Contents

Neve Mahoney
Conversations about rape ........................................... Page 3

Andrew Hamilton
Larger principles underpin Pope's beggar belief ............... Page 6

Tim Kroenert
Interracial romance's antidote to cultural appropriation ... Page 9

David James
Penalty rate cuts are the result of thinking small ............. Page 12

Moreblessing Maturure
All minorities are not equal in the fight for justice ........... Page 15

Fiona Katauskas
To Russia with love ..................................................... Page 18

Neve Mahoney
Feminist 'us first, you later' mentality doesn't work ......... Page 20

Jennie Hickey
Building cultures of equality in our workplaces ............... Page 23

Pepi Ronalds
Japan's Olympic dream disrupts disaster recovery .......... Page 25

Susil Pun and William Okello Kadima
A glimpse of devastated home .................................... Page 28

John Warhurst
Weighing in on Abbott’s Labor Lite slight ...................... Page 31

Francine Crimmins
Scenes from a city picked clean by investors ................. Page 33

Antonio Castillo
There’s life in Ecuador’s 21st century socialism ............... Page 35

Fatima Measham
Swift injustice in modest penalty rates proposal .......... Page 40

Andrew Hamilton
No one wins as public discourse thins ......................... Page 42

Fiona Katauskas
Worst actor in a supporting role .................................. Page 45

Allan Padgett
To feel this world ....................................................... Page 47
Conversations about rape

MEDIA

Neve Mahoney

Content warning: This article will discuss sexual violence.

Last Monday, there was a Q and A discussion about feminism and women's rights in honour of International Women's Day. On that panel was Thordis Elva (pictured), an anti-violence campaigner known for hosting a TED Talk with her rapist Tom Stranger, 20 years after the rape took place. They are currently touring for their book, South of Forgiveness, which was published in February.
I watched Thordis argue that forgiveness was a type of reconciliation with yourself and not really about the rapist. When asked about giving Tom a platform she said, 'It's not about applauding a rapist but giving them a voice to the immeasurable hurt that he has caused.'

So I kept vacillating on my position, with debate on Q and A emulating my internal monologue. Is there a place for rapists in the conversation about rape? Did I want to hear what a rapist had to say? It was heightened by the fact that as I watching it, I was on the phone to someone close to me who had been sexually assaulted in the past. Would I want her anywhere near her rapist again? No.

The fact is that statistically, once someone has been raped, they are at a higher chance of being raped again. This can happen when a victim is caught in an abuse cycle of increasing violence and decreasing honeymoon periods, where unless the signs are caught early, it becomes incredibly difficult to leave the relationship. It also occurs because of revictimisation, where victims can feel a compulsive need to reenact their trauma, leaving them vulnerable to manipulative and predatory behaviour.

So with this knowledge I read and watched Thordis' story feeling like my stomach was tearing itself apart. After watching the segment, I paced around my dining room table for about half an hour. Because I understood how Thordis' story could have gone so very wrong.

Revictimisation and the abuse cycle aren't widely understood by the general public. Active consent isn't taught in our schools. Truthfully, I am afraid of the worst case scenario, that because their story has been so highlighted by the media, it could lead to access for rapists to contact their victims or gain platforms like Tom's, and abuse their access to safe spaces with particularly vulnerable people.

But there is also a significant benefit to Thordis and Tom sharing their story together. Tom is in direct opposition to the a common misconception about rapists known as 'the monster myth'. Tom is well-spoken and had a caring upbringing. He was dating Thordis at the time of the rape, when she was 16 and he was 18. He doesn't look or sound like a
'monster'. It is hard to dismiss him as inhuman.

"When the majority of perpetrators are men, they are the ones who need to be educated the most."

It hammers home something anti-violence advocates have been saying for a long time. Monsters don't rape, real men do. Rapists can exist on a broad spectrum. It is likely that a rapist will have a relationship or is acquainted with their victim. They are part of a culture of entitlement to women's bodies. They can be manipulative, commit horrible crimes and might not even connect in their minds that what they have done is rape.

There are still deep cultural misunderstandings about why men rape. One of the most effective ways to address those myths is for people like Tom to tell their truth. So even with my concerns that Thordis has opened a floodgate, I have to hope that Tom will speak directly to boys and men who need to hear it. When the majority of perpetrators are men, they are the ones who need to be educated the most.

While it's imperative that the safety of victims should always be placed first, we should talk about both sides of the story. It's uncomfortable and I still have deep reservations. But the problem won't get solved if only women are participating in the conversation. We need to break down the dehumanising labels of victim and rapist to get to the truth. As Thordis says, sexual violence is not a women's issue, it's a human issue.

Neve Mahoney is a student at RMIT university. She has also contributed to Australian Catholics and The Big Issue.

If you or someone you know is in crisis you can call Lifeline at 13 11 14.
Larger principles underpin Pope's beggar belief

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton

We often find ourselves invited to respond to people who ask us for money on the street. Beggars, homeless people, buskers and charity collectors, and so on.

We can respond in different ways: give them something, decline as a matter of course, decline as a matter of principle, not notice them, establish a set of principles that dictates to whom we shall give or refuse, keep a few coins to give to people who ask, intend to give coins only to discover that we have only notes, or act randomly depending on how we feel.

The most common principles that may lead us to decline have to do with the probability that what we give will feed addiction, and that other people will have to deal with its human, social and environmental consequences.

Whether we give or decline, we then have the choice of looking in the eye the people who ask us and so making our response personal, of entering into conversation with them, or of giving our money almost furtively with eyes lowered. When we walk on we can think no more about the encounter or we can wonder if we have done rightly and
chat with friends about how best to respond.

Last week Pope Francis entered the conversation, as always with a challenging point of view. In an interview for what would once have been thought a decidedly unpapal forum - *Scarp de 'tenis*, the Italian equivalent of the *Big Issue* - he recommended always giving coins to people who ask for money on the street.

Dismissing the most common reason offered for refusal - that the money will only be spent on alcohol or other drugs - he asked how we spend our own surplus money.

He added that the most important part of giving to the poor is to engage the recipient personally and to enter imaginatively into their situation. He also spoke of the duty of society to provide for shelter and the basic needs of all its members, and to make migrants and refugees welcome.

Francis' advice recalled the legendary Melbourne Archbishop Mannnix's practice of walking into the city each morning and giving coins to people who asked.

"Any principles that shift our attention away from the human being before us are evasions of responsibility. It is dehumanising for us as well as for the person who begs from us."

To many it will seem to be too categorical. The more interesting point, however, is what underlies his dismissal of principled reasons that permit you to pass by without responding to the person who asks. Our principles leave us in control, with an unbridgeable gap between ourselves and the persons who beg.

The Pope's line echoed a pithier line from a priest who told how a dishevelled man had come up and asked him for money. He said, 'I thought that if I gave it to him he would only spend it on grog. But then I thought that if I kept it, I would only spend it on grog. So I gave it to him.'

The humour of the story makes the serious point that we all have one skin, and that the implicit difference between us and them is trivial compared to our shared human dignity and frailty. Furthermore, any principles that shift our attention away from the human being before us are evasions of responsibility. It is dehumanising for us as well as for the person who begs from us. We must constantly renegotiate our principles about people through uncontrolled encounters with the persons themselves.

That is true of the principles that form our personal policies. It is also pertinent to public policy that affects the vulnerable: homeless people, people seeking protection, and disadvantaged young people in the justice system. It is easy to look at the big picture, at the economic and political situation, at the need to allay public disquiet, and to impose a solution. This is then left to the officers of government to administer by implementing the principles inherent in the policy. Asylum seekers are to be deterred, young offenders to be locked up and the homeless kept out of sight.

Of course governments and their officers will also want polices to be administered correctly and humanely. The problem is that humanity and correctness are defined within the limits of that policy, not negotiated through meeting the people affected by it. If the policy itself is inhumane, the great human suffering and alienation that result from it will
be seen as by definition acceptable. Policy will have then made invisible the harsh reality of people's lives and its causes.

As has so often been the case, Francis' throwaway lines about giving money to those who ask us illuminate much larger social issues.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of *Eureka Street*. 
Interracial romance's antidote to cultural appropriation

REVIEWS

Tim Kroenert

Loving (PG). Director: Jeff Nichols. Starring: Ruth Negga, Joel Edgerton. 123 minutes

A few weeks ago I wrote rather harshly about Hidden Figures, an unabashedly feelgood film whose broad sympathy for its black characters is eroded somewhat by the indelibly white perspective of its writer and director. I stopped short of accusing the filmmakers of maleficient cultural appropriation, partly on the assumption that they were well intentioned. Yet good intentions are not in themselves sufficient justification when it comes to the appropriation of minority stories by 'majority' artists. The task, if it is to be undertaken, demands greater care than mere sympathy.

Jeff Nichols' Loving, another 'based on fact' film, maps another, more complex, and ultimately more satisfying approach. Nichols, like Hidden Figures' director Theodore Melfi, is a white man offering a perspective on black history. Yet while his film purports to be a romantic drama about an interracial marriage, it is more precise to say it is, at least in its initial stages, a film about a white man's relationship with a black woman. It is set in Virginia in the mid-20th century (the same period in which the events of Hidden Figures occur); a time and place where such a relationship is beyond taboo.

Frank Loving bears the name that was taken for the film's title; he also bears the emotional heft of the film's first act. Inhabited by Joel Edgerton with a stiffly slump-shouldered stoicism and a slurred, mumbling manner of speech, Frank is the primary agent within his relationship with Mildred (Ruth Negga). It is him who endures the ugliest of redneck glares; yet he sees himself as a provider, and after Mildred becomes pregnant, he purchases property, swears to build her a house, and whisks her off to Washington DC to obtain a marriage certificate that will be legally void in their home state.

It's Frank's anguish that we witness in detail after they are arrested for this indiscretion, and it is Frank who is lorded over by the morally corrupt sheriff (Marton Csokas), who is barely able to contain his disgust at the biological convergence foretold by such a union. Frank literally slings cinderblocks for a living, and at the same time tries to make of himself a brick wall with which to preserve Mildred and their marriage from a hostile world. Mildred, on the other hand, through all this, appears docile and acquiescent, fearful, and glad of the promise of care and protection from Frank.
Yet once we have been drawn deeply into Frank's character and his experience of these events, there is a shift.

"The film recognises even the relative privilege of Frank, who is left without retort by a black friend's drunken insistence that he has no concept of real hardship."

