholly spiritual? I doubt it, yet I also doubt he had those college-boy good looks enshrined in calendars and Sunday schools.

The artisan man-god has long departed into fantale realms of gallery kitsch. In prayer, even that goes west, dissolving into vast infinity. An image graven or ungraven has no hope - no need to ban them, we're with God.

When we descend, we'll put on flesh again, give shape and breath to messengers of God, flick through a mag that's all page three, but after we gorge ourselves on meat, 'No sex please, we're praying'.

Rodney Wetherell worked for ABC Radio Drama for many years, and is now a freelance writer. He worships in an Anglican parish in Melbourne.
Remembering forgotten wars as fallen soldiers return

AUSTRALIA

Binoy Kampmark

Thirty-three bodies returned to Australia last Thursday in the country’s largest repatriation of dead servicemen and their dependents, including six children.

They were greeted by a guard of honour as the coffins were led to the hangar.

All of the dead were connected with Australia’s involvement in overseas conflicts which have been archived and, in some cases, forgotten altogether.

In the politics of Australia's short historical memory, a few wars stand out: the baptismal conflict of the First World War with its bloody symbolism, and the exterminating rages of the Second World War which saw a foreign power reach, though not occupy, Australian shores.

Few Australians (and this says as much about school curricula as it does about general discussion on the subject) would know about the at times covert role played by Australian servicemen in the Malaysian-Indonesian conflict between 1962 and 1966; or
the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960).

Most focus on the stained, estranging Vietnam conflict, one deemed ignoble by even some family members of the fallen personnel.

Returning the fallen has been a contentious matter. Only in 1966 was a policy introduced that formally asserted that servicemen killed in foreign theatres (in that case, Vietnam) would be brought back to Australia for burial. Those who perished prior to that date, such as Warrant Officer Kevin Conway, Australia's first combat casualty in Vietnam, were left.

The choice left for families was grim: cough up 500 pounds to have the remains transported back to Australia, the equivalent of half-a-year's salary, or see the bodies buried in the Terendak Military Cemetery in Malaysia. (Singapore's Kranji Cemetery also supplied a resting place.)

"The repatriation offers a chance to reconsider Australia's varied role in foreign conflicts. These have not all been undertaken in the spirit of cold, logical sobriety."

In some cases, the issue has been politicised, with dead soldiers discarded for being the immoral instruments of disputed foreign policy. This is particularly the case in Vietnam.

The return of these servicemen and dependents should constitute far more than a battle over remains. The press have tended to see it in such procedural terms, a dispute over flawed paperwork, bureaucracy and battling the establishment. The Daily Telegraph focused specifically on Vietnam with the headline 'Australian Vietnam War dead finally return home'.

Veterans Affairs Minister Dan Tehan similarly focused on the sore of Vietnam, with the repatriation giving Australians 'a chance as a nation to stop, pause and reflect on the service and sacrifice that our Vietnam veterans made on behalf of our nation'. Such descriptions ignore the extensive role Australian soldiers have played as agents of broader political machinations, often being victims of egregious calculations.

The repatriation should go beyond Tehan's commemorative remit, offering a chance to reconsider Australia's expansive, and varied role in foreign conflicts. These have not all been undertaken in the spirit of cold, logical sobriety, hatched in the strategic boardroom. Men, and in some cases families, were sent to fight foreign conflicts fed by the ideology of each age. If it wasn't the sanctity of White British Empire raging against German Kaiserism, it was the anti-Communist, and more specifically anti-Asian Communist, cause that mattered.

In some cases, Australians performed the euphemistic clean-up roles, mopping up resistance or patrolling tense borders in undeclared conflicts. Three of the returned Australian personnel died in Malaysia having performed their duties guarding the Thai-Malaysian border from Communist incursions during the Malayan Emergency.

Even now, the ideological glasses remain firmly set, with justifications that the deployment was necessary to prevent Malaysia from falling into Communist hands. That conveniently skips over the initial motivations for the mainly Chinese-inspired communist uprising led by the mercurial Chin Peng: to eliminate British colonial influence and assert
greater control over the rival Malays, who tended to occupy government positions.

It is also worth remembering that some caution in rushing Australian personnel into action could be shown. Canberra proved a reluctant supplier of Australian soldiers to the Konfrontasi conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia, refusing initial requests by the British and Malaysian authorities between 1963 and 1964 to send troops to Borneo. On January 1965, Australia relented in sending a battalion.