In later years, Mildred would say of Frank that 'he always took care of me'; yet this telling of the story shows a more mutual exchange of strength and support than such a statement might imply. The Lovings' entanglement with the state of Virginia would ultimately lead to constitutional change in the United States in favour of interracial marriage, and Loving portrays Ruth as the main agent of the battle.

It is her, after all, who has the courage to continually defy the Virginian laws; who has the hope and determination to endure the wranglings of the legal system; who appreciates and cares about the broader social and political implications of their case; who is willing to play up to the media, acknowledging the benefits of a high profile. Negga has earned a slew of award nominations for her performance; where there are cracks in the mortar of Frank's stoicism, Negga's Mildred possesses a deeply embedded mettle and dignity for which her outward placidity is but a veil.

One of Hidden Figures' weaknesses is its tendency to soften or confect sympathy for its white characters, despite being set during a period of such violent prejudice. Loving does not make this mistake. The civil rights lawyers who take up the Lovings' cause are not heroic; they are ambitious and obsequious. Frank's mother palpably disapproves of her son's life choices, and early in the film there's a strange, portentous juxtaposition where she is seen folding white sheets while Frank ruminates upon which of his neighbours in their hatred might have turned him and Mildred in to the sheriff. (The image is left ambiguous.)

The film recognises even the relative privilege of Frank himself, who is left without retort by a black friend's drunken insistence that he has no concept of real hardship. He has
choices that Mildred and their black friends do not, and, if he so chooses, access to a kind of social freedom that remains closed off to black Americans to this day. Loving's treatment of such matters makes it a persuasive riposte to those who would appropriate others' stories without due care. Not only is such sensitive, thoughtful nuance beneficial when we tell stories about those whose experiences differ greatly from our own; it is vital.

Tim Kroenert is editor of Eureka Street.
Penalty rate cuts are the result of thinking small

ECONOMICS

David James

Witnessing the debate over Sunday penalty rates, the result of which was to cut the remuneration for mostly low wage workers further, an intriguing pattern of thinking emerged. It can be characterised as a microcosm/macrocosm duality.

Those arguing for lower Sunday wage rates chose to demonstrate their case by talking about individual businesses, the micro approach. 'Many individual businesses would love to open on a Sunday and if only wage rates were lower then they would,' goes the logic. 'So unleash those businesses and much greater employment will follow.'

Superficially impressive, it does not survive much scrutiny. As economists love to point out when politicians compare government budget deficits to a household budget, systems (the macro level) do not behave in the same way as a household (the micro level).

A similar distinction can be made with wage rates. The effect of progressively lower wages is to lower overall demand in the economy. While an individual business might benefit from cheaper labour, most businesses will be harmed by workers having less to spend.

Needless to say, this is not something that is investigated much - it does not suit the neoliberal assumptions of most modern economics - but the phenomenon is hard to miss, especially with the economic divisions that are emerging in America.

Discussion of productivity suffers from a similarly deceptive duality. From the micro perspective, productivity is treated much the same as profitability. It is seen as a win-lose battle between workers and owners. 'If my workers get paid more, then my cost of
production will go up, my productivity will go down and I won't be able to make profits.'

At the macro level, things look very different. For one thing, at least two thirds of productivity gains have been shown to be the result of capital investments rather than improvements in labour efficiency.

This makes sense. Even in labour-intensive businesses, wages growth can only be influenced to a small degree. Even if workers wages can be cut, it will not be by much. On the other hand, very large efficiency improvements can be achieved through capital investment, such as robotics, digital distribution systems, enhanced computerisation and online innovations, to name a few possibilities.

"International competitiveness is a function of many factors, such as being good at what you do. Which is why global Scandinavian businesses can compete despite having to operate in a high tax environment. Australia's lazy oligoplies are nowhere near that level."

That is why local industries that are exposed to global competition should not base their competitiveness on cheap wages. They will inevitably lose because wages are so much cheaper elsewhere. It is better for those businesses and the national economy if they are forced to operate in a high wage environment, because it will encourage them to position themselves at the higher value end of the market and pursue high levels of productivity that are not based on cheap labour.

A similar micro-line is routinely taken with tax: 'Businesses must have lower taxes so they can invest more, create more employment and compete internationally.'

This involves some heroic assumptions. Most Australian public companies aggressively farm out their profits as dividends rather than re-invest them. Nor do they have much interest in employing more. There is no better way for Australian public companies to get their share price up than to have a round of redundancies. (In America, profits have been used mainly for share buybacks. There, too, there has been negligible interest in employing more.)

As for international competitiveness, that is a function of many factors, such as being good at what you do. Which is why global Scandinavian businesses have persistently shown they can compete despite having to operate in a high tax environment. Australia's lazy oligoplies are nowhere near that level.

There is also very good evidence, at the macro level, that countries with efficient tax systems greatly outperform those with weak tax systems - for the simple reason that it means the government is not broke. For example, this is one of the key differences between India (which has poor tax collection) and China (which aggressively collects tax).

Australia is showing signs of contracting the American disease of rising inequality, which will ultimately spill over into low growth, especially when the effect of high household indebtedness has its inevitable dampening effect. In the last quarter of 2016 GDP growth was strong and corporate profits jumped 20.1 per cent. But wages and salaries actually
went down 0.5 per cent on a seasonally adjusted basis.

To those who like to think small, the micro-types, this may look like a more 'efficient' economy. In fact, it is an economy, and a society, that is getting sicker.

David James is the managing editor of businessadvantagepng.com
All minorities are not equal in the fight for justice

AUSTRALIA

Moreblessing Maturure

For as long as there has existed a 'lower class', a 'lesser gender', a 'sub-species', a 'deformity of the mind', there's been division within society. These partitions are central to any attempt at structuring power or delegating agency between peoples. Without them, power would be constantly challenged, even overthrown.
So it comes as a surprise to me when the benefactors of these divisions - those whose notions of identity and existence are on the 'right' side of them - are oblivious to their presence. They are surprised, even deeply wounded, at the very suggestion that the divisions exist.

In our current global climate, minorities and oppressed communities are branded as being 'divisive' when attention is drawn to the void which exists between those with power and those without. This allegation stands firmly on the understanding that our 'unified strength' against a common enemy will bring about the change we so passionately fight for.

This isn't wholly incorrect. But it is often forgotten that the terms by which we define 'strength' and 'unity' impact the efficacy and suitability of our actions. Often when the case is made that our strength lies in unity, the assumption is that all parties are to unify with the majority, that 'all our differences should be put aside' and those of lesser power should fight for equality in a way that those in power see fit.

This is inherently problematic, and when disenfranchised communities denounce this approach as the perpetuation of the current status-quo feigning as revolution, they are, again, said to be 'divisive' and to be actively impeding progress.

It's rarely the people who see me as an 'angry-black-non-patriotic-millennial-SJW' woman who's 'anti-free speech' and 'preaches political correctness' that accuse me of being divisive. Rather it is my well-intentioned 'allies', the self-proclaimed 'intersectional' feminists who preach of our 'unified strength'.

In my experience as a young queer black woman, I encounter this reaction, more often than not, from black men, the extended LGBTQIA+ community, and white women - i.e. from communities that already experience forms of discrimination and are my nearest potential allies.

Of course this doesn't relinquish blame from those who occupy positions of power. But it's worth noting the dichotomy of maintaining certain structures of power (those that
benefit us individually) while seeking to dismantle others.

"If we fight for women's rights but neglect everything that makes 'womanhood' diverse and dynamic, then what we get is 'white supremacy - but now, with gender parity'."

The 'divisive' argument creates a hierarchy of 'whose oppression is most important' and thus 'whose rights should we fight for first'. If we fight for black lives but don't include women and queer lives and the dynamism of black existence, then what results is a black capitalist patriarchy. Nothing changes except for the colours of the faces in power.

Likewise, if we fight for women's rights but neglect everything that makes 'womanhood' diverse and dynamic, then what we get is 'white supremacy - but now, with gender parity'. That doesn't help anybody but white women. To pretend it does is to maintain the illusion that we are the same, that there is no division, that we are now equals.

Frankly, it's disheartening and exhausting when everything that shapes your identity is 'divisive', when your very existence is 'divisive'; when your needs must always come second to a 'greater agenda'. Learning to navigate this terrain on both sides of the divide could be the saving grace in cultivating our unified strength.

I certainly don't have the answers, but as a starting point, I pose a potentially 'divisive' approach: that any push for social justice should be led by and accessible to those on the lowest rungs of society. For the hierarchy to be tipped on its head, so that the needs of the most marginalised are met first. The unified strength we idolise stems from an understanding that by 'putting aside our differences' we are robbing ourselves of truly dynamic revolutionary change.

I leave you with a thought from Audre Lorde: 'Within the lesbian community I am Black, and within the Black community I am a lesbian. Any attack against Black people is a lesbian and gay issue, because I and thousands of other Black women are part of the lesbian community. Any attack against lesbians and gays is a Black issue, because thousands of lesbians and gay men are Black. There is no hierarchy of oppression.'

Moreblessing Maturure is an actor, writer and creative director of Sydney-based FOLK Magazine, an online platform dedicated to showcasing artists of colour and their work.
To Russia with love

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas
Feminist 'us first, you later' mentality doesn't work

AUSTRALIA

Neve Mahoney

International Women's Day was founded in women's rights movements across Europe, demanding better labour conditions as well as calls for suffrage. So though it is primarily about celebrating the achievements of women, it is rooted in feminist protest and activism.

In the spirit of the 2017 theme #BeBoldForChange, I think we should change it up a little. While it is important to look back on the achievements of feminism, we should also look back to learn how to be better for the future.

The IWD colours of purple, white and green reference the colours of the suffragettes. While the women's suffrage date usually quoted for Australia is 1902, that excludes Aboriginal women, who did not have complete suffrage until 1962.

Previously, in most states, Aboriginal men had the vote (and in South Australia, Aboriginal women did too), but this was only because it hadn't been explicitly denied to them. So while the Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902 granted white women the vote, it also targeted Aboriginal and other people of colour not already on the electoral roll.

Effectively, through the advocacy of white feminism, there was a gain for white women, while the rights of women of colour were left behind.

Later, in 1975, as International Women's Day was recognised by the UN, mainstream second wave feminism tried to distance itself from the LGBTI community. In a NOW meeting in 1969, Betty Friedan had coined the term 'the lavender menace' to describe how lesbians were distracting from the feminist cause, lavender being a colour associated
with the LGBTI rights movement.

Two of the big names of second wave feminism, Germaine Greer and Gloria Steinem, focused on cisgender women's rights at the expense of trans women, with Steinem warning that 'feminists are right to feel uncomfortable about the need for and uses of transsexualism'.

At its foundation, feminism was for the rights of straight white women. And this still effects mainstream feminism today. Domestic and family violence is a prominent cultural and feminist issue which is statistically more likely to effect Indigenous than white women. Yet in these conversations Indigenous women's voices are frequently unrepresented.

"The fight for women's rights in the past has highlighted the achievements of middle class white women, while also erasing the contributions of minority women."

Similarly, in Australia, the gender pay gap is still a significant issue and receives quite a bit of media coverage. But unlike America, there has never been much focus in Australian feminist media about how the intersection of race and gender impacts upon wages.

Even when there are deliberate attempts to be inclusive in principle, like in the Women's Marches in America, feminists can misstep. Pink knitted hats were made to protest Donald Trump's infamous statement about sexual assault, but these protesters were accused by trans activists for equating womanhood to having a vagina. And while Steinem has apologised for her earlier transphobic views, Greer is on the record as recently as 2015 saying that transgender women aren't 'real' women. She later apologised for saying that on the ABC, but then followed up by repeating the exact same sentiment.

We need to acknowledge how the past shapes our activism, unless we want to keep making the same mistakes. People versed in feminist theory know that the 'us first, you later' mentality doesn't work. Feminism works best when it forefronts the voices that need to be heard, is inclusive, and works from the ground up. Often we need to acknowledge that our viewpoint isn't always going to be needed in every feminist conversation. Women should try to be our own fiercest advocates, but at the same time, we must be critical of our feminism and ourselves. No feminist or feminism is perfect. I know personally that even when I try, I still get it wrong. But we still need to try.

International Women's Day should acknowledge the achievements of feminism that have passed, but also its shortcomings. The fact is that the fight for women's rights in the past has highlighted the achievements of middle class white women, while also erasing the contributions of minority women. So this IWD, let's celebrate the feminists who should have more spotlight and listen to a diverse range of voices. Let's be bold and commit to a feminism that is intersectional, even when it's hard and messy.

Neve Mahoney is a student at RMIT university. She has also contributed to Australian
Catholics and The Big Issue.

Wednesday 8 March is International Women's Day.
Building cultures of equality in our workplaces

AUSTRALIA

Jennie Hickey

The theme for this year's International Women's Day is 'Be Bold For Change'. This involves an aspiration for action, assertiveness and urgency. Because the changes required are considerable, in number and in scope.

In the cover story of the SMH Business Day last weekend, Nassim Khadem talked with seven female board directors. These women spoke of the slowness and smallness of change that has occurred over recent decades regarding female equality in the workplace.

Statistics still reflect a 16 per cent gender pay gap. While there has been some movement of gender diversity on boards (25.3 per cent as at 31 January 2017), the ABS statistics as at August 2015 reveal that only 17 per cent of CEOs in Australian companies were women.

The attitudes that underpin such dire statistics run deep. In 2007 Shelley Correll, a professor of sociology at Cornell University in New York, studied hiring discrimination on the basis of parental status in 2007. Given the slowness of change in gender equity conditions, the study remains relevant a decade later.

In Correll's experiment, four resumes of identical condition were presented to nearly 200 participants to review and place in order of preference for interview. Of the four resumes presented, two were female and two were male; one of each gender was single and one was a family person.

The study found that the final rankings placed the male parent as the most appealing of the four, because he was seen to be more committed to paid work. Mothers were seen to
be the least competent and committed to paid work.

If this is a cultural mindset of people who are in positions of hiring, what can be done to mitigate it?

The women in Khadem's article highlighted the need for companies to have a culture where bias, discrimination and poor behaviour are not tolerated and are named for what they are. They also spoke of a need for systems to be in place to provide protection for people they called whistleblowers.

"As we have seen vividly in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse, cultures of secrecy with a lack of processes for accountability can be disastrous."

We all play a role in shaping the cultures in which we live and work and we must continue to reflect on the contribution that we make individually and collectively. The more transparent our processes and procedures are, the more chance there is to promote a positive and healthy culture that is free of bias.

As we have seen vividly in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse, cultures of secrecy with a lack of processes for accountability can be disastrous. Yet calling out discriminatory behaviour requires courage and there must be systems of protection for those bold enough to speak up.

The International Women's Day website offers a range of concrete actions to mitigate against bias and inequality, to campaign against violence, forge women's advancement, celebrate women's achievement or champion women's education.

We are co-creators in an ever-renewing world and are therefore called to be agents of change, even though this change can be slow. To paraphrase Elie Wiesel, writer, professor, political activist, Nobel laureate and Holocaust survivor, who died in July 2016, the opposite of love is not hate, it is apathy.

Let us be inspired this International Women's Day to overcome our apathy and be bold for change.

Jennie Hickey is the Delegate for Education for the Australian Province of the Society of Jesus.
Japan's Olympic dream disrupts disaster recovery

AUSTRALIA

Pepi Ronalds

This week marks the anniversary of 3.11 - the triple disaster (earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown) that hit northern Japan on 11 March 2011. The event took over 18,000 lives, and initially displaced 470,000 people. Six years on, 127,000 are still without a permanent home.

Some live with family, others have the relative comfort of temporary private apartments, many live in thin-walled, damp, and cramped temporary housing units. All of these accommodations were only ever short-term solutions, intended for just a couple of years. Yet on this sixth anniversary, over a quarter of those originally displaced still await permanent homes.

The disaster was unprecedented, and Japanese governments had to act without a guidebook. Delays have been caused by the sheer physical scope, pre-existing regulations and other restrictions. These are understandable, to a degree. But what is less acceptable are the disruptions caused by the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

3.11 hit the region in a period where populations, local economies and the construction industry were in steady decline. Then, in a single afternoon, demand changed radically. The tsunami inundated over 500 square km of coastline, washing away entire neighbourhoods.

And while Japan's strict building standards mitigated any significant damage by the earthquake itself, there were widespread minor damages to be addressed. The entire nation's construction resources were mobilised, but the area affected was vast.
Olympics are well known for their infrastructure demands - most of which require the same kinds of resources that communities affected by 3.11 need. The bid was awarded in 2013 - a year when 313,000 were still displaced. The competition for construction resources has resulted in a 30 per cent increase in construction costs. Many in affected areas believe they saw a correlation between the Olympics announcement and a reduction of trucks and construction workers in their districts.

And while Tokyo's original visions (such as Zaha Hadid's Olympic Stadium) have been shelved in favour of existing facilities, the monetary cost of the Olympics has ballooned. Originally budgeted at 734 billion yen, current projections anticipate between 1.6 and 1.8 trillion.

Reconstruction has been miserably slow. Delays have knock-on effects; people give up waiting and resettle somewhere else, then populations decline further, then low numbers excuse the slow implementation of infrastructure, and communities find themselves trying to rebuild without basic social services such as transport, post offices, supermarkets, convenience stores and banks.

"Kizuna is a Japanese word that means bonds between people. In a 2016 survey of 1000 survivors respondents felt that kizuna with people outside of the disaster zone was 43 per cent weaker than the previous year."

'The 2020 Games will serve as a spiritual and physical symbol of Japan's recovery from a national tragedy,' opines the Tokyo 2020 website. It's true that sport brings people together in difficult times, providing physical activity and emotional inspiration. In support of recovery the Japanese Olympic Committee holds events for young people in affected communities. By December 2016, 100 Olympic Festas were staged. In this small way, the Olympics have brought smiles to faces. But a single day of activity is soon undermined when children return to temporary housing, with nowhere to call home, and nowhere to play or exercise.

Trans-national nation branding is a major part of Olympics hosting. The Japanese government was well aware that 3.11 had negative effects on international perceptions of Japanese products, exports and tourism. The 2020 Olympics may improve perceptions of the Japanese brand, and even make positive contributions to the economy. But this economic benefit will likely be offset (in the short term at least) by the huge financial investment required to host the games. Why not put that investment into progressive programs to finish rebuilding, revitalise and revive communities devastated by 3.11?

Olympics hosts also aspire to creating national unity. But slow and unnecessary reconstruction caused by competing resources is more likely to fracture any notions of national cohesion. Those awaiting housing are understandably frustrated and feeling forgotten. Kizuna is a Japanese word that was popular in the immediate aftermath of 3.11. It means bonds between people. In a 2016 survey of 1000 survivors (by Japan's national broadcaster, NHK) respondents felt that kizuna with people outside of the disaster zone was 43 per cent weaker than the previous year. Half of them felt that 'construction is going more slowly than expected' and 30 per cent felt that there was no progress in the reconstruction of their hometown.

Rikuzentakata had its entire central business district engulfed in the tsunami and, like all towns, has been working hard towards recovery. Speaking to Reuters in 2016 its mayor
Futoshi Toba expressed concerns about reconstruction and Olympic construction overlapping. 'Why did the government want the Olympics in 2020? I think they could easily have hosted them four years later,' he said.

Pepi Ronalds is researching and writing a non-fiction manuscript about rebuilding and recovery in Japan after 3.11. Her work has been published in Meanjin, Arena, The Lifted Brow and more.

Pictured: The Asuto Nagamachi temporary housing units in the city of Sendai in June 2016. At that time most residents had been relocated to permanent 'recovery' housing. Sendai was able to provide more permanent housing sooner than in other places, due to its size, and the fact that its municipal offices weren't inundated.
A glimpse of devastated home

CREATIVE

_Susil Pun and William Okello Kadima_

Selected poems

A glimpse of devastated home

Once upon a time it used to be a beautiful city.
Suddenly it turned into a yard of sorrow and pity.
Yes, you and me both are scared of dark black clouds.
Because it brings you rain,
But to us missiles and grave.
Wish to survive here is just like a sea wave.
Uproars of bullets and projectiles had became our alarm.
Hearing it and running for life.
And watching own city burning down.
Ambulance rushes to the spot with loud sirens, but noisier were the cry of women’s pleading for help.
All we did was scream and watch like a wolf’s whelp.
Everything was crushed here from hearts to home.
Many lost their life, wife, Daddy and Mom.
How will you feel if an anonymous burnt you for nothing?
How will you feel if an unknown seared your brother and people for nothing?
They took away every felicity they could.
Left with widows, injured people and orphan kids,
What made us alive were these innocent kids' grin and wet eyelids.
No matter which area,
Nobody ever suffers like people did in Syria ...