Today, the United States remains the ideological high priest of Australian foreign policy, encouraging Canberra to be willing to part with soldiers when Washington's interests demand it. Such a policy is naturally sold as being in Australia's best interest, and risks bringing the country into future conflict with such trading powers as China. As always, it is the soldierly class, along with family and the civilians encountering them, who suffer as a consequence. The tactician and policy maker, however capable, stand immune.

Dr Binoy Kampmark is a former Commonwealth Scholar who lectures at RMIT University, Melbourne.
One child held my left pinky

CREATIVE

Brian Doyle

One child held onto my left pinky finger everywhere we went. Never any other finger and never the right pinky but only the left pinky and never my whole hand. My finger misses her hand this morning.

It has been many years since she held my finger. To this day sometimes in the morning when I dress I stare at my left pinky and suddenly I am in the playground, or on the beach, or in a thrumming crowd, and there is a person weighing 40 pounds holding onto my left pinky so tightly that I am tacking slightly to port. I miss tacking slightly to port.

Another child held onto my left trouser leg most of the time but he would, if he deemed it necessary, hold either of my hands, and one time both of my hands, when we were shuffling in the surf, and the water was up to my knees but up to his waist, and I walked along towing him like a small grinning chortling dinghy all the way from the sea cave where we thought there might be sea lions sleeping off a salmon bender to the tidepools where you could find starfish and crabs and anemones and mussels the size of your shoes.

The third child held hands happily all the time, either hand, any hand, my hands, his mother's hands, his brother's hands, his sister's hands, his friends, aunts and uncles and cousins and grandparents and teachers, dogs and trees, neighbours and bushes, he would hold hands with any living creature whatsoever, without the slightest trepidation or self-consciousness, and to this day I admire that boy's open genuine eager unadorned verve.
He once held hands with his best friend during an entire soccer game when they were five years old, the two of them running in tandem, or one starting in one direction unbeknownst to the other and down they both went giggling in the sprawl of the grass.

It seems to me that angels and bodhisattvas are everywhere available for consultation if only we can see them clear; they are unadorned, and joyous, and patient, and radiant, and luminous, and not disguised or hidden or filtered in any way whatsoever, so that if you see them clearly, which happens occasionally even to the most blinkered and frightened of us, you realise immediately who they are, beings of great and humble illumination dressed in the skins of new and dewy beings.

And you realise, with a catch in your throat, that they are your teachers, and they are agents of an unimaginable love, and they are your cousins and companions in awe, and they are miracles and prayers and songs of inexplicable beauty whom no one can explain and no one own or claim or trammel, and that simply to perceive them is to be blessed beyond the reach of language, and that to be the one appointed to tow them along a beach, or a crowd, or home through the brilliant morning from the muddy hilarious peewee soccer game, is to be graced beyond measure or understanding.

Which is what I was, and I am, and I will be, until the day I die, and change form from this one to another, in ways miraculous and mysterious, never to be plumbed by the mind or measures of man.

Brian Doyle is the editor of Portland Magazine at the University of Portland, and the author most recently of the essay collection Grace Notes.
Australia's little sepia book of dead political tricks

AUSTRALIA

Bronwyn Lay

I left Australia eight years ago, but this election began as if 1950s myopia never left. From afar I’ve watched four elections and five different PM’s slip into the seat. Gossip and infighting dominate the political landscape and cruel policies remain the order of the epoch.

Living within the United Nations community I’ve witnessed Australia fall from a well-respected international citizen, to becoming the spoilt, sneaky brat of international relations.

Even the most blasé glance at the geopolitical currents moving through the planet reveal complexities this election pretends don't exist: technological change, climate crisis, ideological bankruptcy, financial fragility, food security, labour uncertainty, increased automation, energy shifts, border fluidity and closures and rising states of emergency.

Australians fighting about jobs and growth in the corner comes across as deeply deluded isolationism. The Great Barrier Reef is dying. The world is watching. Hello Australia? Anybody home?

Since the 90s the major parties are stuck in a complicit rhetorical illness that repeats the Fordist mantra of ‘jobs growth’ and silences analysis of global geopolitics. It’s almost as if the two major parties share a little sepia book containing tired tropes from the past.

After weeks of boredom, the Liberals experimented with passion by accusing Labour of declaring a war on growth. Immature metaphors spewed from Morrison’s mouth,
offending those who know what war is.