- Susil Pun

**Angels don't travel**

So true angels never travel
On canning and winding roads
I was the road of patience, humility and love
With so much glamour at the end
But in the language of angels I hear
The light and the end
Took too long to light up

Her name was mercy
Her tongue sweet and watchful
But her heartbeat had an affinity to gold
The sky is golden
But it was never her limit
She swiped and swaggered on
Limitless love for limitless bounties
She preferred to fly
Burn her wings and virtues in the course
And now deep in the hollow corridors of my heart
I hear her footsteps, walking and panting
The echo of her calls and breathe so faint
Once a goddess, now damned by God!

- William Okello Kadima

Susil Pun is a Nepalese writer.

William Okello Kadima is a final year marketing student at Strathmore university Kenya.
Weighing in on Abbott's Labor Lite slight

AUSTRALIA

John Warhurst

Two irreconcilable views of the ideological position of the Turnbull government are now in circulation. They can't both be right.

One view, held by those who once had high hopes that Malcolm Turnbull would lead a small liberal government, is that the Coalition clearly is a conservative government. Its conservativism is demonstrated by its words and deeds on matters like renewable energy, climate change and asylum seekers and refugees.

This state of affairs is generally put down to various factors, but largely to the internal dynamics of the government. The first part of any explanation is that Turnbull is beholden to conservative forces within the Liberal Party, including Cabinet members like Peter Dutton and past ministers like Tony Abbott, Eric Abetz and Kevin Andrews.

The second element is that the Coalition agreement delivers influence over the Liberals to the more conservative Nationals, led by Barnaby Joyce and including outspoken backbenchers like Queenslander George Christensen.

The second proposition, advanced by South Australian Senator Cory Bernardi when he deserted the ship to form the Australian Conservatives, is that the Turnbull government is not conservative enough, maybe not even conservative at all.

Former Prime Minister, Abbott, is now using this second position to advance his destabilisation of the government. Abbott went so far in his latest contribution to claim that the government was 'Labor Lite'.

This throwaway epithet could mean just about anything but was probably meant to mean that the government was too centrist and coming too close to Labor in search of the middle ground. It was certainly not meant as a compliment. Abbott wants the government to turn further to the right.

Flowing on from this chasm between different views are conflicting interpretations of why the Turnbull government is struggling, trailing Labor in the Newspoll by 55:45.

"What Abbott misses entirely in his denunciation of the Turnbull government is the characteristic tone of modern politics with which he himself is most identified since his time as Opposition leader."

In short, Bernardi and Abbott attribute this unpopularity to the government not being conservative enough. For them the greatest danger for the government is that it is losing ground on the right, exemplified by the growth of One Nation at and since the last
Whereas commentators in general argue that the government's unpopularity flows not especially from this but either from it being too conservative over several popular issues, including same sex marriage as well as those mentioned above, or just general incompetence, indecision, disunity and lack of leadership.

It was these latter weaknesses that also exemplified Labor's last turn in office during the Rudd-Gillard years. It is this that makes the Turnbull-Abbott period similar but different from what went before it. Labor's woes were never primarily about ideological direction. Its disunity was therefore quite different to that of the Liberals, though it is understandable if the community just saw the infighting that occurred rather than its origins.

What Abbott misses entirely in his denunciation of the Turnbull government is the characteristic tone of modern politics with which he himself is most identified since his time as Opposition leader. Australian major party politics has immersed itself for too long in mindless adversarialism and mutual denunciation.

These are the weaknesses of major party politics that the community wants addressed. It wants the tone of politics lifted out of the gutter. Abbott's statement was in clear contrast to one also made last week by current NAB chairman and former Department of the Treasury head, Ken Henry.

In a speech to a business audience Henry, schooled as a bureaucrat not a politician, characterised modern politics as trench-warfare in which politicians 'fire insults designed merely to cause political embarrassment'. As a consequence, the predominant political narrative is conducted in 'the language of fear and danger' and the deliberate outcome is frightened confusion.

Abbott offered policy prescriptions, including cutting the renewable energy target, cutting immigration, scrapping the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, ending all new spending and reforming the Senate to restore major party control.

Turnbull claims he will not be distracted but the net effect of Bernardi's defection and Abbott's continued tirades may be to deflect the concentration of the government, and inevitably the Opposition too, on reaching sensible and moderate accommodation. Instead they may continue to fire bullets from their trenches.

John Warhurst is an Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the Australian National University.

Cartoon by Chris Johnston
Scenes from a city picked clean by investors

INTERNATIONAL

Francine Crimmins

An alarm clock sounds in a small apartment. Cars choke and crawl their way across the bridge to towering offices. The sun glistens on the water as the ferry full of chattering passengers chugs it way across the harbour.

A man waits impatiently for his skim latte, tapping his leather boot on the tiles of Martin Place. The sound of a violin bellows off the walls of Central Station. Coins clatter into the buskers' waiting hat.

The ecosystem of the city - as busy and as complex as ever. It's also an ecosystem under threat from investment predators. As more swarm into the space of the city the other people in the system are faced with two options for financial survival - move out or move far away.

This is exactly the choice that has been given to the residents of the Sirius building at The Rocks in Sydney. Its modular grey blocks, a common feature of brutalist architecture, rise high into the skyline.

The building was erected in 1979 as a solution for public housing tenants who were being displaced when the area was redeveloped. Now it is under threat as the New South Wales government plans to sell off the block along with a handful of other heritage-listed terraces in Millers Point. Most of the residents were moved out of the building in 2015 despite their protests.

Myra Demetriou is one of the last residents still in the Sirius building. It's been 60 years since Myra moved into the Millers Point area. Her hair is now greyish white and she spends a lot of her time talking to journalists and sharing her story. Now 90, she'll be painted by amateur artists when the building in open to the public for Art Month during March.

When interviewed by the ABC she said she hopes people coming along for Art Month will take time to ask her about why she wants to stay in her apartment. 'People from all walks of life should be able to live in the city. It shouldn't be an environment of investors and the wealthy because then you start causing divisions, which is dangerous.'

This danger is one of deep divide, which will eliminate entire groups of people from the city ecosystem and create a classist town.

"If the city is no longer created by everybody, then it's hard to imagine it would be
sympathetic to the variety of people it could encounter in its system."

The building's architect Tao Gofers has also been outspoken about the importance of inclusiveness in city housing. He hopes opening the building up to the public will educate people about the need for not just social housing, but homes for people from all types of work. This includes the firemen, teachers and nurses who are essential to the running of the city. Gofers believes people who are important to the city environment shouldn't have to spend hours coming into work every day. The city being out of reach for about 90 per cent of the Australians who make up the functioning of it is, he says, a great injustice.

In July 2016, the government decided against heritage listing the site despite its unanimous recommendation by the Heritage Council. This will be challenged in April at the NSW Land and Environment Court. In the meantime, the building has become a symbol of the Australian housing crisis, where only the rich and investors can exist in the urban hearts of the states. Everyone else is pumped out through less valued veins, expected to find their own way back to the centre to replenish and continue surviving.

Australia isn't the first place where urban planning has infiltrated social structures in society. The 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* by Jane Jacobs explores how the decline of city neighbourhoods in the US can be blamed on a similar type of housing segregation. She writes: 'Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.' If the city is no longer created by everybody, then it's hard to imagine it would be sympathetic to the variety of people it could encounter in its system.

An unread newspaper tumbles and breaks apart in the wind. A man sits alone on a park bench wondering what it would be like to hear the playful screech of children riding bicycles through the park. As darkness settles over the skyscrapers the city's workers are commencing their long journeys home.

A young woman walks down her hallway towards her kitchen, an entire building of young professionals and yet not a single friend to be had. Not even the music of the street performers is heard anymore. They were all relocated. They didn't fit into the 'future city' plan. Car engines hum and airplanes roar overhead. Somehow the city ecosystem continues despite the investment predators having eaten up all other types of life.

Francine Crimmins is studying a double degree of Journalism and Creative Intelligence & Innovation at the University of Technology Sydney. She is on twitter as @frankiecrimmins. Francine is the recipient of *Eureka Street*'s Margaret Dooley Fellowship for Young Writers.
There's life in Ecuador's 21st century socialism

INTERNATIONAL

Antonio Castillo

Ecuadoreans will head back to the polls on 2 April to determine who will occupy El Palacio de Carondelet, Ecuador’s government house, for the next four years, after 19 February’s general election didn’t come up with an outright winner. Against all projections Socialist Lenin Moreno, who served as outgoing president Rafael Correa’s vice president between 2007 and 2013, did very well.
He obtained 39.21 per cent of the votes, just shy of the 40 needed to win in the first round. He is in a strong position for the 2 April run off. In order to cross the line he will have to negotiate and attract the social democracy of Paco Moncayo, who came fourth.

The closer contender is the right wing banker Guillermo Lasso, who assured that, if elected, Julian Assange would be expelled from the Ecuadorean embassy in London where he has been since 2012, when Correa granted him asylum. Lasso obtained 28.42 per cent of the votes, so to win in run off he will have to knit together the highly fractured Ecuadorean right

While Moreno fell short of winning in the first round there is a sense that the Ecuadorean 21st century socialism, an economic and political model instigated by Correa, is still popular among the majority; and in this Andean country of 15 million the majority are poor.

Perhaps the big winner of the undecided first round was Correa himself. Against all predictions his ruling Alianza Pa\textipa{\textperiodcentered}c\textipa{\textperiodcentered}c\textipa{\textperiodcentered}te\textipa{\textperiodcentered}s obtained a comfortable majority in the National Assembly. It won 75 out of 137 seats.

The election also gave the departing president one more triumph. His referendum - where Ecuadoreans where asked to approve an 'Ethical Pact' preventing anybody with financial assets in tax heavens from holding public service roles - was solidly ratified. The referendum was called as a response to the Panama Papers scandal.

Correa, colloquially called 'mashi' (comrade in Quechua) won the 2006 election and took office in 2007. In an OPEP oil wealthy country, Correa inherited a neoliberal driven financially bankrupt society.

Equipped with an authoritarian style of leadership - not always welcome - Correa managed to stabilise the economy. From the first year of his government to 2015 the GDP grew 3.9 per cent; ten points above the Latin American average of 2.9.

"Not everything has been rosy for Correa. During his ten years in power he foolishly alienated - due to his aggressive extractive-based economy - important sectors of the left, the environmental and indigenous movements."

Correa inherited a dysfunctional political system that between 1997 - when Ecuador returned to democracy - and 2007 has seen 11 presidential elections. Transparency International described his political predecessors as the hemisphere's worst kleptocracies. During this period - before Correa came to power - seven presidents were forced out of office after massive popular unrest. Even his most zealous opponents recognise that Correa gave the country an acceptable level of political stability.

Correa is a close apprentice of Hugo Chavez's progressive social policies. He strengthened the role of the state in just about all areas of Ecuadorean society, culture, economy, education, health and housing. He applied a policy of 'assistance and clientelism' based on heavy state subsidies to programs of social benefit among the most disadvantaged sectors of the society.

Correa's 'citizen revolution' and his philosophical view of what has been called the 'socialism of good living' have achieved the unachievable. Since he began wearing the
presidential sash around 2 million have escaped poverty. In 2006 poverty hurt almost 17 per cent of the population; now it is around 8 per cent.

Correa became a key player in the so-called pink wave - a massive tide of progressive left-wing governments that moved throughout Latin America at the end of the 1990s. He was, along with Chavez in Venezuela, Evo Morales of Bolivia, and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil, one of the builders of the 21st century socialist movement, a political, social and economic experiment underpinned by an anti-US, Latin American nationalism, progressive policies and regional integration.

However, not everything has been rosy for Correa. He faced a right wing coup d'état attempt in 2010 and in the last years of his government, anti-government protests became daily events. During his ten years in power he foolishly alienated - due to his aggressive extractive-based economy - important sectors of the left, the environmental and indigenous movements. Correa also waged a pointless war against the commercial media, colourfully described by him as 'ink's sicarios'.

Leading up to the 2 April elections the gloves of the two contenders, Moreno and Lasso, are off. Moreno has promised to maintain Correa's achievements and fix some of his blunders. Lasso, who enjoys unchallenged news coverage in the commercial news media, has promised to erase Correa from the recent history of Ecuador. In the meantime 12 million Ecuadorean voters - and one lonely exiled Australian - wait anxiously to know what lies ahead.

Antonio Castillo is a Latin American journalist and Director of the Centre for Communication, Politics and Culture, CPC, RMIT University, Melbourne-Australia.
Swift injustice in modest penalty rates proposal

AUSTRALIA

Fatima Measham

The Fair Work Commission decision on penalty rates removes any doubt that young people might have still had about their place in the economic order.

The four-yearly review of awards in hospitality, fast food, retail and pharmacy found that Sunday penalty rates 'do not achieve the modern awards objective, as they do not provide a fair and relevant minimum safety net'. But whose safety net? Unfair to whom?

These industries are already notorious for exploiting young workers, with numerous cases of routine underpayment and unpaid 'work trials'. Workers are particularly vulnerable in regional areas with high levels of youth unemployment; the alternative to being underpaid is not having a job at all.

Some are managing time between work and study. Most do not have union membership. The scale of precarity is significant: one in four young Australians, for instance, are employed in the retail industry.

In a piece on millennial labour conditions, Sonia Nair points out that hers is the first generation that will have earned earned less over a lifetime than previous cohorts. Educational attainment no longer relates to economic mobility. Paid work has become precarious and precious - insecure and hard to find.

According to the 2014 Australian Work and Life Index, nearly 40 per cent of young people depend on penalty rates as part of their wage. The study also concluded that in a broad cross-section of the working population, 'the choice to work unsocial hours is
driven largely by the financial incentive of penalty rates'.

The imperative is so strong that around 70 per cent of employees would not work unsocial hours if penalty rates were not offered. It suggests that working on Sundays is not a matter of lifestyle. In low-wage industries, it is how young people can make up for earnings that they don't receive when they are at university, doing care work or aren't rostered enough as casuals.

The looming cuts to take-home pay vary between industries and employment type (full-time, part-time and casual). A McDonald's counter worker could lose $22.50 from her six-hour Sunday shift. A retail worker could lose as much as $72 from a seven-hour Sunday shift. In cities where young people are also experiencing housing stress, such wage loss could tip someone out on the street.

"In siding with employers, the Commission demonstrates wilful disregard for some of most vulnerable workers in favour of a wealth transfer for business owners."

Remarkably, the FWC acknowledges the impact on award-reliant employees who struggle to cover weekly living expenses, much less save. It cites the Productivity Commission in observing 'most existing employees would probably face reduced earnings as it is improbable that, as a group, existing workers' hours on Sundays would rise sufficiently to offset the income effects of penalty rate reductions'. It recommends 'appropriate transitional arrangements to mitigate such hardship'.

In other words, you may screw over young people, but be gentle. No need to rush it.

In siding with employers, the Commission demonstrates wilful disregard for some of most vulnerable workers in the economy, in favour of a wealth transfer for business owners. It accepts the proposition from employers that current levels limit their trading hours, staffing levels and the range of services. It also accepts the proposition that reducing penalty rates would increase trading and overall work hours and services.

Yet whether this reduction provides an incentive to hire more workers, as employers argue, is debatable. In its own report, the FWC points out that employment effects are overstated, citing studies and submissions that do not support the conceptual model that lower wage costs lead to lower prices, lifting consumer and labour demand. The entire decision seems to rest, then, on speculation - one that relies on the benevolence of business owners.

It is Swiftian, in some regard, a modest proposal to sacrifice the burdensome, impoverished young for the public good.

Fatima Measham is a Eureka Street consulting editor. She tweets @foomeister and blogs at This is Complicated.
No one wins as public discourse thins

AUSTRALIA

Andrew Hamilton

It is a commonplace that our political discourse is much impoverished. Speeches are built around the sound bite designed to be quoted. The Trump administration is experimenting with letting go of speeches and communicating within the limits set by Twitter.

In such a world there is little space for more complex rhetoric, for cultural reference, for reflection on historical precedents, or for wondering. From their speeches we would not know generally what politicians read seriously and what significant cultural influences have shaped them. Their words leave no echoes. Political discourse is dominated by barracking and by answers to 'how' questions.

To recall the world's great political speeches and their writers, ghost and fleshly, and the world of Paine and Burke, of Churchill and Kennedy and even of Rudd's Apology, can be an exercise in nostalgia.

Great speeches mainly belonged to a time when the majority of politicians were more highly educated than their constituents, and when the educational curriculum emphasised rhetoric. The speakers and audience alike shared a wide cultural reference and language that enabled them to speak easily about human goals and the good life.

Today the educational system emphasises technique and the solutions to 'how' questions. Paperless schools exist, and there is no cultural canon that is shared. Political discourse reflects this: once finely honed speeches had public effect; now they don't. So they are
seen as superfluous.

It is worth musing on what may be lost in the thinning of public discourse. If language is thin, so is the perception of reality. That is dangerous in political life. It leads to shallow policies and destructive actions.

The value of reading, whether in history or of literature or within a religious tradition, lies in its encouragement to tease out the complexity of reality and of the subtle relationships and interconnections, the history of hurt and gift, the insights and fallibility, the mixture of motives, the pressure of events, the unseen consequences of well-intended actions and of the contingencies that characterise any domestic situation, let alone more public events. It provides words that enable reality to be seen.

An instinctive awareness of this complexity, depth and interconnection is important in political life because it corresponds to the reality of the parliamentary process and also of national life. Novels, poetry, biographies, histories and religious texts attend to the depth of human life and interactions. They provide a range of words and images that illuminate the world and so help us to affect it for the better.

"If we ignore the past we are vulnerable to a simplistic view of our predicaments and of our own mastery of them. We shall see ourselves as masters of a situation whereas in reality we are one of many actors."

These thick accounts of life in its public and private dimensions draw us beyond the 'how' questions which are properly the focus of government attention to the larger human questions of meaning and of happiness on which effectual answers to 'how' questions depend. They ask why particular actions are proposed, and whether they enhance the life of human beings.

They pose the moral dimension of political life in all its difficulties, complexities, challenges to integrity and weaknesses that are part of political life. Biographies and novels again give images of what it is like to act with integrity as a politician, and what kind of consequence of our action, both foreseen and unseen. They foster the self-knowledge and reflectiveness without which politicians are dangerous to themselves and to others.

It is considered aximomatic that 'those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it'. If this is true, it is not because past situations are identical to present situations, so that we could feed together into a computer the past event and our own situation and so be told what will happen if we act in certain ways. It is rather that if we ignore the past we are vulnerable to a simplistic view of our predicaments and of our own mastery of them. As a result we shall see ourselves as masters of a situation whereas in reality we are one of many actors, not writers of the script.

The invasion of Iraq illustrates perfectly this thin account of human action and the dangers that flow from it. It was orchestrated and applauded by people with little self-knowledge, less insight into the complexity of the situation in which they meddled, and no appreciation of the consequences that might follow. Their naivety was encapsulated in the poverty of the language in which they spoke of their venture.
In the winds that blow strongly across the world we have entered it seems unlikely that the sources that support a thick account of human life and of its public predicaments will be preserved in the mainstream media and popular culture. The task will fall to small groups to reflect in some depth on the events of our day, drawing on the rich cultural, literary and discursive traditions we have inherited. A modest venture, as modest and as hopeful as that of the monks in the dissolution of the Roman world.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of *Eureka Street*. 
Worst actor in a supporting role

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas
To feel this world

CREATIVE

Allan Padgett

Selected poems

To feel this world
the amino acids humans cannot synthesise
are phenylalanine, valine, threonine, methionine,
leucine, isoleucine, lysine, histidine
and the non-rhyming tryptophan,
bound for brain and mutating to serotonin -
this molecule affects your moods and electrical pulsing,
so be careful, these are things we need

notes that humans cannot hear include
the sound of thylacines crying in a van diemen forest,
a dodo's plaintive shuffle on a nearshore kiwi island,
a mammoth's woolly orgasm on an ecstatic arctic tundra,
an esperance dog weed's silent transpiration
the rumbles of a gastric brooding frog giving birth by burping -
these things are far too late for caring

things we need to see and taste include
the surging milk of human kindness
the euphoric rainbow of random caring
the startling scarlet crest of a gang gang cockatoo -
these would make a nice day, nicer

to feel this world, close your eyes and inhale
the earthy pungent tone of musk
on a summer-scented
late evening's perfumed otherness

The brittle sound of daytime barking

Some days it seems we live
in a table-top terrarium with 17 desperate dogs,
such is the brittle sound of daytime barking.
The man comes to read the gas meter:
dogs across the road, dogs next door,
my dog and a host of other unknown
neighbourhood barkers
rip the kind of silent air to pieces.