Can someone catch the Liberals up on the legal meaning of war, and remind them the Bush administration exhausted this metaphor? Can someone from the Liberals pop over to Nauru and listen to what war does to the human soul?

At least wars on drugs and terror made some literary sense, but that language is only used now to propagate Trumpism. War on growth rhetoric maintains a narrow focus on the delusion that the Australian economy is sacrosanct, and immune from global trends. It's hyperbolic and deluded. Its like the major parties believe politics stops at Australia's sovereign borders.

"Distance used to be Australia's tyranny - this election reveals it as a political strategy. Australia's narrow escape from the financial crisis bred an arrogant belief in immunity from global realities."

No polity can pretend it's the Fordist 50s, the neoliberal 90s or the fearmongering noughties without risking destroying their home, ecologically and economically. This election repeats the exhausted choice between upfront neoliberalism or one softened by false promises of a fairer neoliberalism. Even harbingers of neoliberalism like the IMF and World Bank conclude it's naïve; ve to continue believing it works and isn't dangerous. They don't scream about war to get the point across.

Distance used to be Australia's tyranny - this election reveals it as a deliberate political strategy. Australia's narrow escape from the savaging financial crisis bred an arrogant belief in immunity from global realities. This lead to isolationist fictions such as jobs/growth obsessions, and now hysterical fear mongering where taxes are toxic bullets.

Australia is being left behind. The USA, India, China and EU invest more in science and technology and take fast action towards energy transitions. Where does Australia get off ignoring these planetary energy, scientific, economic and social shifts? Jobs from where? Obviously not science, research and development in technology and smart energy transitions - the direction most economically strong nations head. And what kind of growth? Dirty redundant growth the rest of the world shakes off? Even hardcore energy companies like Shell prepare for a new economic future.

Milk prices are symptomatic of global capital movements and can't be solved by chucking short-term money at the problem. Great Barrier Reef bleaching occurs due to carbon emissions of which Australia is one of the biggest, and most stubborn perpetrators. The dying reef is a case study in education systems around the world on the climate crisis and its causes. Connecting global dots illustrates local issues can't be reduced to jobs growth babbling and the naïve; ve misuse of war rhetoric.

There is a battle in Australia: it's by government against the meaning and role of government. The last 15 years has seen the Australian state whittle itself down to a mere surveillance machine out to kill the arts, science, education, technological development, welfare, indigenous rights, the environment, the rule of law and farmers' livelihoods - to name but a few.

The desperate attempt to keep the election focused on jobs growth avoids questions about what role government has in shaping the future. Where are the post mining boom
visions? What efforts are being made to allay the incoming property bubble explosion: an example of fictional value about to smash into harsh reality? Where's heat on our increasingly cruel human rights and international law breaches that breed distrust in diplomacy? Where's protection against climate change damage to our habitat, our home? Where's the acknowledgement that Australian sovereignty, the capacity to steer our national future, is increasingly impotent in the face of global power mechanisms like free trade agreements and the death of local property rights?

With the exception of Di Natale, excluded because he raises issues too confronting for bubble lovers, the real battle isn't being discussed. The capacity of all Australians for self determination - from fracking within metres of homes, to Aboriginal rights to stay on traditional lands, to Australian businesses being swallowed by corporate giants - is the quotidian and ordinary battle with global roots. And people care more than ever - but struggle to locate voices that resonate with their concerns because the little sepia book of dead political tricks keeps ranting about jobs growth and war.

There's no justification for boring or hyperbolic politics besides cowardice. While unstable and frightening, it's an exciting time for political engagement. Progress now means intelligent transitions that account for the reality of hyper globalisation, not Panglossian fantasies that economic immunity will continue.

In the collective scramble towards a sustainable future Australia will be left behind, losing jobs and growth in the process. It's time Australia shifted its lemming direction, its politicians threw out the little sepia book of dead political tricks and started engaging with the challenges that construct, create and influence Australian daily life. Banality and false hysteria are distractions designed to close down the difficult questions outside neoliberal concerns. Something's incredibly, evidently broken and backwards in Australian politics and, with four weeks to go, let's hope some substantial arguments occur beyond narcissistic celebrations of economic triumphalism and reductive fear-mongering about how taxes equate to war.

The reef is dying. Why?

Dr Bronwyn Lay worked as a lawyer in Melbourne before moving to France where she now works as an legal consultant for international NGOs. She is the creative director of the Dirt Foundation and her book Juris Materiarum: Empires of Earth, Soil, and Dirt will be released in mid 2016.

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