He simply smiles and says:
Yo, bro, how you go?
I get excited, turned on by
early morning hip hoppy rap
from the energetic mouth
of our meter-reader.
Great, Bro, say I, but short of
the rhyming slang which might
have followed. Nice to see you, mate -
thanks for reading my meter!

He trips off, down the street
to another encounter, another silent meter,
where disturbed dogs may bark
like mad and if they could,
bring the house down.
Then the postie arrives *en scoot*,
drops the lid after inserting mail
and rides off down the footpath
to a new cacophony of seamless barking.

Four-legged creatures of the sparkling morn:
bark on, since it is your precious sounds
that tell the world these are my people,
and you, relative outsider - harm them at your peril.
My task is to watch, observe, bark -
and if needed: to bite.

You then apologise for stepping into
these private worlds where loving pets
guard the future, and retard the chance
of ugly happenstance.
What's not to like about
these wondrous local choruses
of thrillingly jangly, whooshy sound bites?

And a man on a bike with manners.

Waiting man

Call me Mr Waiting Man:
I wait for Mr Plaster Man to dry
Mr Sander Man to rub it back
Mr Painter Man to lick
his way across your ceiling
and then a longer wait,
the longest wait of all.
I wait for the forces
of nature, time and memory
to resonate and bring
it all back down again. Living
with incipient horror
in a suburban landscape
borrowed from time
and held close to the modern
heart with consuming passion
and inarticulate adoration.
Then, as time proves over
and over again: volcanoes spurt,
apocalyptic magma screaming;
atomic clouds descend, ionising lives to dust;
tsunamis pour in, swamping smiles
with liquid extinction. Then, just
as you think it couldn't
get worse, you switch
to channel 13 on the final day
of life as the asteroid hits
with a force and magnitude
beyond pain and dissolution,
beyond description. The road
out turns back, the road in
vaporises, all skies
lose all their light
all photo synthesising slams
shut
all production is
extinguished
ships sink to the bottom
of boiling oceans
planes fall from a melting sky
like shivering confetti
all genetic codes unravel. And soon, in
a billion years or so,
life re-forms. A
casual observer is overheard
to remark at the time:
well, the elephants
look more like mole crickets
and the viruses are longer
than road trains,
and that stuff which looks
a bit like gelatine colluding
with dyslexia and vinegar,
and violet in its wobbling,
is what's left of the former
world's greed. And humanity? It
wrote itself out - and sorry,
but you won't be returning
any time soon.

Allan Padgett is a WA poet who performs regularly at Perth Poetry Club. He has been published in Creatrix, Uneven Floor, Creative Connections, Regime, Rochford Street Review, Plumwood Mountain, Grief Anthology 2016 & Unusual Work. Allan's poem 'The Wheatbelt turns to dust' was second in the 2012 Creatrix Poetry Prize.
Cultural memory points the way through the Trumpocalypse

INTERNATIONAL

Brigitte Dwyer

To many in the West, we are living in a time of despair, an era of nihilism and meaninglessness, signified by growing violence, environment degradation and, most importantly, political chaos. This unsettling period is referred to by France’s daily newspaper as the 'Trumpocalypse'.
This combination of events, and the sense of hopelessness that accompanies them, can easily be seen as markers of doom, a sign that the era of Western culture is in terminal decline. But it's also possible to interpret them as indicators of the malaise that marks the very peak of life.

In ancient Christianity, the fatigue and inertia that accompanied the middle of the day was known as *acedia*, or the 'noonday devil'. It described the sense of despair felt by the monks who struggled to devote themselves to lives of prayer and solitude. It was said to strike in the middle of the day - during the hours of heat, when the sun was at its zenith and cast no shadow.

But the term *acedia* is also appropriate for the present state of the Western world. It captures the pervasive mood in the postmodern, post-truth world, including the mistrust of progress, scepticism about our past, and fear of the future.

In such a world, there is no room for consensus, no faith in the power of humankind to make the world a better place. Instead, the works of humanity - the great discoveries of science and technology - are seen to have ruined the planet and denied hope for future generations.

Nothing survives the attack of this post-truth viewpoint, including history itself, and the value we once ascribed to events and narratives of the past. In Australia, we can see this in bitterly contested attempts to define or celebrate a national identity, and to identify historical moments that are culturally significant.

Attacking the history of a group, or a nation, can have catastrophic consequences. It can erode the very foundations of identity. Recent totalitarian movements understood this well - regimes who wanted to eradicate the past, such as Soviet Russia, Mao's China, Pol Pot's Cambodia and the Taliban's Afghanistan.

The leaders of ISIS know this too - hence, the deliberate destruction of the Roman artefacts in the city of Palmyra, as well as other important cultural sites in Syria. They
understand that when you destroy cultural memory, you destroy a people.

"Donald Trump constantly invokes the idealism of a 'once-great' America - but he has no intention of rekindling the true memory of America's founding fathers, that is, to build a nation dedicated to both 'the domain of freedom and the Jeffersonian ideal of public happiness'."

It is heartening to read, then, of the efforts of Italian archaeological experts to restore the shattered statues and funeral busts that were deliberately smashed in Palmyra. A team of dedicated professionals are methodically rebuilding these ancient artefacts using modern tools such as laser scans and 3D printers.

Those involved understand the significance of what they are doing. They are rebuilding the nation of Syria by restoring its memory. As Frances Pinnock, the Anglo-Italian archaeologist who arranged the restoration explains, 'the only hope we have to rebuild Syria is through its culture - that's how Italy did it after the Second World War'.

For the Italian people, recovery from the defeat and the horror of the Second World War depended on a recognition of its proud history - including the tangible symbols that spoke of its worth as a nation, and the rich heritage of its people.

This recognition is very different from a desire to return to the past - the tempting but impossible promise of authoritarian strongmen. Donald Trump constantly invokes the idealism of a 'once-great' America - but he has no intention of rekindling the true memory of America's founding fathers, that is, to build a nation dedicated to both 'the domain of freedom and the Jeffersonian ideal of public happiness'.

Without memory, societies and individuals become stuck in the stasis of the here and now. American political analyst, Fredric Jameson, describes this inertia as 'crisis in historicity'. When we have no capacity to imagine our past, we have no vision for the future, and we grind to a standstill.

It's true that there is a fictive element in the way history is written, and an imaginative aspect to the way cultural memories are formed. But every society or group of people depends upon this collective imagination - they are the stories and memories that articulate foundational ideas.

Western civilisation is the only culture that denigrates itself so wholly - the only society that refuses to stand by its values, to articulate its greatness. This self-criticism is currently almost entombing the West. But self-criticism is also the flipside to greatness. It is evidence of an openness and a willingness to listen to others.

Western civilisation cannot move out of the 'postmodern impasse' until we acknowledge that the debate and disagreement in our present culture - far from signifying divisiveness and chaos - are the whispered remnants of a great strength. They are reminders of the West's willingness to interact with other cultures, and to endure through the creative mingling of people and ideas.
Brigitte Dwyer is an Adelaide based freelance journalist.

Pictured: The Tetrapyrus, one of the most famous monuments in the ancient city of Palmyra, before it was destroyed by Islamic State group militants.
How to survive the crucible of school bullying

CREATIVE

Barry Gittins

Squarely back into the school year, dinner table conversations with our kids have included strategies for dealing with bullies. We are by no means alone; a 2016 survey of 20,000 Australians students found one in four respondents (27 per cent) reported being bullied.

Apparently, bullying 'was more common for year 5 students (32 per cent) and year 8 (29 per cent)' - the grade levels of our boy and girl respectively - and, while 'bullying by females tended to be more covert, males were more "in your face" about it'.

While I'd dearly love to be the 'parent nonpareil', with the right words and apt advice, it's not that simple. The variables of personality and situation mean there is no easy, perfect answer.

The old 'fight, flight or re-write' principle comes into play, as parental advice is dispensed. Stand up for yourself. Make yourself scarce. Change the situation with some unexpected empathy, or engagement. Carry yourself well, eyes up; work on your poker face (not responding or buying into teasing, so as not to reward the bully).

My perennial advice to refrain from focusing on petty stuff, letting minor irritants be 'water off a duck's back', also comes in handy.

Competition is a given in life. Genuine instances of bullying, however, as opposed to honest disagreements or competitive scenarios, are characterised by an imbalance of power. The Bully Zero Australia Foundation defines bullying as 'an abuse of power by someone who is stronger physically, verbally, mentally, socially, electronically, politically...
or financially'.

An imbalance of power and nous makes for testing times. Whereas humour, attempts at compromise, or enforced empathy may work in some cases, communication often fails in others. This leaves your progeny trying to work out what 'confrontation' looks like in their world.

In the bad old days, physical violence was more prevalent and accepted among peers. I had a collarbone snapped in defence of my lunch in grade eight (a hungry classmate was trying to pinch my sangers when we tripped and he squished me - and the sandwiches). These days it would be a huge mess; back then, it meant proudly eating my lunch at the local surgery and revelling in an unexpected holiday from school.

"I have faith that my kids will survive the crucible of school bullying better equipped to resolve conflicts. A core message is both altruistic and practical: your strength does not come at the expense or whim of another."

A few years before, as an 11-year-old picking on my younger sister in the back seat of the Kingswood, my mum taught me a lifelong lesson with a flurry of well-timed, semi-powered jabs and a beautiful right cross (leaning over the front seat).

Here's another, favoured example; an ex of mine, when a grumpy teenager, was grudgingly washing the dishes. Her little brother was wiping them up, even more reluctantly. She was throwing her weight around, physically slapping down the sibling as brothers and sisters tend to do, when in desperation the boy took the tongs he was drying and affixed them to his sister. Parental intervention saved the day, although the lady is still, to this day, leery of tongs.

Violence is not the answer, although my son's karate lessons do provide me with some reassurance. We are more enlightened these days, thankfully, and anti-bullying policies in schools rightly frown on violence; even in self-defence.

Finding, maintaining or elevating your place in the pecking order in your family, at school, work or your sporting club doesn't just happen. Choosing how to deal with a social situation is hard-won knowledge that serves us throughout our lives; it's often gained through painful and humiliating experiences.

Ultimately, they do have to work it out for themselves. I have faith that, like most of us, my kids will survive the crucible of school bullying better equipped to resolve conflicts. A core message around our table is both altruistic and practical: your strength does not come at the expense or whim of another.

The bullying survey I cited about schoolkids also found that 'peers are present in 87 per cent of bullying interactions, mostly as onlookers who do nothing to help the victim'. As much as they can safely do so, we entreat them not to be that cowed onlooker - stick up for yourself, for your mates and for others. It's a policy we can all try to model.

What sage advice can you proffer to back up my efforts; how have you dealt with bullies?
Barry Gittins is a communication and research consultant for The Salvation Army.
The power of persuasion in confronting fascism

AUSTRALIA

Daniel Nicholson

For the last few years, Reclaim Australia and other white-nationalist groups have held rallies to protest Australia’s immigration policies, the building of mosques and, more recently, in support of US President Donald Trump.

Each time, there have been counter rallies of socialists, refugee advocates and anti-racism groups.

These protests and counter-protests have been going on for years now; many of them have been violent. There is inevitably a heavy police presence and, on occasions, pepper spray has been used. The white-nationalists accuse the counter protesters of being ‘traitors’. The counter protestors yell back: 'You are not welcome here.'

When these protests began, I grappled with whether or not to join the counter rallies. Some of my friends - people who I have stood next to on picket lines and marched in demos with - were enthusiastic participants, confronting the purported neo-fascists.

These friends send me text messages the week before the rallies, or share 'event invitations' on social media. The invitations sometimes have a sickly tone of excitement in them. 'Come and fight some fascists, it will be fun!' one friend texted me in the lead up to one of the confrontations. In the wake of the skirmishes, my social media feeds are peppered with videos and photos of the day's highlights.

From the beginning, I was ambivalent about participating. I find the views of the white-nationalist groups abhorrent, but I saw them as marginal fringe groups of (mostly) white men who were only getting attention from the media because the conflict with the
counter protesters made for good content.

Why validate their cause by gifting them coverage? Why animate them by giving them somebody to organise against?

One Sunday last year, the day after a particularly violent confrontation between the groups, I began work at 7am in my then role as a residential care worker with homeless teenagers. Work was quiet and I began scrolling through the news coverage, voyeuristically wondering if any of my comrades featured.

"The anti-racism campaigners thought they were right because they fought fascists; no matter if the apparent fascists were homeless children who had been coaxed into participating with lies and predation."

To my horror, I knew people on both sides of the scuffles. As expected, my socialist and trade unionist friends were there clashing with the police and the white-nationalists. Completely unexpected was a handful of my homeless clients, draped in Australian flags, engaged in rolling street battles with the anti-racism protestors.

When I approached the young men - they were all men - they answered their doors with eyes red from pepper spray. I sat with them while they explained how they came to be involved in the protests. They showed me Facebook messages from prominent white-nationalists who had convinced these teenagers that immigrants were the cause of their homelessness, their unemployment and their alienation. They described how good it had felt to confront what they were convinced was their enemy - for once in their lives they had felt powerful.

What struck me were the similarities between these conversations and the ones I had with my progressive friends. Both sides participated to make themselves feel good, not to change anybody's mind. The anti-racism campaigners thought they were right because they fought fascists; no matter if the apparent fascists were homeless children who had been coaxed into participating with lies and predation.

These young men had experienced alienation, exploitation and poverty. All the things the Left is supposed to fight against. They struggled to find meaning in their lives. And tragically, they found meaning in fighting - literally - the people who purport to care the most about the disenfranchised: socialists, trade unionists and the Left.

Over the next several weeks, and a number of conversations, other youth workers and I were able to convince the young men that the cause they had been cajoled into supporting was wrong. They came to understand that while their anger was justified, it had been misdirected.

When I told this story to a friend who was involved on the anti-racism side he was unperturbed. Fascism has to be crushed, not discussed, he told me. I pointed out that the young men were the victims of the same forces we opposed: rapacious capitalism, an indifferent bureaucracy and family violence. That didn't matter - he was content for these young men to be collateral damage in a bigger struggle.

But I remain convinced that persuasion and discussion can't be abandoned. Long, uncomfortable conversations don't make for good social media content but that does not
allow us to dispense with them. If Australia is to stare down the threat of a rising alt-right and work towards building a good society, we must work to address the material conditions that nourish hateful movements. This won't be done by yelling at right wing fringe groups across a police barricade. The slow grind of organising efforts for workers' rights and decent, affordable housing is probably a better place to start.

Daniel Nicholson is an Industrial Relations researcher at the University of Melbourne and a Director at the progressive think tank the John Cain Foundation. Previously, he has worked as a youth worker and a trade union organiser. He has previously published in Overland and The Conversation.
What the sharia is all the fuss about?

RELIGION

Rachel Woodlock

There is a special part of the human brain, so the scientists tell us, that lights up in response to curse words. Every toddler intuits this in discovering the power that speaking a certain combination of syllables holds over mum and dad.

Every society has its taboos and dangerous ideas, but they evolve and change over time and place. As Harvard University's Steven Pinker has pointed out, no-one cares these days if you curse Thor's name. Still, there are certain words you cannot use in polite company, during a work presentation to the CEO, or in front of a magistrate.

Most of the obvious taboo words are ones to do with sexual activity and excrement, but I'd like to add a few new suspects: shari'a, halal and jihad. Check your Macquarie and their definitions are ordinary enough. But over the last couple of decades, these words have taken on such negative meanings that it has become impossible to use them without invoking the taboo response in a sizeable proportion of the population.

'Shari'a' has come to mean the forced imposition of medieval punishments on cowering populations oppressed by religious extremists. 'Halal' is the torture of sheep and cows, through cramming in filthy transport ships and horrendous slaughtering. 'Jihad' means war on non-Muslims, murdering unbelievers; happening 'over there' right now and soon on home soil, if demographic projections come true.

The problem is these words have been stolen from ordinary Muslims, the vast majority of
the world's second largest religion.

Once upon a time, a proud dad in Dandenong could name his son Jihad, with its ancient meaning of 'striving' in the path of God. When his forebears carried the name, they knew it referred to the religious idea of struggling to do the right thing: to choose honesty over lying for personal gain, to be generous in charity even when in need yourself, and, when the situation called for it, to be willing to serve in the armed forces to defend the weak and oppressed, even if it meant giving your life.

Now, that dad might choose to call his son something less offensive to avoid future discrimination.

When the Prophet Muhammad lived, mass production and consumption of meat was unknown. Most ate a largely pesco-vegetarian diet, and slaughtering a sheep or goat was saved for special occasions, festivals and the like.

"Ordinary Muslims cannot continue to let these treasured and beautiful words lose their original meanings. We must resist the temptation to leave these words as taboo curses in the hands of the hateful."

So the Arabian Prophet recommended that before killing an animal to share in a meal, his followers should remove it from the presence of other animals, calm it down with a drink of water, face it toward the direction of prayer, hide the sharpened blade until the last moment, and in what was the most humane method of his day, slice open the neck to cause a massive haemorrhage and a quick death.

At every point, the aim was to reduce the animal's suffering. This was halal slaughtering in the seventh century. Whether it still exists today in the world of global industrial meat production is questionable.

Shari'a, when not put next to verbs like 'creeping' and 'enforcing', refers to the code of living that Islam calls its believers to follow. Its linguistic meaning is the 'life-giving, desert watering-hole', which from a religious perspective is poetic: God's laws are the fount of life for the spiritually thirsty. Practically, it works like Jewish halakha and Catholic canon law. Just as Jews and Christians are able to live in modern, democratic, secular nations and still be faithful believers, so can Muslims. In fact, they do.

So who has stolen these words and degraded them to the point that saying 'I live by the shari'a' sounds like you want to start stoning Sydney's adulterers? I blame two groups. Well, three actually.

The first are the ideological extremists - whether the Iranian Ayatollahs or ISIS - who use religion as a battering-ram to impose their political ambitions. The next are the alt-right xenophobes, who ratchet up anti-Islam prejudice on the public stage. They need an enemy to castigate: Jews, Catholics, Blacks, Asians and now Muslims. Lastly, ordinary Muslims cannot continue to let these treasured and beautiful words lose their original meanings. We must resist the temptation to leave these words as taboo curses in the hands of the hateful.
Dr Rachel Woodlock is an expat Australian academic and writer living in Ireland.

Main image: Author and media presenter Yassmin Abdel-Magied clashes with Independent Senator Jacqui Lambie over the definition of shari’a on the ABC's QandA.
Food waste in the age of hunger

INTERNATIONAL

Francine Crimmins

This week the United Nations announced that more than 20 million people across four African countries face starvation in the coming months. UN Chief Secretary Antonio Guterres says there are currently four famine alerts including Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen.

The UN also told the news conference they had managed to raise just $90 million of the $4.4 billion needed 'by the end of March to avert a catastrophe'. Only the Somalian famine alert is caused by drought, while the remaining are classified as 'man-made food crises' due to conflict.

As the UN World Food Program struggles to feed the starving, they are also reminding people that where there is great need in the world, there is often great waste. In Australia, the Department of Environment and Energy estimates food waste is costing households $8 billion every year. This is twice what the UN predicts it needs to cease a famine in four nations.

What makes us so flippant towards the food on our tables? Some studies into culture suggest our attitude comes from the knowledge everything can be replaced quite easily. We don't think about recycling food because we know more food is never far away.

It's rare that we go to the shops and find out something is sold out. And if it never sells out, it must mean some is thrown out. Indeed bakeries, butchers and restaurants all commit masses of food to the rubbish bin every day. While some businesses give their leftovers to programs like Foodbank, there often is just too much food being produced,
too quickly.

It's quite easy to negate the differences between food waste in Australia and its effect on food shortages elsewhere. It's easy to look at famine as something totally foreign and unrelated to our everyday cooking. This separation of sympathy is something the UN food program works tirelessly to bridge.

Famine is just one underlying factor of global injustice, but is one of the largest inhibitors to human progress. If food is an enabler in the world, then having access to it is a privilege. This privilege is opening our cupboards or fridges to a plethora of grocery items.

This privilege is reflected through our ability to watch TV shows where food can be judged as 'not good enough' based purely on 'presentation'. The ease in which we can produce food and throw it away reflects this inequality between ourselves and the poorest people in the world.

"If we don't achieve the world development goals in the next 15 years, it won't be because we didn't know enough, it will be because the world thought something else was more important."

Reducing food waste in our everyday lives is easier said than done. It's not as simple as eating the food in front of us. It's about starting to view food as a valuable resource.

There's a range of initiatives individuals and big companies are taking to reduce mass food waste. One of my favourites is the 'food waste restaurants' that are taking off around the world. These fine dining experiences offer a different menu to their customers every night with one simple twist - everything they serve up is food from supermarkets that was going to be thrown out. It's not only a genius business plan, it also aims to get people to think about trying to buy food based on the closest expiry dates.

Last year when I was a student journalist in the UN City in Copenhagen I attended a meeting on food security with Anne Poulsen, head of the UN Food Program in Scandinavia. She said one of the biggest issues they face is people's perception that nothing is happening in crisis zones. That perception is often due to a lack of media coverage, or in some cases, irresponsible media coverage. In the past, journalists have broken into famine area storerooms where the UN was holding bags of flour, waiting for more supplies to arrive. The next day the papers accused the Food Program of hoarding food from the starving. The UN argued they could hardly feed thousands of malnourished people with bags of flour.

Poulsen also said that we cannot claim today that we just don't know how to fix the situation of world hunger. The UN has 17 sustainable development goals they plan to achieve in the next two decades. The first is to alleviate poverty and the second is to eradicate hunger. Poulsen said if we don't achieve the world development goals in the next 15 years, it won't be because we didn't know enough, it will be because the world thought something else was more important.
Francine Crimmins is studying a double degree of Journalism and Creative Intelligence & Innovation at the University of Technology Sydney. She is on twitter as @frankiecrimmins. Francine is the recipient of Eureka Street’s Margaret Dooley Fellowship for Young Writers.

Image source: UNICEF
Sports Illustrated's plus-sized push is deeply sexist

MEDIA

Catherine Marshall

Women everywhere are celebrating the release of Sports Illustrated's 2017 Swimsuit Edition, for squeezed in among the innumerable images of slender young models is an aberration: a picture of a voluptuous woman wearing a bikini which doesn't conceal the stretch-marks blooming across her stomach.

This is Denise Bidot, a so-called plus-sized model, though probably average-sized in reality, posing in swimwear designed by the plus-size clothing brand Lane Bryant.

At first glance, this image is significant, for though 'bigger' women have featured in the magazine before, their flaws have been airbrushed into oblivion. The image of Bidot represents womanhood in all its flawed, natural glory: soft belly, broad hips, and those silvery stretch marks, the calling card of pregnancy.

Women, most of them long excluded from advertisers' narrow concept of 'beauty', have rushed to compliment Bidot on her gloriousness, on her rebellious brand of sexiness. They are part of a movement that is speaking out, and often disrobing to prove their point, against the marginalisation of women who don't fit into the dictatorial confines of what society has determined to be attractive.

It's understandable that these women are rejoicing at the inclusion of an un-retouched, representative body in a magazine as iconic as this, given the slew of one-dimensional, provocatively posed, heavily photoshopped models used to represent them in the media.

And it is remarkable that a 63-year-old woman - the preternaturally youthful Christie Brinkley - has also posed for this edition, for she does so amid a sea of almost
unvaryingly youthful faces and bodies.

But this response is highly problematic, for it salutes a publication that objectifies women for widening the definition of those it is willing to objectify. It suggests that women accept without question - indeed, encourage - the idea that their most important attribute is their body.

It forgets that the apparently subversive image is really just a clever marketing tool employed by Lane Bryant: the company's #IMNOANGEL campaign - a dig at Victoria's Secret's hyper-sexualised 'angels' - aims to redefine society's notion of 'sexy' by declaring all women sexy - and so earning undying loyalty from women who've been told for too long that they are not.

"As deliciously subversive as body acceptance campaigns are, they perpetuate the idea that women are, fundamentally, objects to be assessed. They keep women focused on their physical being - and the response of others to it."

In expanding its repertoire of women's bodies (which must still adhere to certain criteria - relatively slim waists, lush hair, conventionally beautiful faces), the magazine lures people into the trap of believing it is somehow committing a radical feminist act. In fact, it is deeply, deeply sexist: it pays little attention to female athletes, featuring them as the primary or solo image on just 2.5 per cent of its regular covers in the years 2000 to 2011; it eschews female athletes in favour of models (bar a few exceptions) in its swimsuit edition.

Most gallingly, the magazine has further patronised women by marking the launch of its latest swimwear edition with a campaign encouraging them to post pictures of their bikini bodies on Instagram, 'because you should feel beautiful no matter what you wear'. If a woman is declared beautiful, they seem to believe, her life's purpose will have been fulfilled.

But herein lies the absurdity of it all: it is not a woman's job to be beautiful. It is not her job to be sexy. It is not her responsibility to remove her clothes so as to prove that she is beautiful or sexy. It is especially not her job, when she knows that she falls outside of the west's circumscribed notion of what beautiful looks like, to remove her clothes so as to convince onlookers that there exists something desirable within the contours of her imperfect body.

For as deliciously subversive as body acceptance campaigns are, they perpetuate the idea that women are, fundamentally, objects to be assessed and approved of (or not). They keep women focused on their physical being - and the response of others to it - at the expense of their intellect. They make room for more women - bigger women, older women, women of colour, disabled women - inside the tiny cage of acceptability that has been built around them, rather than encouraging them to break free from it entirely.

And they misunderstand the very essence of beauty and sexiness: they can never be manufactured, nor declared in oneself, for they exist only in the eye of the beholder.
Catherine Marshall is a Sydney-based journalist and travel writer.
Turnbull's coal pitch is a Trojan Horse for gas

ENVIRONMENT

Greg Foyster

Australia's most politically contentious rock is back in the limelight after Prime Minister Turnbull spruiked 'clean coal' power stations in early February, and Treasurer Scott Morrison brought a lump of the stuff to pass around parliament.

It was juvenile, but effective: here we are again, still talking about coal weeks later, when the real energy policy battle is over gas. But that's how it goes - a pitch for a new coal-fired power station in Australia is actually a clever exercise in repositioning gas as a greener fuel.

I'll get to that in a moment, but first let's put this furphy to rest. 'Clean coal' isn't clean, it's just slightly less filthy.

The fossil fuel lobby introduced the oxymoron 'clean coal' years ago as a marketing slogan for carbon capture and storage, a technique to take the pollution from burning coal and store it underground. Now the term has been reapplied to describe more efficient coal power stations that operate at higher temperatures.

So 'clean', in this case, is a byword for 'emissions intensity'. The 'dirtiest' coal power station in Australia is Hazelwood in Victoria, with an emissions intensity of about 1400kg per megawatt hour. A black coal power station in New South Wales emits about 900kg per megawatt hour.

The Minerals Council's new report says these fancy new power stations - the best in the world, remember? - emit 740-800kg per megawatt hour, which is only slightly below the average for the entire electricity grid (820kg), but heaps more than gas (400-600kg). Wind and solar, in comparison, are squeaky clean (0kg).

The inherent dirtiness of coal power stations makes them risky investments. They have a lifespan of 30 to 50 years, and the overarching goal of the Paris climate agreement is reaching global net zero emissions in the electricity sector by 2050. Over that timescale, climate policies that penalise polluters have to be factored in, which could leave new coal power stations as stranded assets in decades to come.

For this reason and others, industry lobby groups and big energy companies quickly
rebuked Turnbull's 'clean coal' pitch.

"In this case, the government talks about coal for two months, and then, when they switch to spruiking gas, everyone's view of gas is in comparison to coal, not in comparison to clean energy like wind and solar."

The CEO of the Australian Energy Council, a lobby group for large energy generators, said the industry had no plans to start building new coal fired power stations because 'the 50 year life of the assets and their relatively high emissions profile made them uninvestable'. AGL, which owns large coal power stations in Victoria and NSW, ruled out building or financing any new ones. Origin said it planned to close its only coal asset by the early 2030s.

The only chance of 'clean coal' being built is if the government stumps up the cash itself. It looks like that's the plan: the Energy Minister is considering rewriting the rules of the government's Clean Energy Finance Corporation so it can invest in dirty power.

But there's another reason building a new coal power station, even a more efficient one, doesn't make sense. Renewables have changed the very structure of our electricity market, and coal doesn't have the flexibility to compete.

Coal power stations are designed to provide 'baseload' power - a constant, steady supply of electricity. Their output can't be ramped up or down quickly without risking damage to equipment and shortening the operating life of the plant. The larger and older ones were meant to run all the time, or at least most of the time.

But Australia's National Electricity Market works on a bidding system, and while coal costs money to dig up, the wind blows for free and the sun shines for nothing. With low marginal costs, wind farms push out more expensive forms of generation like coal, and household solar panels reduce demand on the national grid.

The result, argued the CEO of the Australian Energy Council, is some coal power stations can't 'operate commercially given the amount of renewables in the grid'. That was the fate of Northern Power Station in South Australia, which closed last year. (Nine coal-fired power stations have closed in the last five years in Australia.)

Gas plants, on the other hand, can shut down and fire up much more quickly, making them a better fit with the type of energy system renewables have already created.

The thing is, we can't go back to the old world of simple 'baseload' power. As the Chief Scientist Alan Finkel's preliminary report into the national electricity market explained in December: 'The changes to how power is generated and how Australians receive and use it cannot be reversed. If anything, change is likely to accelerate in coming years.' The Finkel report says that makes gas, which is flexible enough to complement the peaks and troughs of wind and solar, critical in the interim.

For decades the fossil fuel industry has been positioning gas as a 'transition' fuel, arguing it is less emission intensive than coal. (Actually, it's a questionable claim: methane has a warming effect at least 34 times more powerful than carbon dioxide, and the leaks from
unconventional gas mining could be much, much higher than assumed.)

They're rolling out the 'transition fuel' line this time too. After Turnbull's speech, lobby groups and large energy companies dismissed the idea of a new coal-fired power station in one breath, and then made a push for more gas in the next.

Resuscitating the bogeyman of a new coal power station actually helps this argument because it makes gas look more attractive in comparison. It works like an anchoring effect in negotiations - humans are biased by first impressions, so the initial piece of information influences all subsequent information.

When you're buying a house, for example, the seller might suggest a ludicrously high price to set an 'anchor' that will make other offers seem reasonable. In this case, the government talks about coal for two months, and then, when they switch to spruiking gas, everyone's view of gas is in comparison to coal, not in comparison to clean energy like wind and solar.

It's a clever trick. And it works.

The current pitch for coal is laying the groundwork for a concerted campaign on gas, seeking to curtail the anti-fracking movement. Just wait and see.

Greg Foyster is an environment journalist, an alumni of Centre for Sustainability Leadership, and the author of the book Changing Gears.

Cartoon by Chris Johnston.